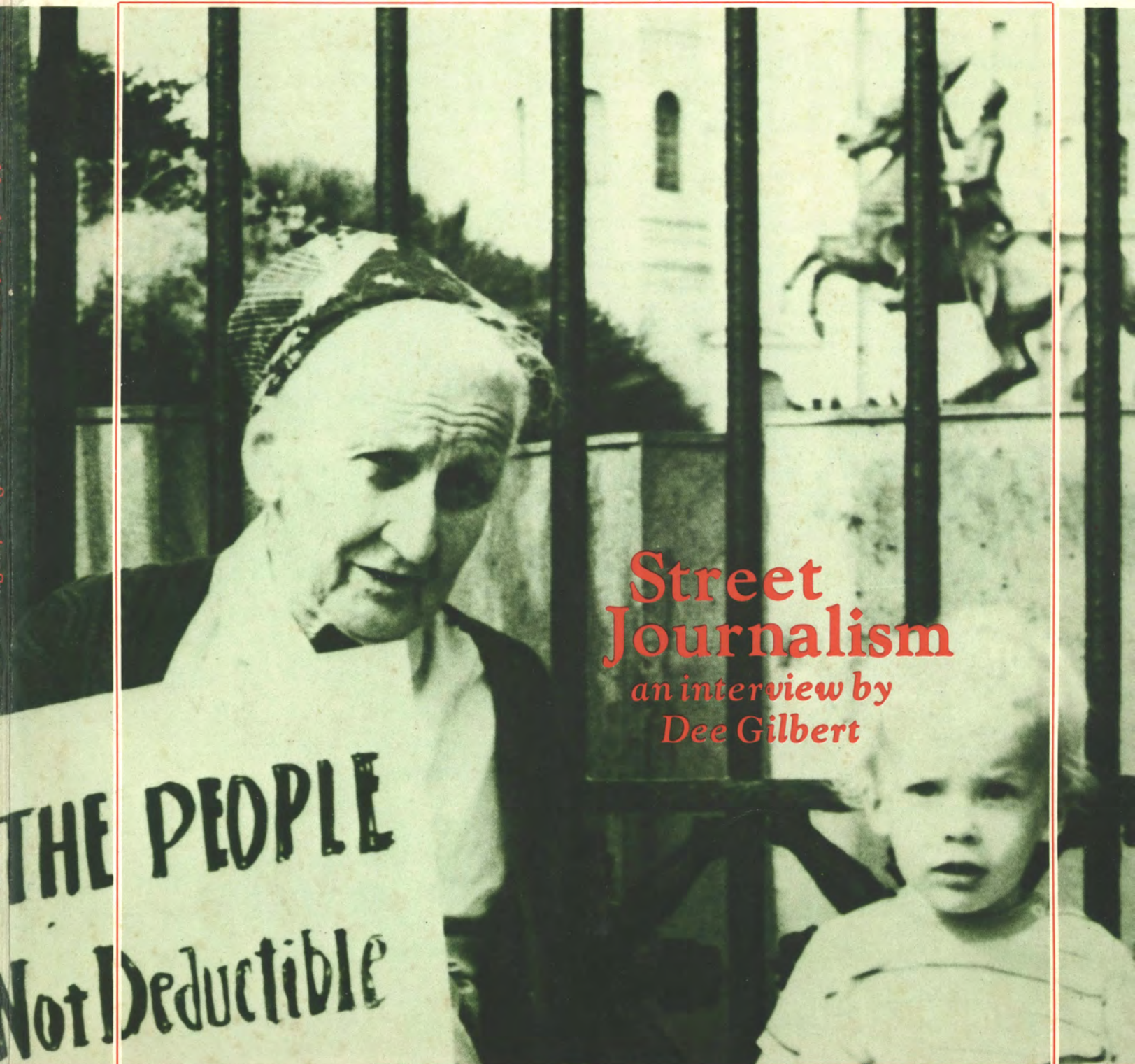


STEPPING STONES

Small Town Folks *by Robert Clare*

Pocketbooks and Neighborhoods *by Steve Schewel*

Raza Unida de Cristal *by Bart Laws*



**Street
Journalism**

*an interview by
Dee Gilbert*

Editors: Maxine Alexander, Pat Bryant, Ben Fewel, Bob Hall, Chris Mayfield, Marc Miller, Barbara Neely, Jim Overton, Joe Pfister, Linda Rocawich, Liz Wheaton

Design: Jacob Roquet

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Stepping Stones

If you happen to get your news from the networks or most newspapers, you will find out an awful lot you need to know. You will also be depressed. Very. Each item seems calculated to make us feel helpless in the face of the shenanigans of the Reagans, Haigs and Helmses of the world. Budget cutbacks. Training troops to fight for dictatorship in El Salvador. Monkeyshines with tax exemptions for schools where discrimination is blatant and admitted. Thousand-dollar plates for the White House.

Following the antics of our adversaries is necessary for effective progressive politics, but it is not sufficient. The news we receive is crucial, but the form in which we receive it discourages action, encourages despair. Along with the disasters, we need to know what our side is up to; we need to know we are still in there fighting, still winning some battles. We need inspiration and we need role models. In this issue of *Southern Exposure*, we have tried to bring you a dose of good medicine, an antidote to depression.

Certainly, the life of Elizabeth Cousins Rogers, now in her seventh decade of struggle, should be a reminder to people who feel like throwing in the towel after a year or two of defeats from Washington. As she says, her opposition to the Vietnam War began in 1918.

From Mississippi, we present two stories of long fights against heavy odds: in Claiborne County, the struggle for voting rights has lasted decades, and now blacks are using the vote to win not only political rights but also economic and social justice. Meanwhile, in a statewide campaign, Mississippi's woodcutters have been combatting physical isolation and economic dependency in their struggle to form an effective labor organization.

And in our home town of Durham, North Carolina, several of our staff members were among the many volunteers who helped elect a biracial, progressive slate to our city council this year.

We can even learn and draw sustenance from campaigns that, in retrospect, failed or fizzled out. Building from a solid base in Crystal City, Texas, La Raza Unida has placed 45 of its candidates into political office nationwide. But outside of Crystal City the party also moved away from its grassroots organizing model, lost some of its hard-fought gains and is now in a period of rebuilding.

Each of these stories contains a victory and, as real life, each contains some setbacks and mistakes. But each is a stepping stone. And you won't hear about them on TV tonight.

**okay!
here's my help!**

**MOST ADMIRABLE,
TOO LITTLE KNOWN,
VITALLY NEEDED**

I can tell from reading Southern Exposure
that you do ~~good~~ work, and I'm glad to learn
more about other projects of the Institute for
Southern Studies.

My Name Is

ALEX HALEY

Last year hundreds
of our subscribers responded
to our plea for support of Institute
programs.

Some, like Alex Haley, said we shouldn't be so
shy about asking for help.

We need your help again this year to continue
the programs of the Institute, described on pages
2 and 3 of this issue.

Please give generously. Your tax-deductible
contribution will make it possible for us to keep our
projects expanding in a time of urgent need.

Here's my contribution of:

_____ \$500 _____ \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50

_____ \$25 _____ \$15 _____ other

My name is _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*Please make checks payable to Institute for Southern
Studies.*

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INSTITUTE REPORT



A Message to Senators not from North Carolina

We need your help.

**Despite our Senators' opposition,
hundreds of thousands of
North Carolinians want a strong
Voting Rights Act.**

Please pass Senate Bill 1992.

Why is the Act needed? Ask us: North Carolina branches of the NAACP
N.C. Association of Educators • League of Women Voters of N.C. • N.C. NOW
N.C. AFL-CIO • N.C. Civil Liberties Union • and 20 other statewide groups

At a time when progressives are feeling a growing pessimism about the state of national, regional and local affairs, the Institute for Southern Studies has *good* news: we're growing in size and gaining momentum.

In the past few months, we've added two new staff people for *Southern Exposure*; we've hired another to coordinate a new project to broaden the Southern peace movement; we've helped the South Carolina Voting Rights Project become a force to be reckoned with in Strom Thurmond's home state; we've worked with people in the Carolinas who are organizing around toxic waste issues; and our research into the 1979 slayings of five anti-Klan demonstrators (see *Southern Exposure*, Fall, 1981, "The Third of November") has spawned the formation of an interracial coalition in Greensboro, North Carolina, which is pressing for federal investigations into the incident and its aftermath.

The Institute does not assume the role of leader or expert in the projects we undertake. Our philosophy is that folks who are concerned with issues in their communities know best what the problems are and how to deal with them. We *do* try to provide the kind of research and technical assistance which will enable them to identify those who

are in control at the local level and figure out what pressure points local groups can use to gain political, social and economic power.

Billboards and ballots

This message to Senators "not from North Carolina" now appears on a billboard strategically located at the corner of Sixth and Pennsylvania in Washington, DC. It was prepared by Institute staff as part of our voting rights support activities in North and South Carolina, where we've helped to pull together coalitions including civil-rights activists, teachers, women's groups, organized labor and the elderly.

In South Carolina, the Institute-assisted Black Voting Rights Project conducted a creative and impressive campaign in honor of Martin Luther King's birthday. On January 15, project supporters kept Senator Strom Thurmond's phone line busy all day with a phone-in to support the Voting Rights Act. One week earlier, 200 Voting Rights advocates protested "Don't Honor Racists" in Myrtle Beach, where Thurmond was being inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame.

Organizing the new peace majority

The South has historically borne a disproportionate share of the nation's military burden. Our region is strewn with military bases, and for many of our young people, the military provides the only hope of a job or education.

The South also suffers a disproportionate share of this nation's poverty. And now that the Reagan administration is systematically diverting funds from human-needs programs to the war machine, the issues are crystallizing for many Southerners.

The Institute project on militarism and human needs will demonstrate in several Southern communities how to build multi-racial networks of traditional peace, civil-rights, women, labor and social service advocacy groups. Work in these communities will serve as a model for developing ongoing peace efforts throughout the South. The project is being coordinated with the War Resisters League/Southeast and the Southern Organizing Committee.

Staff and volunteers have already begun to compile state-by-state profiles to document the impact of militarism on local economies and educational and social programs. The Institute project

coordinator is traveling throughout the region helping peace-related projects join with civil-rights, labor, women's, elderly, low-income, student and energy organizations. If you would like the Institute project to come to your area, contact: Pat Bryant, ISS, PO Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

Much of the information gathered by the project will be published in *Southern Exposure's* special issue on the Southern military, scheduled for November/December, 1982. The project coordinator and Institute staff will also share information about organizing efforts — failures as well as success stories — with folks from Texas to Virginia to Florida and everywhere in between. We'll be looking especially for concrete examples of communities that have prospered by changing from a military-based to a human-needs-based economy, and we'll provide resource materials and workshops so that local folks can develop projects tailored to local needs.

Greensboro justice

The response to the Institute special report, "The Third of November," an in-depth analysis of the Klan/Nazi shootings of five demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, provides a classic example of the way Institute projects are supposed to work.

Among other findings, our six months of research showed there was an intimate alliance between the Klan, Nazis and law enforcement officials before, during and after the shootings. We released the 32-page study in Washington on October 3, 1981, at a news conference with Institute president Julian Bond. The following day, representatives of a dozen Greensboro citizens groups held their own news conference on the steps of the federal building in Greensboro. They joined our call for speedy investigation by the Justice Department into the questions raised in our study; in addition, they called for a congressional investigation of the Justice Department's handling of the case.

At the request of the citizens groups, Julian Bond went to Greens-

boro to meet and discuss options for continued local activity. Out of that meeting grew a new coalition of respected, well-established local organizations: the Concerned Citizens on the November Third Incident.

Within a month of its formation, Concerned Citizens persuaded the Greensboro City Council and the Human Relations Commission to endorse resolutions calling for federal intervention in the case. In December, local churches participated in "Awareness Sunday," when a wide range of justice issues were discussed from pulpits and in Sunday School classes. A local petition drive was initiated, and in January those petitions were presented to the Justice Department and to Representative John Conyers, chair of the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice.

Because of the efforts of the Concerned Citizens, the Justice Department is finally beginning to make a serious effort to investigate the 1979 slayings. Recently the department subpoenaed all of the City of Greensboro's records on the case, including the transcript of the five-month trial which resulted in the acquittal of six Nazis and Klansmen.

(Copies of the Institute report are available for \$3 from the Institute, PO Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.)

Don't dump here

Following on the heels of our special feature on toxic dumps ("The Future Is Now," *Southern Exposure*, Fall, 1981), the Institute is assisting North Carolinians faced with toxic waste horrors. The Institute staff is keeping track of the state's new Waste Management Board and working with other groups to uncover information on health effects caused by past improper dumping.

The project also provides assistance to communities threatened by new hazardous waste facilities. Through resource contacts, investigations of the companies' and state's plans, and a workshop which will bring together waste dump fighters from across the state, the Institute hopes to help these people pressure the state to adopt a

truly effective toxic waste management plan that protects communities from repetitions of Love Canal.

Institute on wheels

Can you help get *Southern Exposure* and the Institute for Southern Studies on the road? As part of our expanding program, we will be sending staff people around the region to conferences, campuses, bookstores and community organizations. If you've got a reliable and efficient mid-sized car, station wagon or van that you're not using much, we'd sure be grateful if you'd donate it to the Institute. You'll get a nifty tax deduction, and we'll get on the road!

For those of you who aren't in a position to donate your wheels, how about letting us know when there's a meeting, conference or class that would be interested in learning about the Institute and *Southern Exposure* — or that we could learn from. We'll try to get there — one way or another!

Drop us a note at PO Box 531, Durham, North Carolina 27702 or give us a call at (919)688-8167 — and we'll talk turkey.

Institute fashions

Looking for just the right thing to spruce up your spring wardrobe? Well, look no further. The first edition of the soon-to-be collector's item *Southern Exposure* T-shirt is here at last. Available in fashionable red with yellow lettering or in cheery yellow with

**Southern
Exposure**
THE JOURNAL OF THE PROGRESSIVE SOUTH

red lettering, these 100 percent cotton shirts cost only \$6. They're perfect for picket line or conference wear, an ideal conversation piece when you're traveling north of the Mason/Dixon.

Yellow w/red available in small, medium and large; red w/yellow available in medium and large only.

FROM OUR READERS

The forces for moderation and liberalism seem to be in shock from the defeat they suffered at the hands of the New Right in the last election. Your organization has the potential of providing the research, coordination and the strategies to counter the New Right.

The Conservative Decade by James Roberts (with a foreword by Ronald Reagan) is the blueprint for the conservative movement. This book implies certain actions we can take to counter the New Right:

- A think-tank group is needed to write an "anti-book" or "anti-manual" of strategies to combat the plans Roberts outlines.

- We need to develop strategies to counter the tactics of those who are targeting liberal senators and representatives.

- Communications need to be established with those elected officials being targeted.

- The efforts of individuals and groups monitoring and countering the New Right need to be coordinated to prevent duplication of effort.

- The computer should be utilized to the fullest in this effort. It has unlimited potential (mailing lists, word processing, data storage, etc.) to increase the effectiveness of this effort.

- We need to develop TV programs and/or messages that can counter New Right propaganda and intrusions on First Amendment freedoms.

- The American people need to be informed that when they "take the bait" of a single issue (e.g., anti-abortion) and vote for members of the New Right that they buy the whole ultra-conservative package.

- Other books written by key conservative leaders (*The New Right: We Are Ready to Lead*, by Richard Viguere, etc.) need to be read and analyzed for counteractions also.

- Lists of industrial contributors to the New Right need to be published so that interested persons can practice "selective buying."

As an educator who participated in the recent North Carolina Association of Educators workshop, *Teacher Rights and the New Right*, I am interested in this effort and would be glad to assist

in any way I can. You are to be commended for the direction, information and motivation for positive change that *Southern Exposure* has given the region.

— a reader
Fayetteville, NC

It was a distinct disappointment that the Campaign for Human Development (CHD) was not mentioned in Bill Adler's piece on WVSP in the Fall, 1981, issue of *Southern Exposure*. CHD has given crucial financial support to the station and to other projects in North Carolina which are noteworthy, such as the Durham Tenants Association and the North Carolina Brown Lung Association.

Would it be possible for you to give CHD some of the credit it deserves?

Furthermore, it might make a good piece for *Southern Exposure* to do a story on how a good many activities such as the Durham Tenants Association and the Brown Lung Association get funded by such agencies as the CHD and the Presbyterian Self Help Development Fund.

— James F. Berry
Raleigh, NC

I am single, 42 years of age, black, a certified welder. All my life I have had to struggle. I have a great deal of admiration for all women who have the courage to stand up for the things that they are entitled to. I support them in all ways.

Please print my name and address, requesting correspondence from anyone who is in need of someone to write to, no matter what the reason.

— Roosevelt Pickens
244920 Ellis Unit B-4
Huntsville, TX 77340

Just a note to tell you how outstanding I think *Working Women* is! It arrived yesterday and I delved right into it.

The topic of Southern women is covered so completely — and of course,

with great understanding and sensitivity. I think also that including the sections on resources is a marvelous idea!

I'm giving my copy to our Women's Resource Center. Unfortunately, our very successful Displaced Homemaker program must close February 28, due to lack of CETA funds. We've had 66 graduates — 33 are now employed. Seventeen of these were on public assistance but are now self-supporting. Really a good record, but what can we do?!

— Rosel Schewel
Lynchburg, VA

Thank you for the Nov. 3 story about the Greensboro killings. It is understood that the documentation's purpose was to focus on "key" organizations and persons. But I am disappointed by an omission that seems prevalent in all media accounts that I have read to date.

The omission referred to is an account of the community in which the incident occurred. Although your article includes a sentence stating that nine other people were wounded, these people seem to have no identity.

On Nov. 3, 1979, viewing the Saturday afternoon movie in my public housing project in Raleigh, NC, the program was interrupted for a report from Greensboro. My feelings of shock and horror became tears for what could have been my community. Although a mixed blessing for poor folk, public housing often is nothing more than a glorified concentration camp.

Throughout the media coverage of the ordeal, the real key people — poor folk and people of color, especially blacks — were never revealed. Aren't we the political pivots in all this turmoil?

In other words, everyone knows what happened with the "racists" and "communists" but what happened with my brothers and sisters whose community became an invaded battleground for those who neither cared nor understood that poor folks' homes and families became the location of a war in which residents had no real vested interest nor foreseen benefits?

— Melissa Stockman
Staten Island, NY

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

Uncle Sam's lawyer on Haitians quits

Calling his decision "a matter of conscience," Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard A. Marshall, Jr., the lawyer defending U.S. policy on Haitian immigrants, recently quit his job.

"I found I was asserting precisely the opposite of what I believed the Haitians were entitled to," Marshall told the *Miami Herald*.

His boss, U.S. Attorney Atlee Wampler, III, called the resignation "irresponsible."

Marshall, 38, also said he was considering joining about 60 volunteer lawyers who represent Haitians confined at Miami's Krome Avenue detention center. Ironically, until his resignation, he was defending the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) against charges it violated the refugees' rights by holding them in detention without telling them how to obtain political asylum.

The case, a crucial test of U.S. policy toward Haitians, is still scheduled for argument in U.S. District Court in March. Haitians first began coming to South Florida in substantial numbers in 1963 to escape life under the late dictator, Francois Duvalier; but the United States claims they left their homeland freely, as economic immigrants, not as refugees from political oppression.

In an earlier motion to dismiss the case, Marshall had argued that the government had no obligation to tell Haitians about political asylum because, under INS policy, people without valid visas are not officially in the U.S. "But the more I read that document, the more I was troubled by making those arguments," said Marshall.

"I felt conscience pangs, not only in this case, but for any immigrants. Should the government be incarcerating people seeking to survive when they have been unable to survive in their own country?"



Illustration by Kent Barton

Immigrants given political runaround

The last of nearly 27,000 Cuban refugees at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, have been shipped to federal prisons in Atlanta and Springfield, Missouri. They were part of the 125,000 who arrived in Florida in the spring of 1980 in the so-called Freedom Flotilla.

Soon after the first wave of Cubans were brought to Fort Chaffee, a rarely used Army base near the western border of Arkansas, they rioted, and many escaped to nearby towns only to be recaptured. Then-Governor Bill Clinton, a Democrat running for reelection, won a promise from President Carter that no more refugees would be sent to the post. But Carter reneged and made Fort Chaffee the consolidated refugee resettlement center.

Political observers say that decision cost Clinton his job. His Republican opponent, Frank White, ran television ads saying Clinton had not "stood up" to the White House and promising that he would do so if elected. After he won, White got Reagan to promise to

move the Cubans, but the resettlement process seemed to drag on slower than White felt was reasonable. Pleading with the government to meet an August, 1981, deadline to close the compound, he wrote, "I don't need to tell you how important it is to the Republican Party and to my own political future that these people be moved."

Bill Clinton has already announced he will run for governor again this year.

In January, only 400 Cubans were left at the camp. "I don't care where I go," said Emilio Rafael Juarez. "I just want to get out and make a living." But his chances of freedom are slim.

"Nearly all of them have a background of severe anti-social behavior," said the resettlement staff director. Some, like Orestes Carrera Bravo, came directly from prisons in Cuba. He says he will "go anywhere the Americans want me to go." He was imprisoned in Cuba for being "dangerous," and when the captain asked those who wanted to "go North" to step forward, he welcomed the chance.

It's likely Juarez and Bravo have now joined 1,300 other refugees in the old federal penitentiary in Atlanta. The government kept its promise to Governor White by transferring them and the remaining several hundred Cubans at Fort Chaffee in late February. It will hold them in prisons in Georgia and Missouri at a cost of about \$8.5 million a year. Just when they will obtain the promised fruits of the Freedom Flotilla is anybody's guess.

Nuclear bomb boom boost for Oak Ridge

Heading for the Knoxville World's Fair this summer? As you drive along the interstate into the Tennessee mountains, keep your eyes peeled for trucks bearing the day-glo triangle — the symbol of nuclear shipments.

If you see such a truck, chances are

it's coming from the top-secret nuclear weapons component plant in Oak Ridge called "Y-12." The plant, operated for the government by Union Carbide, makes warhead components for the Lance, Cruise, Minuteman 3 and Trident C-4 missiles, and for something called the Enhanced Radiation Artillery Fired Atomic Projectile — otherwise known as the neutron bomb.

How is production going now that President Reagan has made a commitment to spend \$180 billion in the next six years on nuclear weapons?

"I would say that just about any nuclear weapon system that is being introduced into the national stockpile, you will find Y-12 is involved in those systems," government spokesperson Wayne Range told the *Knoxville News Sentinel*. "It could be considered a barometer for defense activity."

The budget for weapons work at Y-12 has jumped 25 percent, from \$210 million in 1981 to \$263 million in 1982. About 600 workers have been added in the past year and a half, with another 200 expected to join the workforce of 6,100 before October 1.

The Y-12 plant is the largest of the government's seven nuclear bomb parts factories, but if you're thinking of heading to Oak Ridge for a job, here's a word of caution: this past summer, 4,400 workers at Y-12 and the neighboring Oak Ridge National Laboratory went on strike for two months, partly in protest of inadequate protection against radiation hazards. Their demands were only partially met.

Citrus growers to squeeze consumers

Frozen fruit on Florida's trees sent the price of orange juice futures soaring in January. But now it looks like the citrus crop was not as severely damaged as originally expected, and the increased import of Brazilian juice could also cushion the price jump for consumers. About 21 percent of the anticipated 185-million-gallon harvest was lost when temperatures hit 20 degrees in mid-January.

The biggest losers, besides consum-

ers, are small farmers whose crops are concentrated in one location. The largest Florida citrus growers own groves throughout the state so if one part of the crop is damaged, they'll have enough to send to market at inflated prices for a hefty profit.

"The value of the concentrate always increases more than the loss in the crop," says 81-year-old James Emmett Evans, who owns 17,000 acres of orange groves across the state. His other secret to success is holding the juice in stainless steel tanks until the price goes up; he still has two million gallons from last year when he reaped an \$8.3 million profit off \$75 million in sales. "I've never had a losing year in my 56 years in the business," he says.

Movement builds for civil rights activists

Maggie Bozeman and Julia Wilder were part of the reason several dozen marchers walked the 140 miles from Carrollton, Alabama, to the state capital in Montgomery in February. The other reason — to demand extension of the Voting Rights Act — received a good bit of media attention, especially because the route followed the famous Selma-to-Montgomery march that sparked Congress to pass the original Voting Rights Act in 1965.

But Maggie Bozeman and Julia Wilder's story seemed to get lost in the midst of the historical film footage and flashbacks to Martin Luther King, Jr. They are victims today of a white power structure in Pickens County, Alabama, determined to keep blacks — 40 percent of the county's population — from winning any elected office.

In "Stayed on Freedom" (*Southern Exposure*, Spring, 1981), the two women explained they were arrested after helping 39 mostly house-bound elderly blacks register and vote by absentee ballot. On the testimony of one 79-year-old woman who does not recall marking the ballot turned in with her name, Wilder and Bozeman were convicted of vote fraud and sentenced to prison for five and four years, respectively.

The 1979 conviction was ultimately upheld by the Alabama State Supreme Court, and in November, 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case. On January 11, 1982, while 300 supporters of the women packed the Pickens County Courthouse, Judge Clatus Junkin rejected a motion to suspend the sentences and ordered the "convicted felons" to prison.

SCLC and the Southern Organizing Committee (SOC) organized a telegram campaign to the governor's office to have the sentences commuted, and the Alabama Black Legislative Caucus demanded that Governor Fob James get personally involved in the case. He did. After a week in jail, the two women, aged 69 and 51, were assigned to work-release programs in a neighboring county. They are living in a trailer, rather than the jail, but are not allowed to return to Pickens County.

Distressed at their treatment and



its meaning for voting rights, SCLC sponsored the march from Carrollton to Montgomery with a coalition of 30 other groups ranging from NOW to the Alabama Hunger Coalition. Hundreds of marchers participated along the route and heard Coretta King, Joseph Lowery, Julian Bond and others urge passage of a strong Voting Rights Act and the immediate release of Wilder and Bozeman. On February 18, about 5,000 rallied at the state capital, and a delegation met with Governor James, but he rejected their call for further help.

To keep the momentum building for the women's complete exoneration, supporters are urged to write Governor Fob James, State Capital, Montgomery, Alabama 36104, and the Pardon and Parole Board at the same address. Ms. Wilder and Ms. Bozeman can be written c/o Lucius Amerson, Macon County Sheriff's Office, Tuskegee, AL 36083.

Cancer society says 'no' to union's help

Between 1949 and 1972, betanaphthylamine (BNA), a chemical used in the manufacture of dyes, was handled and produced by employees at the Augusta Chemical Company outside Augusta, Georgia. BNA is one of the most potent human carcinogens known, and hundreds of workers exposed to it knew nothing of the health risks involved in its use.

The federal government banned the production and use of BNA in 1972. By that time, several current and former Augusta Chemical Company employees had developed bladder cancer.

Federal studies have shown that as many as 70 percent of people exposed to BNA contract bladder cancer. Since BNA-related cancers have a latency period of 20 years, many former workers may now be developing the cancer and not know it. Yet bladder cancer can be cured if detected early enough.

To help remedy this potential public health menace, a project jointly sponsored by the federal National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the AFL-CIO-affiliated Worker's Institute for Safety and Health (WISH) attempted to inform workers and retirees of the risks and refer them to appropriate medical assistance for screening and treatment.

Project officials wanted the support of the American Cancer Society chapter in Augusta to disseminate information and offer guidance to local doctors. But the society refused to get involved.

Dr. Knut Ringen, WISH's Augusta Project Director, attributes the chapter's reticence to a basic suspicion of WISH's association with the AFL-CIO. None of the former workers at Augusta Chemical were members of labor unions.

According to Ringen, "Our attempts to assure the Cancer Society members that our intent in Augusta was to aid cancer victims — not organize them — fell on deaf ears. The tragedy of the situation is that because of this anti-union prejudice, the Augusta ACS unit is not involved in a major cancer detection and treatment operation in its own back yard."



Illustration by Peter Steiner

Error-prone capital punishment on rise

An average of four Americans are sentenced to die every week, according to the latest statistics from Amnesty International. Almost all of them are poor and unemployed; over 40 percent are black. At the end of 1981, the total number of condemned prisoners was 924, with more than two-thirds of them in the 11 states of the Old Confederacy.

One man who narrowly missed the list was released on December 15, 1981, after being locked in Louisiana's Angola prison for seven years. Johnny Ross, cleared at last of the rape charge which nearly led to his execution, had maintained his innocence since being imprisoned at age 16, the youngest person then on death row in the country.

The proof that set him free was a simple blood test indicating that his blood type and the rapist's (determined from a sample of seminal fluid) were different. Tragically, the evidence was available and should have been introduced at Ross's trial in 1975. But Ross, who is black, was arrested at his New Orleans home, beaten at the police station, forced to confess, given an attorney who called no witnesses for his defense, and sentenced to die after the jury deliberated only a few minutes.

Attorneys for the Southern Poverty Law Center took Ross's case after he wrote them for help. They filed a battery of motions on his behalf and arranged for the blood test which conclusively proved his innocence. Presented with the evidence, the New

Orleans District Attorney's Office, which had sought Ross's execution in 1975, agreed to his release. He now lives in Denver with his sister. The real rapist has never been caught.

"Johnny's exoneration and release is an occasion for great happiness," said John Carroll, the Center's legal director. "But it's also a time for sober reflection on the innocent men and women who have been executed in this country and on the inadequacy of our system to make such life-and-death judgments."

The potential for executing innocent people was one of several reasons given by Amnesty International (AI) in launching a worldwide campaign in mid-February that seeks to convince public officials in the U.S. to abandon executions. No country in Western Europe still uses the death penalty, the organization said, and there is "no evidence that it deters crime more effectively than other punishments."

AI also pointed out the racism behind the application of capital punishment in the U.S. A recent study in Florida, the state with the most prisoners on death row, shows that blacks convicted of killing whites are nearly 40 times more likely to be sentenced to death than those who killed other blacks and five times more likely to receive the death penalty than whites who killed whites.

Customers still pay nuclear power costs

If you need a simple lesson in the essential injustice of capitalism — those with the capital make the rules — you can do no better than to follow the fate of the nuclear power industry. Customers of electric utilities throughout the South are now paying higher rates because, even though they are conserving, they have to pay for the inefficiencies of new nuclear power plants. Stockholders, meanwhile, continue to enjoy a handsome profit; instead of losing their shirts for taking the nuclear risk, their investment is protected by government regulators and the courts.

Even TVA, the publicly owned utility that acts like a private corporation,

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has announced that it will raise rates, perhaps as much as 16 percent, at the beginning of its fiscal year in October, even though it is cancelling eight of its planned 17 nuclear units. Five of the eight cancellations had been announced earlier and resulted in 6,000 workers being laid off. The decision in February to drop work on three more plants will cost 4,000 workers their jobs. But the bankers who lent TVA funds for the projects won't lose a dime.

Always looking for a way to make a buck, Wall Street analysts are now suggesting that a "good buy" in stocks can be found in companies that sell an array of cleanup and repair services to nuclear plant operators. Quadrex Corporation and Impell Corporation are two smaller firms whose increased business following the Three Mile Island disaster has impressed stockbrokers.

"What I like about Quadrex and Impell is that they're the only ones in the field that have developed services for the entire lifespan of a nuclear plant," suggests Bear Stearns's Harry Rosenthal. The demand for checking pipe corrosion or more monitoring of reactors will only enrich alert investors, he says with a straight face. Apparently, only the captive customer is supposed to lose in the nuclear gamble.

Clean-up of poisons slow as Christmas

On Christmas Eve, 1981, South Carolina got a present from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) it had needed for six years. The agency agreed to pay for cleanup of a hazardous waste site that had been called the most serious threat to the environment in the South. The dump, located on Bluff Road just outside of Columbia, is ranked as the thirty-third worst in the nation. Two weeks later, on January 8, 1982, EPA committed \$1 million in emergency funds to start the project immediately.

"It's sitting there like a cancer," said Hugh Boyd, director of Emergency Preparedness for Richland County, where the dump is located. Over 7,000 barrels, many leaking, are stacked two-

high over much of the small lot, which is owned by the bankrupt South Carolina Recycling and Disposal Company (SCRD). Chemicals from the deteriorating barrels have caused air and water pollution. Some of the chemicals that have been identified are carcinogens, but the contents of many of the drums are still unknown.

Most of the waste at the site is unlabeled, and when asked where it came from, a county official said, "The good Lord only knows." South Carolina businesses generate 600 million tons of hazardous waste annually, but at least some of the waste at Bluff Road came from out of state. EPA was embarrassed to discover that 16 drums contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) had come from its own laboratories in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

The Bluff Road site, opened in 1975, had problems with fire, smoke and odors from the start. "It vented gases off and on of its own. It's been venting all the time. The matter of where and when it goes is like Mount Saint Helens," says Boyd. A fire in 1977 resulted in the hospitalizations of 40 people who were fighting the blaze, and another the following year was allowed to burn because SCR D officials could not tell firefighters what chemicals were stored there.

After the 1977 incident, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) began a series of unsuccessful attempts to get SCR D to clean up the site, first initiating administrative procedures and then resorting to the courts. By February, 1980, DHEC had dug 11 test wells which revealed that the groundwater had been contaminated, possibly permanently, with volatile organic chemicals.

Critics charge that DHEC shunned its own responsibility to take action to protect the environment; instead, it focused solely on getting the company to clean up the mess. In June, 1980, Dr. John Freeman, the court-appointed receiver for the bankrupt SCR D, wrote, "In my estimation, the Department of Health and Environmental Control should either do something constructive to save that problem or close up shop. I believe that taxpayers in this area have had enough excuses and legalistic rigamarole."

The state finally used federal super-

fund money to clean up two of the company's sites, and the company did take care of one site itself — after SCR D president James McClure was jailed for a week and threatened with an additional six months imprisonment. However, no progress was made on the Bluff Road site until the EPA announcement. At one point, Richland County sued DHEC to clean up Bluff Road, but without success.

DHEC's refusal to intervene at the Bluff Road site is not peculiar to South Carolina. Across the nation, state environmental agencies have failed to respond to imminent threats to citizens and the environment. The EPA has served as the last resort for environmental protection, but massive cuts in staff and funding, which have already eliminated the hazardous waste enforcement branch, mean that the EPA will be unable to do its job. The South's safety will now depend on the DHECs of the various states. There won't be any more Christmas presents to save us from the next Bluff Road.

Thanks to Paul Bush for this news report.

'Pothole awards' go to Southern states

Awards to state governments for their performance in promoting the hiring of women on construction crews were handed out in January by the Southeast Women's Employment Coalition (SWEC). The organization, representing 14 groups in six states, has monitored enforcement of Executive Order 11246, which requires that private construction companies working under federal contracts enact affirmative action plans.

Under the order, federal-aid highway contractors must increase their proportion of women employees to at least 6.9 percent by 1981 or prove they are making a "good faith effort" toward that goal. Because of weak supervision by the state highway departments, which are charged with implementing the order, women held only 4.6 percent of the jobs of federal-aid contractors

as of July 31, 1981.

SWEC gave nine highway departments "pothole awards" for failing to get federally funded road builders to hire even as many as 125 women on sites in their states. For example, only 20 women were among the 1,231 workers employed in South Carolina projects. Other states to receive a bag of gravel from SWEC "to fill in the holes" in their enforcement of affirmative action plans were: Alabama (98 of 2,518), Florida (96 of 2,593), Georgia (57 of 2,405), Kentucky (119 of 2,189), Mississippi (22 of 1,745), North Carolina (85 of 2,812), Tennessee (39 of 1,836), and Virginia (62 of 2,185).

The West Virginia Highway Department received the organization's "affirmative action award" for its "noteworthy achievement in recruitment and hiring of women." Contractors in that state had 7.8 percent women employees, including 172 women in on-site construction.

Given the cutbacks and leadership from Washington, it's doubtful further gains can be expected soon. President Reagan plans to weaken the order by eliminating penalties for violators and narrowing the range of companies the order covers. Within Reagan's own shop, meanwhile, a Congressional study of cutbacks in federal employment shows that women in administrative positions are losing jobs at a rate about 60 percent higher than men, while non whites in those jobs are being laid off at a 220 percent higher rate than whites.

Coke refines image, buys movie company

While kleig lights and 30-foot balloons danced outside Atlanta's Civic Center, some 2,500 representatives of Coca-Cola bottlers meeting inside were treated to a multimedia extravaganza that included several dozen singers, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and 35 projectors simultaneously beaming images of happiness on the walls and stage. The whole show was designed to convince bottlers affiliated with the Atlanta-based Coca-Cola Company to chip in their share for a new advertising campaign centered on three words: "Coke is it!"

The bottlers are expected to embrace the campaign, the latest in the ongoing battle over the multi-billion-dollar soft drink market, which Coke still leads with 24 percent of total volume sold. Bottlers may have gained extra comfort from the knowledge that the new commercials were developed by John Bergin, creator of the highly successful "Pepsi generation" campaign.

Coke officials are also gushing over their \$850 million purchase of Columbia Pictures, which gives them a head start in the much-ballyhooed pay-per-view cable TV business, a venture pioneered by Columbia. Within four years, say some experts, Columbia can routinely release a new film to theaters

across the nation, then broadcast it on a national pay-per-view basis, then sell videocassettes and disks of the movie.

But some Wall Street brokers say Coke paid too much for Columbia and will end up losing earnings for the next few years. Coke's stockholders are not likely to vote against the acquisition, however. About 17 percent of the stock is owned by one man, the 92-year-old former chairman, Robert Woodruff, and another five percent is voted by Coke's friendly banker, the Trust Company of Georgia. For them, there's no doubting that "Coke is it!"

Florida county stops a phosphate miner

One third of the world's supply of phosphate and 80 percent of the nation's needs come from Florida, but if Manatee County has its way one powerful mining company will never get a piece of the action. Estech, a subsidiary of Swift Agricultural Chemicals, which produces everything from dental floss to Butterball Turkeys, owns 10,383 acres in the phosphate-rich county, located just south of St. Petersburg on the Gulf Coast.

Since 1965, Estech has been trying to mine along the watershed of the Manatee River, the principal source of fresh water for the 108,000 residents of the county and another 150,000 people further south.

The chair of the Manatee County Commissioners, Vernon Vickers, is one of the public officials standing in the way of Estech's drag line. Vickers grew up in neighboring Polk County, the self-proclaimed Phosphate Capital of the World. "I've seen spring after spring and lake after lake dry up after they went through," he says. "I am strictly opposed to phosphate mining."

Estech is not willing to give up yet. With the help of its Japanese financial backers - Mitsubishi and Zen-Nob - it convinced state officials to overrule the county's restrictive zoning. Florida has been aggressively courting Japanese investment, so the pressure was not lost in high places. "We would like to emphasize," wrote the heads of the two Jap-



anese companies to Governor Bob Graham, "that concerns and interests of both the Government and the people of Japan in investment in the state of Florida would be inevitably cooled down if the project fails as a result of unsettled permitting issues."

Although the county eventually lost its zoning fight, it enacted two mining ordinances which local officials say go far beyond state and federal restrictions. "They tried to use their money and influence and power to run us over," says commissioner Edward W. Chance, "but if they're going to mine here, they're going to mine by our rules."

Another mining company has been allowed to begin operations in a different part of the county. But Estech's efforts to mine in the watershed are still being successfully blocked.

Slavery trial over, but system is unchanged

The conviction of three North Carolina crew leaders for conspiracy to hold farm laborers in involuntary servitude produced a wave of chilling news stories around the country, with headlines like "Human Bondage Going On Today" and "Slavery Revisited." But hardly any newspaper pointed the finger of shame at the growers of North Carolina or elsewhere who use the crew leader system to shield themselves from liability for the workers who harvest their crops.

The system itself is vast and riddled with abuses. Stephen Nagler of Migrant Legal Action in Washington, DC, believes as many as 100,000 farmworkers may be held in forced service in the U.S., most by the middlemen crew leaders who contract with growers at the beginning of the season to supply and supervise laborers. In eastern North Carolina, where an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 migrants pick cucumbers, tobacco, peppers, sweet potatoes and other crops, many of the laborers are Haitian refugees or down-and-out urban blacks who are told they will be beaten if they try to leave the shoddy camps set up on the growers' property.

"The few cases we have had reported have been very dramatic," says Robert Pence, the FBI agent in charge of North Carolina. "But you have a situation here where there are other cases, probably many other cases, of abuses that are not reported. And we do not have enough staff to monitor the camps, although we do investigate all complaints that we get."

It was the death of Robert Lee Anderson, who collapsed in a Nash County sweet potato field last fall after being told he couldn't stop working, that brought attention to the three black crew chiefs eventually convicted of conspiracy. The three — John Lester Harris, Dennis J. Warren and Richard Wayne Warren — respectively received sentences of life plus 15 years, 25 years plus two five-year terms, and six months plus five years probation.

"These men received heavy sentences because there was conspiracy which resulted in death," observed Chuck Eppinette, co-director of Farmworker Legal Services of North Carolina. "The maximum sentence for slavery is only five years. They were guilty, but the strongest feeling I have is it's a shame that the farmer was able to walk away with nothing happening to him. They did what they were paid to do."

Evidently the farmers stick together to protect their system of labor contracting. Throughout the week-long trial, a representative of Agri-Foods, Inc., the association of large growers, sat at the table with the crew leaders' defense attorneys, two of eastern North Carolina's most experienced criminal trial lawyers. Courtroom observers noted that the association probably paid the attorneys' fees.

Cecil Williams, the owner of Rainbow Farms, where the Warren brothers were arrested, frankly admitted, "The crew leader system is for our situation the best." He also said he preferred the middle-aged urban derelicts to younger, more productive workers who are "too independent."

"People say around here, 'We used to own our slaves. Now we rent them,'" says Martin Boone, an Xavieran priest who has worked with farmworkers in eastern North Carolina since 1979. "How do these conditions exist? To a large extent, the economy of the state depends on them."

Campus & city stop anti-gay campaigns

Students at the University of Tennessee's campus in Chattanooga were finally allowed to register their Gay Awareness group as an official campus organization in February, giving them access to school facilities. After fighting with the student government association and various administrators for five months, the organization appealed to the university chancellor. His legal counsel advised that the school would probably lose a court challenge on the issue.

Chancellor Frederick W. Obar was careful to note that his decision to give official recognition to Students for Gay Awareness "does not imply anything beyond compliance with the minimum requirements" of the law. Given the persistence of official hostility toward the group, it obviously faces an uphill battle in achieving its main goals: educating the campus about homosexuality and providing a social outlet for gay students. It is the first gay-rights organization recognized on any University of Tennessee campus.

Meanwhile, in Austin, voters rejected an amendment to the city's Fair Housing Ordinance which would have made Texas's capital the first city in the nation to legalize housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The final tally was 36,239 to 20,997.

The referendum was backed by Austin Citizens for Decency, a conservative, anti-homosexual organization that was formed last August when the city council refused to pass the amendment itself. The group wanted property owners to have the right to exclude potential renters whose sexual preference they did not like.

Dr. Steven Hotze, chair of Citizens for Decency, said his group was "concerned about the moral climate of this city" and wanted to "keep Austin from becoming another San Francisco."

"This is not a purely homosexual issue," said Robb Sutherland, a spokesperson for Citizens for a United Austin, a coalition opposed to the amendment. "It concerns all of us. Everyone has a sexual preference. We don't believe in the legalized discrimination of one of people's most basic rights — housing."

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RESOURCES

Fight taxes and war

The War Resisters League has published two handbooks which should prove invaluable to peace activists in the '80s. The first is especially relevant as tax deadlines loom near: *The War Resisters Guide to Tax Resistance*. This 120-page book gives history and analysis of the tax-resistance movement in the U.S., plus detailed information on how to resist taxes, what to expect from the IRS and alternative "peace tax" funds.

The WRL *Organizer's Manual* is a must for folks who are doing just about any kind of organizing. Its 222 pages are packed with information and illustrations; there are six sections covering the politics of organizing, basic organizing techniques, working with varied constituencies, literature production, direct action techniques and the all-important "working with the establishment."

The *Organizer's Manual and Guide to Tax Resistance* cost \$6 each and are available from: War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette St, New York, NY 10012.

Turtle backs, mountain tops

It's not often that you come across a catalog that's also a learning experience, but that's exactly what Turtle Grandmother Books' catalog is.

The name Turtle Grandmother comes from Mohawk lore in which Sky Woman flew down from the heavens and landed on the back of a turtle, which grew to become North America. "Turtle reaffirms for us the meaning of our solid connectedness with the earth and our respect for the many cultures that form the bedrock of Turtle's back," says the introduction of this 26-page description of publications by women of color. It includes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, anthologies, oral histories, cookbooks and children's books. Some examples:

Daughters I Love You. A monograph on nonviolence by a Chickasaw poet.

Jewish Grandmothers. Oral histories of growing old in America.

Slaves of Slaves. Latin American women on feminist movement building.

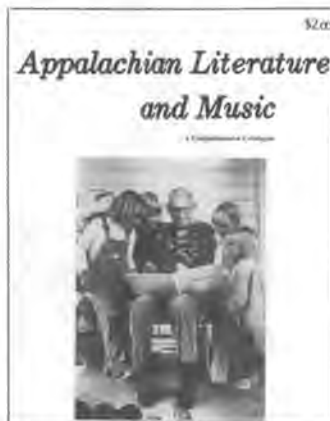
Hopi Cookery. Recipes centered on

the Three Sisters: corn, beans, squash.

When Megan Went Away. A story for children on lesbian relationships.

The Turtle Grandmother Books catalog costs \$2. It's worth it. Write to PO Box 33864, Detroit, MI 48232.

Another handsome and educational catalog comes from the Council of Southern Mountains. It's a comprehensive listing and description of *Appalachian Literature and Music*, with sec-



tions on culture, history, children, regional studies, literature and records — each introduced in the catalog with an insightful essay on another dimension of Appalachian life and lore. All 600 books and records are available through the council's mail-order and walk-in shop in Berea, Kentucky.

Order the new catalog (\$2.00) of *Appalachian Literature and Music* by writing the bookstore at 104 Center Street, Berea, KY 40403.

Dirty tricks revealed

If you have any doubts about the practical difference the Voting Rights Act has made in the South, just spend an hour reading some of the dozens of cases Laughlin McDonald, director of the ACLU's Southern Regional Office, has summarized in a new report. After reviewing the history of disfranchisement, provisions of the act and statistics on its applications, McDonald fleshes out the litany of ingenious trickery used by whites to thwart black political strength: run-off elections were initiated in Moultrie, Georgia, so a black with a plurality of votes could not defeat two whites with fewer votes; a school board in Lumberton,

North Carolina, annexed several areas of the county so whites would not be governed by the Indian and black majority; Lee County, South Carolina, used an all-white Masonic Lodge for a polling place; officials in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, refused to allow registration of voters on at least one Saturday a month as ordered by the courts. . . .

The 132-page report, *Voting Rights in the South*, provides conclusive evidence that the act "must be extended and its provisions strengthened." Request a copy from the ACLU, 52 Fairlie Street, NW, Atlanta, GA 30303.

Farmworkers' health

Two reports on health conditions faced by farmworkers in the South are available from legal services offices in Florida and North Carolina. "Danger in the Field: The Myth of Pesticide Safety" reveals that nearly half of the workers surveyed had been directly sprayed by poisonous chemicals, but that clinics and state government agencies were unwilling either to identify the cause of health problems as pesticide poisoning or to confirm the existence of illegal sprayings. For a copy, write: Florida Rural Legal Services, PO Box 1637, Wauchula, FL 33873.

The second report, "Hazards of the Harvest: A Report on Farmworkers' Health in North Carolina," analyzes the relation of pesticides, heat stress, infectious diseases and sanitary conditions to problems ranging from a high incidence of hookworm among Haitian migrant workers to the common occurrence of dizziness, nausea and other symptoms of poisoning among farmworkers handling tobacco.

The report also chastises hospitals in farming areas for not administering tests which would identify pesticide poisoning and criticizes the state agency charged with educating health professionals about pesticides for not conducting a single training session or workshop since 1977, while the agency responsible for supervising migrant labor camps has refused to set any standards for housing or field sanitary facilities. The report is available from: Farmworkers Legal Services, PO Box 398, Newton Grove, NC 28366.

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Latin America

Days and Nights of Love and War

Eduardo Galeano is a Uruguayan-born journalist, writer and political activist. He edited Crisis, an outstanding monthly journal of literature, poetry, art and politics published from 1973 to 1976. Days and Nights of Love and War is a journal/history/testimony/poem which spans more than two decades, weaving into itself the stories and images of the Latin American people from Guatemala and Cuba in the North to Chile in the South. These excerpts are taken from a much longer section of the book which appeared in NACLA Report on the Americas in September/October, 1981. The entire book will be published soon by Monthly Review Press. Judith Brister did the translation. The illustrations appeared in Crisis.

Today I discover that once a month, the day the magazine comes out, a group of men cross the Rio Uruguay to read it.

There are about 20 of them. The group leader is a professor of about 60 who has spent a long time in prison.

In the morning they leave Paysandu and cross over to Argentine soil. They all chip in and buy an issue of *Crisis* and then go to a cafe. One of them reads aloud, page by page. They all listen and discuss the material. The reading lasts all day. When it ends, they leave the magazine at the cafe as a present for the owner, and return to my country, where it is banned.

"Even if it were just for this," I think, "it would be worthwhile."



The telephone rings and I jump. I look at my watch. Nine-thirty in the evening. Should I answer or not? I answer. It's the José Rucci Com-

mandos from the Argentine Anti-communist Alliance.

"We're going to kill you, you bastards."

"The schedule for calling in threats, sir, is from six to eight," I answer.

I hang up and congratulate myself. I'm proud of myself. But I want to stand up and I can't: my legs are limp rags. I try to light a cigarette.

"The tree flies,"
says the poet,
"in the bird that leaves it."

One afternoon in Montevideo, in the summer of '60 or '61, I discovered I could no longer stand that guy who put on a tie and shiny jacket at the proper time and counted bills and gave out change and good mornings with clenched teeth. I shut the cash box and made out the balance sheet, signed it and told the bank manager, "I'm leaving."

And he said, "It's not time yet."

And I told him, "I'm going for good."

And I went to Buenos Aires for the first time.

I was 20 years old. I knew just a

few people in Buenos Aires, but I thought I could manage.

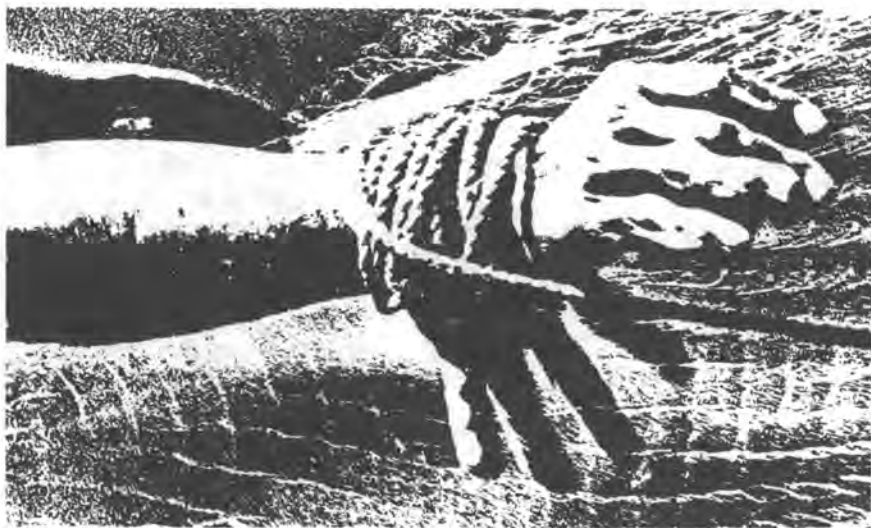
At first Babylonia treated me quite badly. I felt lonely and persecuted by the crowds and the heat and the lack of money.

I worked for a short time at the magazine *Che*, until one morning when I arrived at the editorial offices with Chiquita Constenla and Pablo Giussani and we found the building surrounded by police. It was during the days of the railroad strike. The workers were burning railroad cars and the magazine didn't think this was so bad. The soldiers broke down the door.

For a week I didn't see anyone. I was buried in a "hotel/rooming house," as they call it there, where they didn't request identification papers or ask questions. I rolled around in my bed day and night, a puddle of perspiration and sadness, kept awake by the yells and the doors slammed and the couples who groaned through the walls.

2

An image remained with me from that first period in Buenos Aires which I'm not sure was real or dreamed up some awful night: the crowds pressed together at a subway station, sticky air, a feeling of suffocation, and the subway wasn't coming. A half hour



Enrique Bostelman

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

passed, perhaps more, and the news got around that a girl had thrown herself onto the tracks at the station just before ours. At first there were silences, remarks in low, funeral-like voices. "Poor little thing, poor little thing," they said. But the train still didn't come and it was getting late for work and then people began stamping nervously and saying, "But why couldn't she have thrown herself across another train line? Why did it have to be just this one?"

I crossed the river and vowed never to return. But I returned, many times. And in early '73 Fico Vogelius placed me in charge of a magazine that was to be called *Crisis*.

3

In mid-'76 there was nothing to do but leave.

It wasn't easy. The city which I had hated in earlier days had treated me to dangers, jubilation, loves. How many people are shaded by the magnolias of Plaza Francia? What multitudes filled my mind when I passed the "Ramos," the "Ciervo" or the "Bachin?"

In the "Ramos" at midday, Manolo would toss peanuts onto the wood floors. Some pigeon would leave the sunlight on the sidewalk and come in to eat. With Manolo, the waiter of the "Ramos," we would watch the people pass by on the avenue.

"How are you doing?"

"The same as the country."

"Surviving?"

"Who, me?"

"The country, I mean."

"Lying, poor thing."

4

On the eve of our departure, Helena and I ate with Achaval and Carlitos Dominguez. Acha raised his glass of wine and toasted.

"To better times," he said. "We've seen the worst."

Achaval lived far away, more than an hour from Buenos Aires. He didn't want to stay out late in the city because it was sad riding the trains alone at daybreak.

Every day at nine in the morning Acha got on the train to go to work. He always got on the same car and rode in the same seat.

In front of him rode a woman.

Every day, at 9:25, that woman would get off for a minute at a station — always the same one — where a man stood waiting — always in the same place. The woman and the man would embrace and kiss until the whistle blew. Then she would break away and return to the train.

That woman sat in front of him, but Acha never heard her voice.

One morning, she didn't come and, at 9:25, Acha saw, through the window, the man waiting on the platform. She never came again. After a week, the man disappeared as well.

Street War, Soul War

How many times have I been a dictator? How many times an inquisitor, a censor, a jailer? How many times have I forbidden those I most loved freedom and speech? How many people have I felt I owned? How many people have I sentenced because they committed the crime of not being me? Is it not more repugnant to hold

people as private property than things? How many people have I used, I who thought myself so marginal to the consumer society? Have I not desired or celebrated, secretly, the defeat of others, I who aloud claimed no interest in success? Who fails to reproduce, within himself, the world that makes him? Who is free of confusing his brother with a rival and the woman he loves with his own shadow?

The System

Extermination plan: destroy the grass, pull up every last little living thing by the roots, sprinkle the earth with salt. Afterwards, kill all memory of the grass. To colonize consciences, suppress them; to suppress them, empty them of the past. Wipe out all testimony to the fact that in this land there ever existed anything other than silence, jails and tombs.

It is forbidden to remember.

Prisoners are organized into work gangs. At night they are forced to



whitewash the phrases of protest that in other times covered the walls of the city.

The steady pelting of rain on the walls begins to dissolve the white paint. And little by little the stubborn words reappear.

Street War, Soul War

I pursue the enemy voice that has ordered me to be sad. At times I feel that joy is a crime of high treason, and I am guilty of the privilege of being alive and free.

Then it helps me to remember what chief Huillca said in Peru, speaking before the ruins. "They came here. They even smashed the rocks. They wanted to make us disappear. But they have not been able to, because we are alive, and that is the main thing." And I think that Huillca was right. To be alive: a small victory. To be alive, that is: to be capable of joy, despite the goodbyes and the crimes, so that exile will be a testimony to another possible country.

The task ahead — building our country — cannot be accomplished with bricks of shit. Will we be of any use if, when we return, we are broken?

Joy takes more courage than grief. In the end, we are accustomed to grief. □

California

POWER fights for better schools

Frustrated with the miseducation of their children, 75 parents and supporters in Richmond, California, organized the first chapter of POWER — People Organized to Win Educational Rights. Capping a two-month organizing campaign, POWER held a Speak Out on the public schools which attracted supporters Gus Newport, Mayor of Berkeley; Wilson Riles, Jr, Oakland council member; Charles Benson, Professor of Education at the University of California, Berkeley; Lovie McIntosh, community activist; Irene Casanova, Director of Familias Unidas; and Amy Barton, director of the Oakland-based Applied Research Center.

In Richmond, the racial composition of the school district has changed in the last few years from 80 percent white to 60 percent black, Latino and Asian. According to POWER leader Gwen Cowans, "The unification of Richmond schools with those of the surrounding middle-class, largely white suburban schools was engineered in 1967 so that suburbs could 'share' the tax base provided by the large Standard Oil plant which dominates the Richmond economy." Since that time, many residents feel the services, maintenance of facilities and overall quality of education in city schools have steadily declined.

In the mid-1970s, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that the Richmond United School District (RUSD) was in the top one percent of over 2,800 school districts studied for suspending a disproportionate percentage of black students. Statistics provided by the school administration for 1975-80 demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between the percentage of minority students in a RUSD school and low scores on standardized reading and math tests.

Chicano organizer Irene Casanova of Familias Unidas criticized RUSD for suspending a disproportionate number of Raza students and pointed out that the net result is a 40-percent dropout rate. "Our kids are being colonized," she said. "The barrios and ghettos are part of the underdeveloped Third World."

Another mother, Dessie Smith, described a conversation with her young son: "My son said to me at one time, 'You always taught us to respect others. Shouldn't children get respect?' I said, 'Of course,' and he replied, 'Well, I don't get any respect. I just get insulted by the teachers.'"

Richmond parents and students have organized POWER to resist both the blatant racism of the RUSD and the more subtle academic crippling of Third World students through tracking and testing. For further information, contact: POWER, 3911 Cutting Blvd., Richmond, CA 94804 (415)236-5469.

This article was reprinted from Third Force, the newsletter of the Center for Third World Organizing, 1459 Columbia Rd NW, Washington, DC 20009.

drawing courtesy National Survival Institute, Toronto, Canada



An informal meeting of students at the International Peace Research Association in June, 1981, resulted in the formation of an international network of students concerned with promoting communication and cooperation among students on a global level. The group, the International

Students Peace Network, will work for disarmament, human rights, economic justice and ecological balance. The network has members in seven countries, and maintains communications through a bi-monthly newsletter. Students of all ages are invited to contact: International Student Peace Network, PO Box 282, Kingston, NJ 08528.

FACING SOUTH

What the Wright Brothers Never Knew

RICHLANDS, NC — In the early 1900s, when the airplane took the world by surprise, there were many people living in rural areas who had not heard of its invention or flights. The news traveled very slow in these areas. I will tell some of the stories I heard my father and mother tell about the day the first airplane came over the place where they lived, which was the village of Richlands near the New River in eastern North Carolina.

It began one clear morning just after the men folk had gone into the field to begin the day's work. All of a sudden the whole countryside was filled with this strange sound. The people began to whisper together — when there was more than one person in a place — as to what the sound might be. When one was alone, he or she was trying to get where there were others. People were running from the noise, and no matter which way they ran, the sound got closer. My own mother said that she and three or four small children were left alone because they could not run fast enough to keep up with the neighbors. All she could do was pray.

One story was told about a lady that lived two or three houses down from my dad's house. She too had got caught alone as had my mother that morning. As the plane came into her view, she convinced herself that it was God coming for her. She would hide her sons under the doorstep one minute and take them out the next. The whole time she was talking to this strange-looking thing which she believed to be her redeemer. She would say, "Yes, Lord, I have obeyed you, you know I have." And then, "Lord, you said you were coming like a thief in the night, but here you come in the daytime!"

This went on until the airplane was out of sight, which was a pretty good while because of the slow speed of the airplane. Then she couldn't understand why she had been left behind. There were cases like this all through the countryside, which on that day was no laughing matter, as you can imagine if you had been in their shoes.

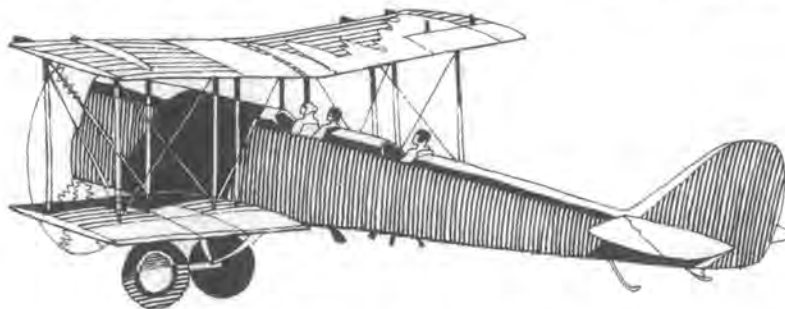


Illustration by Frank Holyfield

But at least most cases included lots and lots of prayer.

One more case that stands out in my mind was the one about the man who had a nice team of mules. He had started work earlier and now he was beginning to hear this funny sound, which sounded something like a bumblebee, but was unbearably louder. The mules began to prick their ears and show signs of uneasiness. It got louder and louder. Finally he stopped his team and began to look. He saw a strange object coming, and as he watched it grew larger and larger. He tried to be brave, and began to pray the best he knew. Nothing seemed to slow this terrible thing down. Finally he made up his mind that it was God and this was to be the day of judgment on the world. He told his team good-bye, and stripped them of their plowing gear and set them free.

He waited. He closed his eyes; the noise was so loud it pierced at his ear drum. He whispered his last prayers and goodbyes for his loved ones. Then he noticed the noise was subsiding. He opened his eyes and gazed in the direction of the sound. Lo and behold, the thing was passing him by. He was as puzzled as ever, and so weak from

fear that he could hardly stand on his feet. He watched in amazement as the plane went out of sight.

It was told that it took him all week to catch up with his team.

The Wright brothers probably never knew how many people they caused to repent that day. There were also countless number of people who had

upset stomachs and open bowel movements when the plane passed overhead. By the end of the day, the doctor's office was filled to running over with people who had shot nerves and people who had been hurt by frightened teams and runaways. Numbers of wagons and carts and buggies were torn all to pieces by runaway animals when the plane went by. A few people had heart failure and died.

So there was no fun in that day for anyone. Many years later it would be a cause for laughter, as the grandchildren of these people would sit and laugh at this day with them. I will never forget the nights our family sat around and listened to Dad and Mother tell of the old days, especially these stories about the first plane. □

— GARLAND W. BRINSON
freelance
Sneads Ferry, NC

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STREET JOURNALISM

“See, the principle of our leaflets always is to get the *real* news, that is suppressed, to the people in some kind of form.”



photos by Dee Gilbert © 1981

Elizabeth Cousins Rogers and her late husband, Walter “Rog” Rogers, began leafleting together 42 years ago. Elizabeth was a self-proclaimed “East Coast bourgeois,” Smith College graduate (class of 1913) and ex-Vogue editor. Rog was the son of Lithuanian peasant immigrants, a World War I veteran, hobo, member of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and ex-con (he spent a year in Alcatraz because he deserted the Army in 1919 rather than serve as a strikebreaker against miners). They met at Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas. Leftwing Commonwealth’s curriculum was oriented to the politics of labor and union organizing, and sponsorship

by a union was a criterion for admittance. Elizabeth was teaching a course in labor journalism when Rog arrived at Commonwealth “in a dirty leather jacket, with his pockets overflowing with labor pamphlets.” As she says, “When I married him, it was just like a flame to a piece of brush. He was the flame and I was the brush.”

When Commonwealth was forced to close in 1940, “I said to Rog, ‘Well, where are we going?’ and he said, ‘We’ll go to the toughest place we can find – the Deep South!’”

The Rogerses ended up in New Orleans and over the decades they’ve written leaflets on a myriad of issues – local, national and international –

meeting their goal of one a month. Their most sustained and visible effort was a six-year peace vigil in Jackson Square in the French Quarter. Each Sunday from 1970 to 1976 they handed out a new leaflet denouncing the Vietnam War.

Alone now, Elizabeth, “90 years old and still wearing blue jeans,” talks about those years and about the work of their lifetime, which they dubbed “street journalism.”

Journalism is a lot more than just putting out a paper. Most people think of journalism as daily newspapers. Well, the daily newspapers are not journalism, they are ad stuff. For years

and years and years, all their money has come from the ads. The nickel you pay wouldn't buy the print for one edition; we've known that for ages. That isn't journalism. Journalism is what the people get about their daily lives! So there had to be a substitute, and it just grew out of the picket lines, and then it grew out of the peace movement. We started calling our leafletting "street journalism" because it is in place of the commercial newspapers, which pervert and lie.

When we first started doing street journalism, in the '40s, we wrote leaflets on union issues — protesting union race discrimination was one of the first ones we did, I believe. See, Rog had a tremendous belief in the written word. He used to remember the Wobblies — Industrial Workers of the World — with whom he had become militant. He kept talking about the little five-cent pamphlets that they had. He said, "That is the way to reach the masses." And nobody much listened to him, because the unions got their own stuff out and it was mostly pretty dull and dry. And some of the things that were gotten out by militants in New York didn't fit the South at all, you see.

So we were trying to take what we knew about unions and progress and good political ideas, and put them on paper in a form that you could pass from hand to hand in the language that people speak here. You know, there are certain little New Orleans tricks that people don't realize they are using, but they love them, and if something comes to them in that medium, they'll think about it. You know, like "I carry my sister to the hospital" or "I been knowing you a long time." There's a hundred little things like that, instead of what is almost the jargon of the political writers. You know, they use words that just simply don't have any meaning at all here.

Well, we started writing and pasting up our own leaflets. We'd get items from foreign papers, we'd get them from the *Daily World*, we'd write a little piece of our own. And we always gave the credit to the place we got it from, no matter how far left it was. Because that's good journalism; if you're going to crib things and not tell, too, you're not enhancing the truth at all.

We had, say, \$60 or \$70 that we

could spend on printing the leaflets, and that's about what it costs to get a run of a hundred. We never had any big financial backlog, but Rog made a good union salary then, and he never spent one cent on himself. He never played pinball, he never went around for drinks with the fellows afterwards, and I just had to beg him to get a pair of new shoes.

We had one great big room on the front of our house. We had our big mimeographing machine in there, we had piles and piles of paper, we had a book lending library, and we had, really, a little factory here where we'd get out little booklets. And we'd lay them out from one end of the room to the other — that always pleased Rog. He'd say, "Well, we've got a belt-line now!"

You know, if two people can go on a march with picket signs or leaflets, it's far better than one that goes and smashes something. You've got to get attention, but if you can get attention in a way that you've *reasoned*, then you'll appeal to the reasoning people too. And then you're on the way to getting somewhere.

When asked when it was that she first began to oppose the Vietnam War, Elizabeth states flatly, "1918." I laughed, but she did not.

Well, the feeling about Vietnam began in World War I and went on with World War II — you've got old-timers here, you know! Well, it builds up and builds up and you've got a missile there that's just ready to pop off. World War I wasn't over until we were in World War II and World War II wasn't over until we began to fight with the Soviet Union.

It's not rational, it's not reasonable, to hate everybody because some people who are there do wrong. We are so paranoid, what we see when we look out is our *own* face. The minute we look across the Atlantic, we see our nasty selves looking back and we say, "That's the Russians!"

You see, my whole life lies right along the most awful behavior of the United States. When I was eight, in 1898, Dewey took Manila. We got Cuba, we got the Philippines. They made a great deal of this. My family went to the parade, the Dewey parade, and I couldn't go and I pulled up my grandmother's tulips. But not because of anything political, because I thought



WHO OWNS THE POSTOFFICE?

WALTER ROGERS' Civil Rights Complaint to UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL EDWARD LEVI

Filed July 22, 1975

Thommie Bramblitt

Songs for the Sidewalk
SOLIDARITY DAY
 September 19, 1981

SHOWDOWN - NEW ORLEANS

8

People of New Orleans, or you're not! People of the 9th Ward, or you're not!
 People of the 9th Ward, or you're not! People of the 9th Ward, or you're not!

People of New Orleans, or you're not! People of the 9th Ward, or you're not!
 People of the 9th Ward, or you're not! People of the 9th Ward, or you're not!

Widow! we had no money to pay the mortgage!
 We don't want no pay, no pay!
 We don't want no pay, no pay!

I paid all my life on my husband's
 the best I could get for my pay!
 Now before I have paid off the mortgage
 Here's Urban Renewal to say!
 Move out, move out, we need your home for an apartment!
 Move out, move out, find some other place you can stay!

They said they would help us relocate
 as tenants, which made us feel sad,
 It's true our old home was no place,
 but the new place is three times as bad!
 Move out, move out, we'll remodel your home 'ere a richer day!
 Move out, move out, find some other place you can stay!

URBAN REMOVAL (FOLLOWING BETSY HURRICANE FLOOD 1965)

(Has he sung to "Give Me a Bowl of Soup" or "My Bonnie Live Over the Ocean")

© Copyright 1981 Elizabeth Cousins Rogers

At left and top right: Several of the pamphlets put out by Elizabeth Cousins Rogers and Walter Rogers; above: "Songs for the Sidewalk," a collection of trade union, community and peace songs written by

Elizabeth Cousins Rogers. It was produced for Solidarity Day in Washington, DC, September 18, 1981. To obtain a copy, send \$3.63 to: Elizabeth Cousins Rogers, PO Box 51294, New Orleans, LA 70151.

that parade was something I wanted to go to. It was something I should have been glad to stay away from! It was the beginning of our aggression.

So we were leery about the entrance to Vietnam in the first place. We've seen aggression too much not to know that this was an aggressive country in an aggressive mood. They'd managed to get most of the people into that mood and it's still flaming now. Now we're in a position where there isn't a single struggling revolution anywhere in the world that we aren't actually opposing by giving supplies to the tyrants. And thumbing ourselves as if we were some sort of angels for doing it!

One of the things that really helped us in the work on Vietnam was an organization called Another Mother for Peace. They put out a folder which had a map of that whole peninsula of Southeast Asia, and they had the different companies which had bought claims in the oil deposits around there. That's what that war was. The Vietnam War was fought by the authorities for the grabbing of the monies, as well as the repression of Communism. I'm saying that it was fought, as all wars have been, for the control of the resources. Ideology doesn't bother the people in this country who rule it. What they're thinking about is minerals and products and being able to overcharge for what they sell. They're not fighting for principles, they bring the principles up and get the people excited about the principles — what they're after is loot!

In 1969 there were busloads from Loyola and Tulane that went to Washington, and we went along with them. It really was a thing! We enjoyed every minute of it. There was a tremendous outpouring against the war, and Washington was filled from one end to the other.

We got gassed while we were in Washington, too. But it was an experience that everybody should go through; as long as people are going to be gassed for doing the right thing, it's a good thing to spread it around, over the older people and everybody so they can see from their own experience that tear gas is not something you just shrug off. You feel as if you're going to die, you can't breathe, can't breathe, eyes tearing all over. And there's nothing you can do about it — nothing, nothing.



When asked when she first began to oppose the Vietnam War, Rogers answered, "1918."

After the march on Washington, the university students began holding weekly peace vigils in Jackson Square. We went down and joined them, and then after awhile, the students all dropped out. All dropped out but one, who came every Sunday and, ah, we sort of thought he was keeping an eye on us. Well, when we took it over, we went into that square by that circular fountain in front of the St. Louis Cathedral, just inside the gates, and we hung our big signs on the fence and we had a lot of leaflets to put out.

A cop came round once — just a big — what Rog used to call a "Dis 'n Dat Cop." He asked us, he said, "Do you have a permit to do this?" and Rog up and says, "Yes, indeed — the First Amendment to the United States Constitution!" And the cop kind of reddened and walked off. Never bothered us again.

We had the leaflets in big buckets we'd make out of a box, because the leaflets we didn't give out one week, we'd use the next week. So we got about five different kinds of leaflets at a time and we'd temper them according to what the person looked like.

Sometimes people would say, "I don't want that shit." You get a lot of negatives. But then you just laugh and go on.

I would always station myself near a trash can, and they'd drop them in the trash and I'd get them out. Sometimes I'd get them out four or five times. "Now that's a good leaflet," I'd say, "went to four people!"

Now the best bets were the tourist buses, because they'd come from all over the United States. If the tour leader sees you, you can't get anywhere. But you let that tour leader go by, and if the first one grabs it, they'll all take it! And they stuff it away, and on the bus they'll read it and discuss it. And that's what we want. They'll argue and fuss. No matter what they say, they're bringing out what they think of it and that's what you want. It's the fact that you can get it to them when they're ready and relaxed and with others that they can match their opinions against, that's where the thing germinates, like scratching a match.

I also asked Elizabeth to describe her feeling about how the war and her work in it ended.

I don't think that war has ever ended. They are still picking on Cambodia, they are still harassing the Vietnamese — look at all the mess they made about the refugees. It was a "crawl out" in Vietnam.

It was those young men who refused to fight that ended the war. It was mutiny, it was individual mutinies piled up by the hundreds, really thousands.

The ones that wouldn't fight — those were the heroes of that war. That was the victory. And that was the first sign in a long time that the American people were becoming conscious of their own power. And they didn't do it as consciousness of power, they did it in answer to their individual consciences.

The power comes from the people, and when you get a person sufficiently oppressed, they're going to rise. It's just like you put a kettle on the fire and put an airtight cover on it and flame underneath — after awhile it's going to explode, and it's going to have an effect.

Well so, that's what we did during the Vietnam War, our leaflets. They were very successful. We got rid of all of them, always kept about 25 in a file. Every once in awhile I try to sit down to organize that file, but I've got involved with local work and daily work, which is the most important because we're hanging by a thread now. Anyone that you can influence or anything that you can do to throw a little light on the situation, you must do *now*, because if we don't do it now we may not *be* here! □

*Young folks, the gains we've made
we pass to you;
As old folks, we've done the best
that we could do.
There are battles ahead . . . to win!
Just remember, as you begin
Working people are all one kin!*

— Elizabeth Cousins Rogers

Dee Gilbert is a New Orleans free-lance writer and coordinator of the New Orleans Women's Oral History Project.



and Pocketbooks Neighborhoods

by Steve Schewel

Perhaps 50 of us strained to hear the words

coming from the radio. Tom's opponent's acceptance speech. She looked forward to being back on the job the next morning. She appreciated the support of the voters who had put her back on the council. She hoped they'd be seeing a lot of Tom Campbell downtown in the future. He'd run a good race.

Many of us had spent several exhausting months working on Tom Campbell's city council campaign and coordinating our efforts with those of the other progressive candidates. Some of us were too dazed from the last hours of the campaign to feel anything. Some shushed children so we could hear the last gracious lines of a gracious speech. Some sipped beer in

silence. The 1979 city elections had brought on a profound collective depression we were only just throwing off; now it appeared that the forces of racial division had triumphed in Durham once again.

Then the disc jockey said it: a mistake. A 1,000-vote mistake. In another 10 minutes, the 50 defeated campaigners had mushroomed into 100 raucous partiers. Soon 150 ecstatic leafletters, pollworkers, phone-callers, contributors and friends were exploding into our election-night gathering place above a local beer hall. The final precinct totals buzzed from the radio underneath the din of victory — rare, cherished, clean, sweet victory.

Up the stairs and into the midst of our mostly young white crowd flew our jubilant allies from the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People (known to most as the Durham

Committee). Then our new mayor-elect, Charles Markham, rose to speak, then Tom, then our other candidates, black and white. Those of us with any energy left roared approval. Those too tired just smiled, tried to clap, felt disbelief.

We had won an election. We had put in a good candidate who could speak for the progressive community, who lived among us, who shared our politics. With him we swept into office, against all predictions, a biracial coalition of city council members.

Durham, North Carolina, is in significant ways typical of many of the South's older cities. Downtown Durham — once thriving — has gradually decayed along with the nearby remnants of James B. Duke's tobacco empire that long ago put the city on the international map as the home of "Bull Durham." The city's economic nexus has shifted to the enormous Duke University and Hospital complex employing over 10,000 people. Ten miles down the interstate to the southeast, the Research Triangle Park employs thousands of researchers in government and private think-tanks and the high-tech laboratories of industries like IBM, Hercules and

Steve Schewel is a member of the People's Alliance and has been active in Durham politics for many years.

Burroughs Wellcome. This is Durham County's real boom town, the place where industry locates while the tax base of the city of Durham shrinks.

In the first half of this century an alternative economy grew up in Durham's black community centered on several financial institutions, including Mechanics and Farmers Bank and North Carolina Mutual, the world's largest black-owned insurance company. Durham is ringed with white suburbs just outside the city school district; the city itself is now 47 percent black (35 percent of the registered voters). The black community has long had a powerful political organization, but only recently has it had numerous allies among the city's white voters.

Until 1977, the 13-member Durham city council was almost exclusively composed of white men from the city's white business establishment with two or three blacks and women. This council held great power over the lives of Durham's citizens, and it wielded that power for the benefit of commercial developers. The city poured millions of urban renewal dollars into the razing of black neighborhoods and the displacement of 100 small black-owned businesses in the city's historic Hayti section. The council allocated federal and city tax dollars in a disastrous attempt to revitalize a dying downtown retail district through cosmetic changes and parking garage construction. At the same time, ironically, the city and state slammed through the first legs of the East-West Expressway, displacing thousands of black residents who formerly shopped downtown and forcing them into housing projects far from downtown stores.

In the early '70s, Durham had over 60 miles of unpaved roads in residential areas, near the top of the national list for a city its size. Recreation programs were minimal. Slightly under half of the city's housing was rental property, much of it deteriorating under lax city housing code enforcement. Despite the obvious needs of the city's neighborhoods, the city council continued to concentrate its community development spending on revving up commercial development. Even the more affluent in-town neighborhoods felt the sting of strip commercial zoning along their borders.

The city council elections of 1977, however, unexpectedly turned local

politics inside-out. In that year progressive candidates ran for six council seats and the mayor's office. White neighborhood organizations, fed up with suburban development interests and the assault on in-town neighborhoods, joined with the highly organized black voters of the Durham Committee to elect five new council members, creating a slim progressive majority of seven on the council. The new council majority started slowly, but before too long it had passed the city's first affirmative action hiring program. Then came housing code enforcement with teeth in it, the paving of dirt roads in neighborhoods, the diversion of federal funds from public works boondoggles to neighborhood reconstruction and attempts to improve the city's public transportation service furnished under an electricity franchise agreement with Duke Power Company.

The city's business establishment looked on with disapproval, but not until February 12, 1979, did that disapproval turn to shock and that shock to calculated, frenetic action. On that night, after months of pressure from dozens of community groups, the city council majority of four blacks and three whites won a 7-to-5 vote to halt further construction of the East-West Expressway and to provide one million dollars in Community Development funds to the Crest Street community directly threatened by those construction plans. This victory clearly pitted the developers' interests against those of the city's neighborhoods and its progressive community.

The East-West Expressway has been the pet project of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce and the North Carolina Department of Transportation for two decades. At each step of its construction, black neighborhood groups in its way have risen up in angry protest before finding themselves removed to federal housing projects. But the resistance of the Crest Street community has taken on a different dimension.

Crest Street is a community of 200 homes huddled around a small, proud brick church called New Bethel. It sits at the end of the expressway shotgun, out the back door of the mammoth Duke University Medical

Center complex where most of the adults in the neighborhood walk to work. Crest Street's residents are black. They are mostly low-income working people, many of whom cultivate gardens in vacant lots near their homes to provide a portion of their food. Over 80 percent of their homes are rented, and many of them are in poor exterior condition. For 20 years the city neglected even the most basic road repairs in Crest Street and denied the community a park. After all, wouldn't these just be wasted improvements when the expressway came through? Landlords, encouraged by the city's laxity in housing code enforcement, took the same attitude.

Crest Street is an unusually cohesive community; many of its residents were born there. The church is not only the spiritual center of Crest Street, but a civic and educational center as well, the base for clean-up campaigns and afternoon tutoring sessions. For the last 10 years Crest Street residents have been fighting to keep the expressway from taking their church, which sits on the proposed site of an enormous cloverleaf. Betty Johnson, an officer of the Crest Street Community Council, once told the city council, "Like the song says, folks: we shall not be moved. And we mean it."

In early 1978, immediately after the new city council's progressive majority began flexing its muscles, the Crest Street community got some new allies. The Durham chapter of the North Carolina People's Alliance (PA) consists mostly of young, white college-educated people who knew that the expressway would hurt more than one small neighborhood. In their efforts to focus public attention on this issue, PA members organized around city-wide concerns about the road: potential air and noise pollution damage to several city neighborhoods; the \$30 million cost for two miles of pavement; the possible creation of a virtual interstate highway through downtown Durham; the tendency of expressways to shrink city tax bases as they augment suburban sprawl; and the availability of cheaper public and paratransit alternatives (carpooling, vanpooling, bicycles, etc.).

Crest Street residents and PA members worked closely together, jamming state and city hearing rooms, lobbying city council members, pub-

lishing studies of alternatives to the expressway, holding press conferences, marches, fundraisers and petition drives. Other consumer, religious, environmental and neighborhood groups joined them to create the Coalition for Expressway Alternatives, which soon included the liberals in the Durham Voters Alliance and the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People. By February 12, 1979, that coalition's strength had come to bear full-force on the city council, and, in a chamber packed with hundreds of anxious citizens, the council voted that night to stop the expressway.

The next six months — leading up to the November, 1979, city council elections — were filled with intense local politicking of a sort Durham hadn't seen in recent times. The two local dailies (owned by the same company) and the Chamber of Commerce screamed for a council that would make a new decision on the expressway. The newspapers effectively portrayed the expressway issue as one of progress versus the obstructiveness of a few young white transients and a small, run-down black neighborhood which would do itself a favor to accept public housing. Business interests fielded a slate of seven white male candidates under the aegis of Voters for Durham's Future and bankrolled them heavily.

On the other side, the biracial coalition campaigned hard, fielding six candidates representing several neighborhood constituencies. On election day 18,000 voters showed up at the polls — 3,000 more than in 1977. The Voters for Durham's Future called its constituents out to vote through a phone bank operating out of several local banks and real estate offices. Their representatives also distributed sample ballots at the polls showing the business interests' all-white slate. The results reflected the successful efforts of the expressway proponents to fuel the fires of racial division. All seven Voters for Durham's Future candidates won fairly narrow victories. The biracial slate got 95 percent of



Tom Campbell on the campaign trail

the black votes cast but only one in every five white votes. The newspapers had successfully made the expressway a symbolic black/white issue submerging all other issues and dividing the city along racial lines. There were more whites than blacks voting in Durham, and a pro-expressway, pro-big-business majority once more reigned at City Hall. Five minutes after the new majority members were installed, they voted to get the road rolling again.

So much effort spent. Six solid progressive candidates in the field; six candidates defeated. The biracial slate was outspent by 3-to-1. That was 1979. Many of us believed that 1981 could be different if a candidate stepped forth from Durham's growing community of young white progressives to help convince more white voters to support a biracial slate representing neighborhood interests. The Durham Committee was already doing a fine job getting out black voters; now it was time for progressive white organizers to take a similar role, so that pro-

gressive candidates from both races might have a chance to win. Clearly the big developers also saw the '81 elections as crucial and clearly they would outspend us again. This meant we needed at least one candidate who could motivate lots of volunteers to work the streets, particularly of white neighborhoods, for a progressive biracial slate.

Shortly before the filing deadline, Tom Campbell declared his candidacy for the seat held by conservative council incumbent Judy Harward. Campbell, 33, is co-manager of the Regulator Bookshop, an intellectual and cultural center for Durham's artistic and progressive political community in Durham's reviving Ninth Street shopping area. A former editor of the *Duke Chronicle* during the early '70s, Campbell holds a masters degree in Environmental Management. He was, in short, just the candidate we needed — he had founded a successful small business, held the proper academic credentials to attract the liberal voters clustered around Duke University, and could inspire the loyalty of Durham's young political

activists who had thrown themselves so forcefully into the expressway battle and the 1979 city elections. Furthermore, Campbell wanted to run an issue-oriented campaign that would appeal to people of low and moderate incomes across racial lines. Julia Borbely-Brown, president of the Durham Voters Alliance, said, "It's great to have someone to work for that you can trust on the issues," and many other Durham political activists, who had known and worked with Tom for years, shared her feelings.

The biracial slate included other popular and effective council candidates as well. Four are black. Maceo Sloan is a young lawyer from a family long prominent in Durham's black community. Chester Jenkins is a telephone company employee active in the precinct organization of the Durham Committee. Johnny "Red" Williams, the only progressive to lose in November, is an energetic young state government accountant. Ralph Hunt, a two-term incumbent, ran with token opposition.

Two other progressive whites ran as well. Sylvia Kerchoff is a teacher and League of Women Voters activist. At the top of our ticket was the mayoral candidate, Charles Markham, defeated by one percent of the vote for a council seat in 1979 after a bitter campaign. Markham is a law professor and a former Assistant Secretary of HUD. From an old Durham family, he lives in the house where he was born. He campaigned vigorously, but it was the Campbell campaign which catalyzed the work of Durham's white progressives for the biracial slate.

Campbell's campaign took enormous energy from hundreds of people over two months. It took lots of money. It required thousands of words of ad copy, thousands of phone calls, thousands of brochures (handed out in door-to-door canvassing) and hundreds of posters. Every local civic organization from the League of Women Voters to the National Council of

Senior Citizens had candidate nights for Tom to attend, questions or candidate interviews to be completed. The details of the campaign defy brief description, but some vignettes can help tell the story.

In the midst of the campaign



The "family" photo: Tom Campbell, Marci Kramish, and their son Ewan.

we had the gaffe. Reporter Bill Gilkeson of the *Durham Morning Herald* called Tom one evening at home and began asking him questions. What was his educational background? His connection to various local civic and political organizations? His marital status? Tom handled the questions calmly and reported the conversation to us later with only slight trepidation: Gilkeson had asked him about his local church affiliation, and he had said that he had none. How would the newspaper play it? Some of us believed that Gilkeson would simply omit any mention of Tom's church affiliation. Instead, smack on the front page of the local section of the *Herald* appeared a comparison of

some personal data about Tom Campbell and Judy Harward. As for Tom, Gilkeson wrote, "Church Affiliation: None." None! What would the city's church-goers make of this contrast? Although Tom is a person of religious principles, and made this point in subsequent forums, it was too late.

Canvassing door-to-door in her neighborhood, Campbell campaign worker Sharon Whitmore had an encounter that illustrated to us the potential extent of the damage done. Whitmore gave her pitch about Tom to an elderly woman who then asked if he was a Democrat. Whitmore said yes, and the woman asked a second question: "Well, I'm a Methodist Democrat. Is he a Methodist Democrat?"

Judy Harward attempted to capitalize on just this kind of sentiment and the *Herald* report by publishing enormous ads in the newspapers comparing her own local church participation to Tom's "none." She continued in that vein, attempting to portray Tom as a newcomer (of 15 years!) to Durham and as a dabbler in civic affairs, especially when compared to her Durham-born virtues. Harward's ads mentioned nary an issue, depicting her rather in strictly personal terms designed to appeal to those voters looking for traditional conservative traits in

the Moral Majority style: hard worker, lifelong local resident, church-goer, family person.

On the day before the election Tom ran a large newspaper ad to try to counteract Harward's attempts to portray him as the villain in a family morality play. Amidst quotes from business associates and friends about Tom's contributions to the life of the city appeared a large photograph of Tom and his wife Marci Kramish holding their two-year-old son, Ewan. The church and family problem was, we hoped, at least partially defused. Of course we weren't sure until the returns were in.

The campaign also experienced a few internal battles on the issues. Some we all agreed upon, and Tom hammered these home with great effectiveness in personal appearances, leaflets and newspaper advertisements. These were the pocketbook and neighborhood issues which the People's

Alliance and other groups had been advocating at City Hall for the past two years, issues with specific appeal to low- and moderate-income voters. One of Tom's ads consisted of "straight talk" on neighborhoods, calling for "strong" housing code enforcement, "strict zoning standards to block commercial intrusion into residential areas" and "aggressive support of neighborhood self-renewal programs" such as Durham's Neighborhood Housing Services program. In his "straight talk" on pocketbook issues he called for formal city intervention against Duke Power's rate hikes and equalization of water and sewer rates to end small-user subsidies of the system. These issues were the easy ones for all of us working on the campaign — they were basic to the kinds of neighborhood and economic justice politics we practiced and were also issues on which we felt most voters agreed with us in opposition to current city policy. Tom was the only council candidate to speak in specific detail on these issues; he attempted (successfully) to raise the campaign above the level of a personality contest.

Then there were the tough ones; and the toughest of all was crime. Political polls repeatedly cite crime as the most pressing concern of many urban people. Elderly people, especially, often see crime as a severe impingement on their freedom of movement and sense of security in their homes. People want crime stopped. Yet for many of us in the campaign the daily cries reported in the media for tougher law enforce-

ment and longer prison terms promised false solutions to crime. We know that crime is largely an indirect product of poverty, discrimination and social dislocation, and also that longer prison terms will not stop crime or address its causes. But should we — as progressives so often do — leave the

newspaper ad offered "straight talk" on crime. Some of his agenda emphasized Neighborhood Watch programs, community-strengthening crime deterrents we could all support. Other items were more difficult for some of us to swallow — the "more cops on the beat" part of his program. Generally,

Paid Political Advertisement

Straight talk from Tom Campbell on Neighborhoods

Durham's residential neighborhoods are the backbone of the city. From Hope Valley to Bragtown, from Hillandale to Joyland, not just the tax base, but also the city's quality of life depends on the quality of our neighborhoods.

The protection and improvement of neighborhoods should be a *first* priority of city government. That means protection from blight, crime, commercial intrusions and anything else which threatens them and their residents.

Too often, the City has taken existing neighborhoods for granted in pursuit of new development or promoting commercial expansion. Planning and zoning standards are regularly ignored, the housing code is poorly enforced, and neighborhood renewal programs neglected.

Therefore I support:

- Strong enforcement of housing codes to keep neglected property from causing neighborhood decline.
- Strict zoning standards to block commercial intrusion into residential areas.
- Increased emphasis on the Neighborhood Watch Program and the Public Safety Crime Prevention Program.
- A city ordinance to protect elderly renters from being unfairly evicted in condominium conversions.
- Aggressive support of neighborhood self-renewal programs, such as in Old North Durham and the West End.



VOTE

TOM CAMPBELL

Paid for by Tom Campbell for Council Committee

FOR CITY COUNCIL

serious issue of crime to the law-and-order conservatives?

After some soul-searching debates among ourselves, and discussions with several Durham public safety officers, we reached a compromise. Tom's

however, Tom played down the crime issue throughout the campaign. The Campbell campaign does not offer a model of how a progressive candidate should deal with the crime problem, but in Durham we at least

began to give it some serious thought.

The solid organization of Tom's hardworking opponent and the difficulty of issues like crime were not nearly as worrisome as the possibility that the newspapers would clobber Tom. The two intensely conservative dailies are the only regular means of local political information for much of the electorate. In 1979 they did a masterful hatchet job on the anti-expressway candidates, labeling all expressway opponents as enemies of Durham's future. In the lead article on the morning of election day in 1979, the *Herald* branded Carolina Action, an established statewide neighborhood organization supporting the biracial coalition, as a "radical" group. Likewise, the papers have historically delighted in emphasizing the endorsements of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, noting the power of the "bloc" vote. We feared this kind of treatment again in 1981.

We tried to maneuver skillfully along a media tightrope, and fate offered us some unforeseen assistance. On the morning after the local primary in early October, the *Herald* reported the results with its usual emphasis on the heavy weight of the Durham Committee's endorsements (all its candidates came through the primary with ease). But coverage of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's assassination dominated the headlines of that edition, overshadowing the local election news. Consequently the white electorate was less aware of the committee's endorsements than in 1979, and the potential for white backlash in the general election was reduced.

The newspapers were not so kind when it came to other sensitive subjects. A reporter for Durham's afternoon *Sun* got wind of what he called in print "some rather embarrassing rumors" about Tom, checked them out himself and found them to be untrue — but published them anyway, in a lead story just five days before the election. One rumor insinuated that Tom had not paid his taxes in his former Orange County residence; another involved what the reporter described as "some finger pointing at Campbell as being connected with the Communist Worker's Party [CWP]." As the reporter himself discovered, and stated in the article, Tom's tax record was impeccable and he had no

connection with the CWP. Yet the rumor mill had succeeded where publication of the facts could not. By printing these rumors about Tom, the *Sun* had given them unwarranted credence. We were furious, but could do little except hope that the last-minute stories would not hurt Tom too badly. Their side owned the media.

At noon on election day, November 3, 1981, I drove up to the Friends Meeting House, the polling place for Precinct Five, which included the Crest Street Community as well as many young recent Duke graduates. Mildred Booth, a resident of Crest Street, sat outside the poll in a folding chair as she had sat year-in and year-out on election day. She was passing out the sample ballots of the Durham Committee (identical to our slate) to her friends and neighbors as they came to the polls. She left briefly in the middle of the day for home kidney dialysis, but then this mother of several grown children was back with a carload of voters who needed transportation. Mildred Booth knew how to work her neighborhood. She had cajoled the young to register; she asked the pastor at New Bethel to announce the election in his Sunday sermon; she reminded the forgetful to vote; and she remained for long hours at her polling place — sample ballots in her hand, a white carnation in her lapel, dignity in her bearing, determination and a looming expressway on her mind.

Elisa Wolper was at the Friends Meeting House too, working with Mildred Booth. Wolper, 24, is a member of the People's Alliance and has been active in the organization since she came to North Carolina to work after graduating from college in Massachusetts in 1979. Like many PA members, she has strong organizing skills. She has spoken at North Carolina Utilities Commission hearings, organized petition drives door-to-door on environmental issues and raised funds at the grassroots level. During the campaign she put that experience to work for Tom Campbell and the rest of the biracial coalition, organizing among the young white voters in Precinct Five, many of whom had registered to vote in the 1980 presidential election but knew little of local politics. Wolper

and Mildred Booth cooperated closely during the '81 council campaign, sharing literature and working jointly on voter turnout in Crest Street. At Precinct Five the biracial coalition had real meaning.

Another poll worker was at the Friends Meeting House that noon hour, working on behalf of the conservative slate offered by the Voters for Durham's Future. He asked me in a joking undertone — out of earshot of Mildred Booth — if Tom was paying the Durham Committee a thousand dollars for election day "fried chicken and busdrivers" to get blacks to the polls. That question made victory all the sweeter.

Today the expressway still threatens Crest Street. The Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce is preparing a whirlwind campaign to support city subsidies of a grandiose downtown convention center, and a slim majority still exists on the city council in support of that kind of public spending. But now there is hope in Durham for something better. Local electoral campaigns on the part of progressives in Durham grow naturally from issue organizing; electoral coalitions evolve from issue coalitions. Tom's campaign — issue-oriented and fueled by hundreds of dedicated volunteers — served as the key to attracting the white votes necessary to complement the Durham Committee's strong organizing.

As the results came in on election night, 1981, it became clear that Tom Campbell and the other progressive candidates had done well in many white working-class precincts where we had long been laying the groundwork for neighborhood and pocket-book issue appeals. That fact made the victory of our slate doubly sweet. It meant that we might now win some long-sought victories in city policy. And it meant that in Durham, North Carolina, a Southern city, black and white progressive candidates could defeat a strong conservative business slate through attracting votes across racial lines. The years ahead will tell whether or not racial divisiveness will continue to characterize Durham politics, but at least in 1981 a significant number of white voters rejected the racial voting of the recent past in favor of their pocketbooks and their neighborhoods. □

Sister Lucy squinted hard at the starred ad in the pet section of the want ads. Her little “Hump” roused Mama from her morning drowse. “What you say there, Sister?” the old lady whined.

“Birds, Mama. Birds,” the younger woman replied, smacking her toothless gums together as she reread the ad. Brother had paid for a fine set of teeth three years ago, but she’d never liked them, and as soon as he cleared out of the house after breakfast, out came the teeth. She was always careful to put them back in when she telephoned him, something she was preparing to do even as she answered Mama’s question.

“Says here, in the want ads, that someone’s got canaries for sale,” she told Mama, punctuating each word with a sweep of the dial.

“Sure now?” Mama asked, leaning forward in her chair with a rare show of interest.

Sister Lucy and the Bird Lady

By Patricia D. Petit





Sister Lucy nodded her head, scratching at the gray frizz with her pencil at the same time. She popped to attention when the voice from the other end said, "Benevolent Insurance Society and Funeral Home, Brother MacEvoy speaking."

"Brother? Brother, that you? Lucy here." She always began each day's call that way. Even after all these years, hearing him so business-like threw her for a moment.

"Yes, Sister. It's me. What's wrong now?" He always said that too.

"Nothing wrong, Brother." Lucy beamed her toothy smile into the phone. "In fact, everythin's fine. Remember how we was talkin about orderin a canary bird?"

"Mmhmm. . . ." His silence hung between them.

"Well we may not have to, Brother. It says right here in the classified ads, one with a star, 'Canaries,' she now read with authority, juggling the carefully folded paper and the receiver and adjusting her glasses at the same time. "Cage-bred singers, all colors' and the number to call '739-7072' – that's not long distance, is it Brother?"

"Hmmm? No. Not as I know. That's down around Happy Hill, where the Carols live, remember?"

Lucy nodded and smiled into the receiver again. "Reckon I should give them a call then?"

"Why not, Sister," the man answered. "Before you go now, you don't need nothing but bread from the store, right?"

"That's right, Brother, and eggs, cause I'm gonna make Mama some bread puddin tomorrow, and some milk and cinnamon, too, and. . . ."

"That's enough for now, Sister. You go on and make that call. Find out all about it and tell me when I get home this evenin, hear?"

"Yes, Brother. Thank you." She nodded at the receiver. "Bye now." She hung up and simultaneously removed her teeth and set them on the chimney piece. "He says go on and call, Mama. Jest think, we maybe gonna get us a canary bird."

The older woman didn't reply. She dozed, hands folded corpse-like over her breast. Lucy tiptoed past her chair and turned down the TV set volume. Then she returned to the phone table. She circled the ad with a lead pencil. Should she put her teeth in or not? Never mind. She dialed with trembling finger. The phone rang, long rings, four to be exact, before a soft voice answered, "Hello?"

"A white woman," Sister said to herself.

"I'm callin about your ad in the paper for canaries?"

"Yes ma'am?"

"Well, what can you tell me about them? How much do they cost?" She scowled into the receiver.

"Well, they're cage-bred birds. This year's hatch. They're in full song, and I have variegated yellow, variegated orange, variegated peach, green, silver and one peach frost left. They start at 30 dollars and run to 50 dollars depending on song and color. The reds are the hardest to breed."

"Sure now." Sister Lucy was digesting the torrent of information. "I use to raise canaries," she stated. "You just don't find them anymore."

"No ma'am. You can order them through a pet shop. They start around 50 dollars and run to 70 or more."

"I know," Sister Lucy answered, warming to the bird lady. "How come they run so high these days?"

"There was a ban on bringing canaries into the country about 10 years ago. They used to come in from the Orient," the soft voice explained. "There were only a few breeders in this country – not enough to meet the market. I looked for years before I found my birds. I've been breeding birds some eight years now. Would you like to make an appointment to see the birds?"

Sister shook her head. "Whereabouts you live?"

"Do you know where Bellingrath Gardens are?"

"Oh Lordy, that far out?" Lucy's face fell. "I'll have to talk it over with my brother an see if someone can get me out there. I – who am I talkin to?"

"Michel, the name is Michel."

"Mitchell?"

"No, Michel – Michael in French. M-I-C-H-E-L," the voice spelled out carefully while Sister's sausage fingers labored with the pencil at the top of the want-ad page.

"Miz Michel, I got that, right?"

"Yes." The voice from the other end sounded tired.

"Good. Now I got your name and number. I'll call you back. Bye now."

"Well?" Mama's quavering voice demanded of the form hunched over the paper.

"She's got birds, Mama. All colors – she says. And I could hear them singin in the house. Lordy Mama. Such songs. Remember your birds? And my birds, Mama? My goodness, almost 15, maybe 20

years ago. Remember Joe, the little yellow bird, and Ollie, the brown and yellow bird?"

The old woman pulled the blue bath towel that had been lying across her shoulders up over her head and face, shutting out daughter, memories and the terribly warm, immaculately clean room she couldn't see anyway.

"I'm gonna run down to Yvonne for a minute, Mama. You be okay?"

The draped figure gave no evidence of hearing, so Sister Lucy slipped the lock and let herself out into the autumn morning freshness. "The house is really too warm," she murmured to herself as she hobbled up the street.

Yvonne turned her one good eye toward Sister Lucy, taking in the state of her neighbor and best friend. She was taller, greyer and more regal than Sister Lucy ever dreamed of being. When Yvonne added her rich contralto voice to the Oakdale Baptist Church Choir, it was as if milk and honey were flowing together.

"Well, Sister, you be out early this mornin," she puffed, leading the way to her spotless kitchen. "Get down now, Beau," she scolded the little Papillon dog who bobbed about looking for a treat. "Come here you, come sit with Mama." The bundle of fur bounded into her generous lap. "You got time to sit a spell? I'll make coffee."

"No, Yvonne, I can't stay. I just wanted to tell you about the canaries."

"Canaries?" Yvonne leaned forward. "You mean that brother of yours done gone and ordered one of them fancy pet store birds? They won't have no strength, Sister."

"No, no, Yvonne. I found a lady has some down near Happy Hill."

"Do tell. What she askin?"

"Thirty to 50 dollars." Lucy sat back and let Yvonne swallow that.

"You told your brother yet?"

"About the birds, yes. About the price, no. He said to go on and call. I'll tell him tonight. I sure do want one. Remember when we had birds, years ago?"

Yvonne nodded. "Seems like it was someone else, not us." Both old women nodded and stared at the kitchen wall as if it might suddenly throw back an image from their past.

"I'm pretty sure the price is okay with Brother. But how'm I gonna get down there to pick my bird up?"

"Maybe I could get my grandson to take us one Sunday," Yvonne volunteered. "I wouldn't mind to have one of those canaries myself."

"They'll do well here," Lucy encouraged. "You got plenty of light, and it's not too hot. We have to keep the place so hot for Mama."

"How she doin today, Sister?"

"Middlin. She gets so cross. The TV's too loud or not loud enough. Seems if I couldn't see, I'd just as soon have the radio. But I gotta go. Mama may miss me."

"Let me know what Brother says," Yvonne said, following her friend to the door.

"I will. I'll call you after supper. Bye now."

"Bye yourself. You stay here Beau," Yvonne snapped at the little dog. "I really am interested in one of those canaries," she added again. "You call me."

Mama was still under the towel but snoring loudly when Sister Lucy let herself back into the house. The warm room seemed huge in its shadowy stillness. From every corner she imagined her canary's song softly rising and peaking, trilling off into its own echo. Where would she put the bird? They like lots of light. Maybe in the dining room. She could open the blinds there. Maybe they could turn Mama's chair a little toward the south wall. Yes, that would do. The light couldn't bother her. Lucy walked into the dining room and stared into the imaginary bird cage on its stand. Her canary swelled his little throat in song. The tiny beard moved up and down. She wiped her eyes on her apron and went to do the dishes.

That night Brother heard it all, every word and shading of the morning's conversation. The only distraction was helping Mama with her dinner. While she picked at her dessert, Brother wiped his mouth and carefully refolded his napkin. Sister watched him with pride. He was always so neat, so precise. Then he pushed back his chair. "Now Sister, we talked about ordering a bird. I know."

"Who gonna take care of it, huh?" Mama muttered, leaning close to her dish.

"I will, Mama." Lucy dreaded Mama's objections. "But Brother, all we got to do is go down, find a way to go, and jest pick one out." She

would beg if it was necessary.

"I ain't goin nowhere but to the doctor or my funeral, hear Sister?" Mama whined.

"Now Mama, you ain't dyin anytime soon. Besides, you used to love having a bird to sing for you. Just think how much nicer he'll sound than that old TV." She was afraid she might cry now.

"Sister," Brother was continuing over Mama's

whining. "We can't get that far anytime soon." Her fat jolly face turned so sad. He felt terrible. Sister never asked for much. He smiled and continued. "But you could call the lady and see if she might deliver a bird."

Sister Lucy was smiling again. She leaned over to scrape up the last of Mama's dessert for her.

"And while you're at it, see if she has any females. You could try raising some birds of your own. I bet Yvonne could help you."

Lucy couldn't seem to get to sleep that night, and after answering Mama's little night bell, she lay in the cold circle of moonlight, hearing in her heart all the birds that had sung for her from her days as a teenager, through the lonely years of taking care of Mama.

Arch gave her the first canary for Easter. He was Yvonne's only brother. Lucy never loved any other boy or man. He wanted her to marry him, but Mama was already starting to ail, and Arch couldn't find steady work. She'd been afraid. The pretty yellow bird had sung heedless of the struggle that went on in the tidy room. It all ended when Roselle Jones from over Marine Street had smiled her smile and wiggled her hips. Arch stopped coming down to plead with Lucy. She rolled over and shed a few tears for the plump girl who had smiled at Arch's wedding and then come home to sob her heart out in this bed, in this room. A night bird called, but Sister Lucy didn't hear it. She finally slept.

Mama was fed and dressed, the dishes tucked away, but it was still too early to call the bird lady; a toy commercial or cereal ad from Captain Kangaroo reminded her of the time.

Sister decided she'd better go to the storage room and make sure she still had the bird cage left from Mama's last canary. They'd given her the bird when they brought her home from the hospital, to keep her company. Her sight was all but gone then; still she'd taken pleasure in the song.

Sister laughed triumphantly when she found the cage behind the Christmas decorations and a bar-

becue grill they had long ago forgotten. And what else? Wonder of wonders, there wasn't just one big cage, there was a small round green cage greying under years of dust. It was the cage Arch had brought her Easter canary in. She squatted, painfully, in the center of the storage room, surrounded by the discards of a lifetime, and gently ran her fingers over the bars of the old cage. That pretty



yellow bird, she thought.

By the time she'd carried the cages back into the kitchen, and wiped off the worst of the dust, she was sure it was not too early to call the bird lady. She didn't even stop to think about putting her teeth in, and her excitement when the woman answered made her hard to understand. "You deliver?" she asked somewhat brusquely.

"I can," the lady replied, "if you think you'd rather do that than see the birds and make your own choice."

"Well, I really want one, and Brother says there's no way we can get down your way to pick one out right now. See, I take care of my mother," Lucy explained.

"I see." The voice softened with concern. "I can pick you out a nice bird. You have a cage?"

"Yes ma'am. I'll get it cleaned up."

"Fine. And you want a 30-dollar bird, right?"

Lucy had forgotten the differences in pricing and color, and nodded like a puppet as all was re-explained to her. Finally she settled on a yellow and brown singer. Then there was the problem of explaining where she lived. Lucy never drove, and when she did get out, it was to the doctor with Mama, while Yvonne's grandson drove, and of course to church. But the bird lady seemed to know approximately where she was.

"Glory be, Mama. We're gonna get us a canary bird," she cried out when she replaced the receiver. Mama only nodded and said, "Turn up the TV, Sister."

Lucy had to tell someone. She called her brother at the funeral home. "Fine, Sister. That's fine." He sounded quietly pleased. "Did she have any hens?"

"Why no, Brother, I clean forgot to ask."

"Well you might's well ask her. That way you

can try your hand at raisin them. We need something young around the house."

"Oh Brother," She was really excited now. "Hang up so's I can call her now." Her teeth were still in, and the bird lady didn't connect Lucy with her first call right away. But she still had a few silver and green hens left. Sister Lucy allowed that she'd gladly take one of them, recalling that

the darker birds were stronger somehow.

The bird lady asked Sister if she had a way to get seed. Going to the store with Yvonne was a rare outing for her, so she and the bird lady agreed that it would be best if the bird lady brought seed with the birds.

Even if she'd had the words, Sister Lucy couldn't have told the bird lady that for the first time in time forgotten, her heart was soaring. Her hands were trembling when she hung up. But Mama had gotten her head all wrapped up in the towel and was mumbling about the bathroom. That brought her back to earth. She was still busy with Mama when Yvonne called from the front room. "I'm with Mama," she hollered back. "I'll be right there."

Mama took forever, and when the two hobbled back up the hall, Yvonne was standing at the dining room table, dusting imaginary dust from the green bird cage. "Hello Mama, how you today?" her mellow alto crooned.

"Waitin for Jesus, Sister. That's all," the old woman croaked, leaning her birdlike frame heavily on her daughter. "I believe He's forgotten me."

"He's just not ready for you yet, Mama." Lucy envied the assurance in Yvonne's velvety tone.

"I got me two birds comin, Yvonne," Lucy told her as she settled Mama again. "Brother said go ahead and get a little hen too. So we's gonna have some songs, some young and everything." She beamed cherubically at her friend.

"That's what I came to see you about, Sister," Yvonne began. "I have an empty cage at home too. I'd kind of like to talk to your bird lady. When you goin to see her?"

"She's comin here, Sister. Bringin me my birds and seed too. Isn't it grand?"

"It sure is. I just hope she's honest. But listen, I'd like to talk to her when she comes. You reckon she has any more birds?"

"You want me to call?" Lucy asked. It was rare in her memory, Yvonne doing anything through her. Yvonne usually met the world head on.

"If you don't mind, seein you got her business cornered."

"Well it isn't that, Yvonne. I guess when you can make some money you just have to go where it takes you. Right?"

"Right." Yvonne sounded relieved. "Well, I best get home and do some cleanin. You let me know what she says."

"I will, Yvonne, I will." She let Yvonne out the door. "I sure hope the bird lady don't think I'm crazy," Lucy muttered half to Mama and half to herself as she dialed the number she now knew by heart. "I hate to keep troublin you," she began without bothering to identify herself.

"It's no bother, Miz MacEvoy. What can I do for you?"

When Lucy hung up, Yvonne was committed to a red and brown singer. She proudly reported the results of her call to her friend. Then she set about cleaning her cages, fussing with perch arrangements and wondering where the pair would fare best. Even Mama's childlike antics couldn't blight the day for her.

That night Lucy put the money Brother had carefully counted out to her in a stocking purse under the bottom corner of her mattress. She knew that people who had money taken from under their mattresses generally hid it up at the head. Even so, all the next day she slipped into her room more frequently than usual, just to check that the purse was still safe.

Wednesday night was Lucy's turn to go to Prayer Meeting while Brother sat with Mama. She dressed with the greatest of care. She knew Yvonne had mentioned the birds to several of the neighbors, and that meant all eyes would be on them tonight. She carefully rebraided her salt-and-pepper grey hair, smoothing the frizz at her forehead. Virginia, from across the street, who did hair, had called and twitted her about finding gold and wasting it on a "silly old bird." "Why with that kind of money," she'd drawled to Sister Lucy, "I could get me a new fall outfit for church."

"Well, I'll take fine birds and not the fancy feathers," Lucy had quipped back, surprising herself with her sudden turn to wit. Even sightless Mama had peered round-eyed from under her towel at her daughter. Lucy had to smile about it as she smoothed her bulky front. Even in a girdle she was too fat, "Dumpy" her critical eyes told her. "Why couldn't I have been a shade taller?"

she demanded of herself. Then she might have carried her heaviness with the stalking majesty of Yvonne and some of the other matrons in the neighborhood.

Sister turned from her mirror. Now she had the birds to set her apart. Somehow, suddenly, because of them she was going to stand out from the rest of them, except Yvonne. "But Yvonne wouldn't be getting her bird without me." The thought was strange. Perhaps she had her own shadow, instead of just being Yvonne's.

After the meeting people clustered on the church steps to visit before heading into the autumn evening coolness to homes where there would be coffee and talk. Sister Lucy hoped Yvonne would be ready to go home at once. She didn't like Brother's having to wait too long alone with Mama, although, she reflected, he was often better at managing her than anyone else was.

She began guiding Yvonne along the fringes of the little clusters of finely dressed women. "Wait Sister, don't hurry off." It was pesky Virginia and

Yvonne prophesied almost grimly.

The bird lady called her early Friday morning. "You will be home this morning, won't you?" she asked, announcing her intention to arrive with Lucy's pair and Yvonne's singer before lunch.

How could she tell the bird lady she never went anywhere but church and sometimes the doctor's? How could she explain to the woman the gauntlet of eyes behind sheer curtains that she would run to enter the house? Sister Lucy chewed on all these thoughts while she straightened what was already straight in the spotless house. "Never had no white ladies in here before, Mama," she said, brushing the old woman's remaining white hairs into a kind of glowing halo that she promptly destroyed by hiding under the bath towel she demanded be left over her shoulders.

"You got beautiful shawls, why not wear one of them today?" Sister argued trying to take the towel away.

"Don't keep me as warm as this towel," Mama whined. "Now let me be, Sister."



her friend Dorothy from Gayle Street. "I was just tellin Dorothy about your fancy birds."

"When you gonna get them, Sister?" Dorothy addressed Lucy.

"Sometime this week. Yvonne's gettin one too." She wanted to shed the unwelcome and unfamiliar limelight.

"Only one," Yvonne stressed.

"It must be nice, bein so rich," Gladys Pattway caroled, coming into the tiny group. "Imagine takin a chance with 50 dollars for a couple of tiny little birds."

"They used to be only five dollars," Virginia declared.

"That was before they stopped them from comin in from Japan and Korea," Sister Lucy said quickly.

"Well," Dorothy added, "my man wouldn't let me take that kind of risk with his money. Suppose somethin happens to them. Then what do you have?"

"All of life's a chance," Sister Lucy replied calmly. Then she took Yvonne's arm firmly. "Come Yvonne. I promised Brother we wouldn't be too late." The two figures bobbed into the darkness. "Don't mind them," she puffed into Yvonne's ear as the two labored over the uneven sidewalks, "they're just jealous."

"They'll all be around once the birds come,"

Sister Lucy hoped Mama would behave. She hoped it hard while she did the dishes. She couldn't even get lunch started because she ran to the window every time she thought she heard a car door over the racket from the TV set.

Morning dragged on. She thought of getting the money from under her mattress, but dismissed the idea. Folks were known to break into houses in broad daylight to steal, and everyone knew to the penny what the birds cost.

Brother added to the excitement by calling to ask if the birds had come yet. "He's as excited as we are, Mama," she exclaimed, trying to drag Mama into the excitement. Brother had caught her with her teeth out. She must remember to put them in before she answered the door or the phone.

Mama finally dozed, and Sister Lucy had accepted the idea of starting lunch when the doorbell rang. Her hands were shaking when she opened the door to a tiny white woman, kind of fluttery like her birds, Lucy later observed.

She handed Lucy her purse and bags containing

seed. Then she dashed to her car to get the birds. Sister could hardly keep her fingers from the white sheet draping the small cages. The lady set them on the dining room table and pulled away the cover. "Well, there they are."

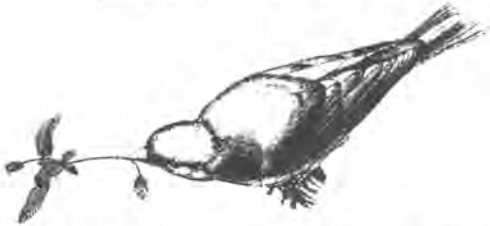
Sister Lucy stared, round-eyed, at the two little birds who looked back at her from their cage floor. One was yellow with a dark cap and brown penciled wing feathers. The other, a muted olive veiled with a kind of silvery sheen, hopped about and called a plaintive single note.

"They're beautiful," Sister said, hunching over the cage for a closer look. "You come to sing for me, you pretty things," she called too loudly to the tiny birds. They jumped and fluttered about their cages, the olive bird calling in her desperate single note.

"They've had a long ride, and they're frightened," the bird lady reassured her. "I'll fix their cages and we can set them up," she continued.

"Have you any newspapers for the cage bottom?"

Lucy hurried to fetch some while the woman



chatted on. "I always use newspaper for the cage bottoms. It's cheap and the birds don't get sore feet if you let it age." She went on talking as she worked, her quick, almost birdlike movements fascinating Sister Lucy almost as much as the two new treasures.

When the bird lady exclaimed over the little round cage, Sister Lucy made her laugh, owning up to saving everything. "Sometimes," the bird lady sighed, "I think we're in the junk business instead of the life business." Lucy was pleased to be included in the business of living things. Then the bird lady unpacked the seed, identifying each type as she sifted the shining seed through her fingers. Lucy wondered how she'd ever manage to keep it all straight. The bird lady put all the seed and treat cups in place and gave Lucy the water container from her own travel cage. "Until you can get your own," she offered. "These birds are part roller and drink a lot of water."

"I'll go get your money now," Sister Lucy told the bird lady once the cages were set up. She needed an excuse not to watch the transfer of the tiny birds. What if one got away? Mama might rouse from under her towel and raise a fuss.

Once the money was carefully counted out, Sister Lucy remembered Brother's stressing the importance of getting a guarantee. "The male will surely sing in 10 days," the bird lady stressed as

she wrote the receipt and guarantee. "Sometimes, where there are two birds in the house, they sing even sooner." She explained that the colored bands on their legs bore the date of their hatch and her initials, just in case anything went wrong. Lucy took it all in, smacking her gums and nodding. Too late, she realized she'd forgotten her teeth. Absorbed in the bird lady's information, she again forgot their absence. She had a million questions.

Finally the bird lady looked at her watch. "Goodness, I must hurry. I have to deliver a bird to Springhill. Is your friend still interested in her bird?" While Lucy went to call Yvonne, the bird lady gathered up the empty cages and fluttered quietly past Mama to fetch the other cage.

Lucy felt shy of her birds, and wished everyone, even the reassuring bird lady, were gone, so she could get acquainted with them in private. But Yvonne stalked in moments later and allowed herself to be introduced. The bird lady uncovered the square cage. A brown and red bird hopped about, and at once began calling to the pair already

in the room. The second bird, a shade of peach veiled with frosty white, stared wildly at the three women, and panted in fear.

"Lord he's beautiful," Yvonne exclaimed, pointing at the panting bird. "But the dark one's stronger. I remember from when I raised them. Darker is stronger."

"You've made an excellent choice," the bird lady agreed. "He's an excellent singer."

"I sure do want him. I sure do," Yvonne replied, turning to Lucy. "Sister," she said, "You got 30 dollars for me? He is 30 dollars?" She turned back to the bird lady, who nodded. "You got 30 dollars for me? It may be a month till I get it. It may not be."

The three women stood silent for a moment. The bird lady wondered about her sale. Lucy and Yvonne wondered about the years of big fish little fish, queen and court. Lucy finally said she'd look. She knew that she had that much tucked in a jar of dried black-eyed peas.

"Thank you, Sister," Yvonne crooned, as Sister Lucy came back into the room, and handed her the money. "I'll be payin you back as soon's I can."

There was the flurry of receipt writing, and the bird lady's fluttering departure, with her promise to return with more seed for both women in a week's time.

"She was nice, wasn't she?" Lucy said to Yvonne as they watched the little green car swing away into the quiet street.

"Next time she can stop at my house too," Yvonne intoned, collecting her bird and share of the seed. "Well Sister, I guess I'd better get home and start lunch. Bet everyone on the street is watchin now."

Sister Lucy nodded. What had she done, she wondered. What had she let them in for? "Bye now. Be careful." She helped Yvonne maneuver herself and the bird cage out of the house.

"Thanks again, Sister." Yvonne touched her arm. "You always been right here when we needed you." She hobbled away.

"What are friends for?" Lucy called after Yvonne.

Mama had uncovered her head and sat upright, listening. The birds were hopping around their cages, making scratching sounds on the paper, calling single notes to each other. "When they gonna sing?" she demanded petulantly.

"Soon's they feel at home, Mama," Lucy replied, tearing herself away to the kitchen, and hoping that would be very soon.

Right after lunch people started dropping by. Virginia was first. "You got prettier ones than Yvonne. Her bird don't sing none neither," she hastened to add.

Dorothy came by from work, and Callie, the young girl from across the street, came by with her baby. The child grabbed the bars and frightened the birds. They flew about wildly and Lucy was certain they would hurt themselves.

She was exhausted and close to tears by the time Brother got home from work. "Dinner's late," she told him wearily. "Everybody from Oakdale Baptist Church has been by here I think. Poor little birds is so scared they can't hardly peep."

Brother sneaked a look at them and assured her they were just beautiful and would sing "bymbye." After dinner he opened the windows. The day had warmed unseasonably. A kind of still mugginess gripped the evening. Mama fussed and said she wasn't going to bed yet. All the people stopping by about the birds had interrupted her routine. Lucy had hardly had a minute for her. "And them birds ain't said 'boo' yet," she snorted, flipping her towel over her face.

Laughter rang from the porch of Virginia's house. Yvonne's grandchildren were fooling with their cars. Somewhere up Virginia Street police sirens whined. Sister Lucy felt sorry for the poor little birds, taken from their brothers and sisters and quiet country home to this hot noisy city.

Her teeth hurt, and she longed for Brother to go out on the porch for his evening smoke so she could take them out. Finally, she could take no more. Almost defiantly she turned from the sink and removed the offending teeth, carrying them to their customary spot on the mantel. Then she went back to where the cages stood in the dining room. She turned on the light and took up her sewing. What did Brother do at the funeral home that was so hard on buttons? The birds rustled awake on their perches. "O Lordy," she muttered. She'd forgotten to cover their cages. "Poor things. I'll probably kill you before you ever get a chance to sing." She started to rise to go for covers. But the hen's desperate call stopped her. The little male replied, a long answering note. Then the hen called again and hopped to the side of the cage facing him. She cocked her head and called. His reply was almost a reassurance. Then lifting his head, he began, softly at first, looking for the right notes, to sing. The song took on a pattern and grew stronger, fuller. The hen hopped about a little and called encouragement. He swelled his tiny throat and raised to his full height. The song filled every dark corner of the house and spilled through the open front door and windows.

Someone hushed a loud voice on Virginia's porch. Even traffic seemed not to move. Brother came from the porch and stood looking into the room, smiling. He flashed Lucy a wink she did not see.

Mama uncovered her face and sat very still, listening. Her lips moved soundlessly. Tears filled her blind eyes and spilled down her leathery cheeks. Sister Lucy just sat, her hands quiet on her lap, her soul quiet for the first time since she'd been a girl. □



*Patricia D. Petit resides in Theodore, Alabama, and is founder of the South Alabama Cage Bird Society. She is author of *Where Have All the Canaries Gone?* and has guest lectured to creative writing classes at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham.*

The People

OF CLAIBORNE COUNTY

By Regina Devoual

I FIRST tried to register in 1957. The circuit clerk gave me a pen and some paper and told me to interpret a section of the constitution — I think it was section 92. Well, the first time, she [the circuit clerk] said that what I wrote was too long. So she tore it up, put it in the garbage and told me that I couldn't register. It took about a year for me to finally get registered, but it didn't matter to me because I knew that someday the Civil Rights Movement would come to the South and I knew how powerful the vote was. I knew it was a right I had to have and one day I hoped to use it.

— Nate Jones
Claiborne County, Mississippi

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the number of blacks registered to vote in Mississippi has increased from 6.7 percent to over 60 percent of eligible voters today. The number of black elected officials has risen from 29 in 1968 to 387, more than any other state in the nation.

The political power to improve economic and social conditions in black communities remains elusive. Despite the significant number of black Mississippians now registered to vote and the number elected to public office, the political process is still dominated by white and corporate interests.

A case in point is Claiborne County, a rural southwest Mississippi community of over 12,000. Seventy-five percent of Claiborne's population is black, and the black electorate has made its presence known in county government. Of 32 elective positions in Claiborne, 26 are now held by blacks — more than any other county in the state. The county has had a black majority on its Board of Education and on its Board of Supervisors since 1975.

In Claiborne, black voters are learning that their struggle for social and economic justice goes beyond simply electing black candidates. The county still has the highest infant mortality rate in the state; there are no vocational education programs in the schools; and the county provides no social services for young or elderly people. The majority of black wage earners work in factories which pay from \$3.70 to \$4.20 per hour; per capita income is \$6,684 and unemployment lingers around eight percent.

While blacks have been successful in the political arena, the economy of Claiborne is still controlled by predominantly white corporate interests. During the 1975 election campaign, community organizers linked political success with economic opportunities for the black population in the largest

construction project ever undertaken in Mississippi — the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station in Port Gibson, Mississippi, being constructed by Mississippi Power & Light (MP&L), Middle South Energy and the Bechtel Power Corporation. At a projected cost of \$3.4 billion, the station will contain the two largest nuclear-fueled generating units in the world. Originally hailed as a source of high-paying jobs for county residents and a sound tax base for county coffers, Grand Gulf has proved to be neither. MP&L has, to date, paid over \$27 million in taxes. However, while the worth of the two local banks has tripled in the last 10 years, there is no evidence that the tax dollars have been used for programs and services that the community needs.

According to the records of the Port Gibson Urban League's now-defunct Labor Education Advancement Program, less than 200 local residents have ever been continuously employed at the Grand Gulf nuclear project, although the site, in peak periods, has employed as many as 3,400 people. County records show that although per capita income has risen since construction began on Grand Gulf, a substantial portion of the improvement is attributable to the influx of highly paid Bechtel and MP&L personnel from outside Claiborne County.

Since construction began, Claiborne's Board of Supervisors has lowered the amount of taxes MP&L pays by almost one-third. Evan Doss, the county tax assessor and collector since 1971, has been a vocal critic of the board's policies. Doss contends that the economy would be significantly better if the board would "stop catering to the white power bloc in the county" by cutting taxes to please white bankers and MP&L. Doss has charged that the lowering of tax rates has taken away revenue that otherwise could have been used to benefit the community. "A nuclear facility is a potentially high-yield business for MP&L," Doss points out,

"and a potentially dangerous one for the county. We will daily be surrounded by some of the most health-hazardous material in existence. I have always felt that the utility deserves to pay a fair price — to contribute to the community.

"Taxes are the only thing this community can hope to gain as a result of the plant being located here. Over 3,000 people work at Grand Gulf — but very few of our people are employed there, and even fewer of the others live or trade here. Most either head to Vicksburg, Fayette or Natchez when the work day is over."

William Matt Ross, president of the Board of Supervisors, has become weary of Doss's criticisms and counters that he "tries to be fair with all the people." MP&L, Middle South Energy and Bechtel do pay the majority of taxes in the county, but the Board of Supervisors appear to be the only friends they have these days. In December, 1981, Mississippi Attorney General Bill Allain announced his decision to appeal a \$48.5 million rate hike sought by MP&L. Allain charged the utility with deceiving the public in seeking such an enormous rate hike.

photo by Patricia Crosby



The cooling tower of the Grand Gulf nuclear station in Port Gibson, MS.

The problems in Claiborne County have not all centered around the supervisors' handling of the Grand Gulf situation. Health care, for example, is an issue that George Henry 36

Walker, community organizer and member of the county hospital board, sees as improving but still bogged down by political power struggles.

"The situation is very ironic," Walker explains. "Claiborne County has a very well-equipped hospital. The Board of Supervisors has put thousands of dollars into improving the facility and buying new equipment. The supervisors also appointed members of the hospital board — all blacks. But when it comes down to critical

issues, the majority of those blacks vote whatever way the whites want them to."

Walker says that white power came to play in the hospital board's decision to turn down the request of a black physician, Dr. Frank McCune, to be admitted to the Claiborne County Hospital staff. McCune had been on staff before, moved his practice to nearby Jackson, and returned to reapply to join the staff of doctors — three white and one black — who

Blocking the Black Vote

The political atmosphere and the perceived lack of political power among black voters are not the only threats to majority black counties, or any other counties for that matter. The Voting Rights Act is itself in jeopardy, and if Congress refuses to extend it in 1982, the access of blacks and other racial groups to all levels of government will be diminished. Already the editor of the *Port Gibson Reveille*, Edgar Crisler, has called for the re-establishment of literacy tests.

Even with the act, Mississippi has used a wide variety of techniques to perpetuate white control at all levels of government:

- Thirteen counties have attempted to switch to at-large elections for members of their Boards of Supervisors, and 22 have attempted to switch to at-large elections for county school board members. Where there is not a significant black majority population in the county, an at-large system lessens the chance of black candidates being elected.
- Fourteen counties have attempted to gerrymander the boundaries of their county supervisor's districts — which serve as election districts for county supervisors, justices of the peace, constables, county school board members and county election commissioners — to deny black voters an effective majority in district elections. Most of these plans were blocked by challenges under Section Five of the act, which requires that any changes in voting procedures be

approved by the U.S. Justice Department. But in some cases, the Justice Department did not enforce the law. The Warren County Board of Supervisors ignored the Attorney General's Section Five objections to its redistricting plan and held the 1971 county elections under the contested plan. The Justice Department finally filed suit against the county after three more Section Five objections were filed.

In total, the Justice Department has objected to 77 Mississippi election law changes from 1965 to 1980; 40 of those cases surfaced after 1975, the year when certain provisions of the act were last extended.

The most recent Section Five complaint in Mississippi came from Indianola, a small Delta community where disgruntled black residents brought suit against the city to challenge municipal annexations from 1965, 1966 and 1967 which brought over 1,000 white voters into the city. Prior to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, Indianola was 70 percent black. Although three of four annexations took place after 1965, none was submitted by city officials for Section Five approval. It was not until the case was brought to public attention in 1981 that the Justice Department became involved.

The black citizens accused the city of disfranchising black voters. They alleged that by refusing a request to annex 11 adjoining predominantly black subdivisions, which already received city water and sewer services and city fire protection, the government was overtly discriminating against them.

Just prior to the 1981 city elections, the Justice Department finally forced the city to remove the names of the annexed whites from

currently serve Claiborne's 12,000 residents.

"Dr. McCune is a board-certified surgeon and a very qualified doctor," Walker says. "It was not his credentials that were in question. During one of the board meetings, the doctors on staff told us that they would resign if Dr. McCune was admitted to the staff. I have gotten feedback from several hospital board members that they were asked by those who appointed them not to put Dr. McCune on staff.

the voting rolls. But the damage had already been done: between 1965 and 1981, the percentage of blacks in the city dropped from 70 to 40. The city had condemned much of the black-occupied housing, and many black voters were forced to leave Indianola. In the December, 1981, municipal elections, only one black was elected — incumbent alderman James Robinson. A black mayoral candidate was defeated by only 55 votes.

No state legislature has done more to defeat the purpose of the Voting Rights Act than Mississippi's. To block growing black participation in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the early '60s, the state legislature enacted a number of election laws to prevent the election of black independents: it increased the number of signatures required on qualifying petitions, manipulated the qualifying deadlines, abolished party primaries and required a majority vote in the general elections to win an office. One of these statutes, the "open primary" bill which abolishes party primaries and imposes a majority vote/runoff requirement to win office, was repeatedly enacted in 1966, 1970, 1975, 1976 and 1979. The statute has been blocked by a court decree and three consecutive Section Five objections, but Mississippi is still attempting to gain Section Five approval through litigation.

The most celebrated case involving the legislature was the 14-year district reapportionment battle. Majority black counties had been combined with more populous white majority counties to create majority white multi-member districts. The legislature had also created countywide districts in majority white counties which can-

And that's exactly what happened. He was not admitted."

Dr. McCune is fighting the board's decision and continues to practice in Port Gibson, despite the fact that Walker says "the hospital will not even perform blood cultures or other laboratory services for his patients. I know because it happened to my wife. One night we needed to get some tests run. They were begun [at Claiborne County Hospital], but when the people on staff saw Dr. McCune's

celled out the votes of large black populations within the county.

The Mississippi reapportionment case, filed as *Connor v. Johnson* in October, 1965, was not made subject to provisions of the Voting Rights Act until 1975. The lawsuit continued for 14 years — longer than any reapportionment case in American history — and went to the Supreme Court nine times before multi-member districts were finally eliminated for the 1979 elections. The number of black state legislators more than quadrupled in that election, from four to 17; two blacks were elected to the state senate.

More significant than the number of blacks elected to the state legislature is the fact that blacks comprise 35 percent of the population but hold only seven percent of elective offices statewide. There are still no blacks in Mississippi's congressional delegation or in any other statewide elected offices; while the number of black state legislators has multiplied significantly, they still comprise less than 10 percent of the legislature; only seven percent of the county Boards of Supervisors and 10 percent of the city council members are black; only three majority black counties have black sheriffs; and of 22 majority black counties in Mississippi, eight still have no black representation on the county Board of Supervisors and black supervisors are a majority on only two of them. Thus, the voices of most black elected officials are muted by the fact that their positions carry limited power over specific local institutions, chiefly school boards, and are not, for the most part, significant policy-making jobs. □

name as attending physician, they ceased the tests and told us they would not complete them. It is a systematic approach by whites to run Dr. McCune, the only certified surgeon in the area, out of town. And if he is not granted the cooperation of the hospital, it just might work."

"The situation in Claiborne County today," explains Port Gibson High School's Afro-American and U.S. History instructor Percy Thornton, "is very similar to the one in Reconstruction — blacks exploiting blacks and whites making an issue of it. We have not learned to exert political power because the electorate and the elected have not cultivated a strong relationship. We don't even realize just how much power we have. That atmosphere threatens the future of majority black counties."

Despite such disappointments, the struggle for black voting rights in Claiborne was long and difficult — and necessary. How did the residents of Claiborne County succeed in electing black officials during a period in which the majority of black Mississippians were without political clout? Many of the blacks who were at the nucleus of the political struggle in the '60s attribute the success to the organized efforts of grassroots, community-based groups. Nate Jones and several other founding members of the local NAACP chapter gathered recently to discuss the voting rights movement in Claiborne County.

Jones: "The NAACP got started before 1965. On a couple of occasions, some of us met here — upstairs in this building. The first time we met — of course, it was a secret meeting — we wanted to deal with the discrimination against Negroes by white merchants and the local government. But somehow the white folks found out, and when we came out, the street was lined with them. We were told then, and on several other occasions, that they [the whites] didn't like the idea of us meeting. We decided not to hold any more for a while."

But by 1965, blacks in Claiborne County were prepared to charge the government and white merchants with discrimination in hiring and administration of services. A biracial committee, consisting primarily of blacks, had been formed to discuss and resolve

the grievances, but Jones and the NAACP were not satisfied:

"Our problem with the biracial committee was that it was formed by whites and decided, without the consent of the majority of the community, to state and solve all of the problems. The biracial committee left out several of what we felt were very important grievances.

"In December, 1965, we met with the black members of the biracial committee. [Thelma Wells, another founding NAACP member, interjects: "They had been sent by the whites, who were waiting for the result of that meeting."] They came to ask us to join them and agree to solving the problems their way. . . . We refused. . . . They left . . . and from that day, the NAACP took over."

The NAACP resumed its attack on discrimination by the government and merchants and early in 1966 presented a list of 13 grievances, along with proposed solutions. Following fruitless deliberations, the NAACP instituted a boycott against the merchants which lasted for three years. (In 1969, the merchants brought suit against the NAACP and 132 individuals to stop the boycott and collect damages. The Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that the boycott was an illegal conspiracy; the NAACP and 91 individuals were held financially liable for any and all damages the white merchants could prove were caused by the boycott and the defendants were prohibited from engaging in boycott activities such as picketing in the future. In November, 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the NAACP's appeal of that decision.)

At about the same time that the NAACP was forming in Claiborne County, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was mobilizing in Greenville. Ignoring gun-toting plantation owners and hostile voting registrars, the NAACP and FDP succeeded in using the Voting Rights Act to register over 3,000 voters by 1967, and for the first time since Reconstruction, the organizations carried the campaigns of black candidates to the public.

Getting black voters to the polls was even more difficult than getting them registered, though. "Difficult is an understatement," commented Charles Bunton of the FDP. "Most blacks were afraid — fear of economic reprisals, fear of intimidation — these

things kept a lot of black folks from getting involved. We had a whole slate of black candidates in 1967. And the FDP did something that had not been done before. We held meetings all over the county — we went to the people with the candidates."

Claiborne County elected its first black supervisor and chancery clerk in 1967. In 1971, largely because of the same organizing effort, it added a black circuit clerk and a tax assessor and collector on the countywide level, and on the district level, Claiborne elected black justices of the peace and constables. The total of black elected officials increased to eight.

The first systematic grassroots political effort began in the 1975 election. Using what they called a modified block captain system, organizers sought out volunteers in each community, conducted an intensive voter education program and turned out more black voters than in any previous election. Evan Doss received more votes in his re-election bid for tax assessor and collector than any other political candidate in the history of Claiborne County. For the first time, blacks comprised a majority on the Board of Supervisors; William Matt Ross, first elected in 1967, became president of the Board. And for the first time, Claiborne elected a black Superintendent of Education and a black majority on the Board of Education. Every county department, with the exception of sheriff, was headed by a black. The 1979 elections brought a black sheriff and another black member to the Board of Supervisors. Those victories increased the number of black elected officials in Claiborne County to 26.

While the election of black officials in Claiborne County has not brought the social and economic development that was hoped for, the county has made some good investments: a public swimming pool, a county fire station and most recently, through the efforts of recently hired county planner Bennie Paige, a federal Rural Health Initiative Grant for the establishment of a primary health care facility. Paige says that other projects, including a rural transportation program, a flood insurance program and a housing project for the elderly, are in the offing.

Community organizers in Claiborne County look positively to the 1983 county elections: voter and commu-

nity education will be the primary focus of grassroots organizing efforts. They will work closely with statewide groups like the NAACP, the ACLU of Mississippi and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Together they will bring forums, publications and voting rights projects to the community and document both the effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act and the need to strengthen its provisions.

But the people of Claiborne County have learned through first-hand experience that exercising the right to vote means much more than simply casting a ballot.

George Walker, who has been involved in all of the campaigns in Claiborne County since the passage of the Voting Rights Act, believes he understands the shortcomings of the earlier political movement. "At that time, black candidates were those people who owned their own businesses or who were otherwise economically secure. And because black pride was all we had going for us, we ran the candidates on the premise of 'Vote for me because I'm black.'

"Today that has changed. We understand that the power of the vote goes beyond casting a ballot. We have to choose candidates who have the ability to run the office and the concern of the community at heart. We have to be sure that once they are elected, their objective will be to make things better for those who elected them. Before, we were willing to put these people in office and just trust them to do the right things. Now we know that we have to hold them accountable — just as the minority of white voters have all along." □

From 1979 to 1981, Regina Devoual was associate editor of 40 Acres and a Mule, a periodical published by the Emergency Land Fund, and for eight months in 1980 and '81 edited her own community publication, The Claiborne. She currently serves as public relations director for the Claiborne County Voters League.

James Miller, former Urban League Labor Education Advancement Program recruiter in Port Gibson, provided much of the resource material and assisted in conducting interviews used in this article. Miller was one of the publishers of The Claiborne and currently coordinates activities for the Claiborne County NAACP.



Southern
CONNECTION

by John Beam

For anyone who has ever traveled "south of the border" or in the Caribbean, a visit to New Orleans is bound to trigger memories and half-lost impressions. The wide, live-oak-lined boulevards of South Claiborne or Canal Boulevard would not be out of place in the wealthy residential sections of Merida, Mexico, or Lima, Peru. The poorer neighborhoods' whitewashed woodframe shotguns, doubles and four-plexes — often built only three to five feet apart and opening directly onto the sidewalk — could easily be in Belize or Panama. The French Quarter more closely resembles Cartagena, Colombia, than any other city in this country.

Not only is its *creole* ambience more Latin and Caribbean than American and Southern; for centuries, much of the city's political orientation has also focused southward. New Orleans has figured in Latin American intrigues since the original French and Spanish settlers connected the Northern and Southern continents through commerce, slave trading, intermarriage, religion and military muscle.

It was from a base in New Orleans that William Walker, the 1850s proslavery filibusterer, launched his invasion of Nicaragua in 1855. Central American nationalists overthrew him in 1857, and the Hondurans executed him in 1860 after his second unsuccessful invasion.

Attempting to liberate their homeland from Spain, Cuban exiles staged their own expedition from here in 1868. Nearly a century later, a different sort of Cuban "exile" was recruited here for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Most recently, terrorists linked to the Klan and Nazis attempted to launch an attack against the independent black nation of Grenada.

Today the affinity between New Orleans and Central America and the Caribbean creates a natural climate for education programs and organizing in support of liberation struggles in those countries. Among the regulars

who volunteer their time for these activities is Cathy Watson, a public school math teacher who became an anti-Vietnam War activist while attending Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. "First, we were five people sitting in a room forming a Moratorium Committee," she recalls. "Then we had 500 people marching in a month."



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lack of structural change in the U.S. began to grind down her spirit, she shipped out with the Peace Corps. "I thought, 'I'm either going to stick around here and blow somebody away or I'm going to leave the country.'"

She then went to Jamaica. "When I went to Jamaica, I had a total indoctrination to imperialism without anyone ever using the word."

In Jamaica and later with the United Farmworkers in California, she began to see a need to transcend what she calls "borderitis — a border mentality." But she also decided that "My work should not be there in Jamaica but here with the problem. . . . The most efficient way to be useful is to work in the culture you know. Solidarity work internationalizes local work, brings political work outside its borders, puts it all in perspective. I realized that to struggle for the Haitians was not very far from struggling against police brutality here in New Orleans."

Gita and Marty Lefstein met while studying in Costa Rica and later taught English in Colombia. Their first-hand observations of life in those countries led them to help open the *Libreria del Pueblo* (People's Bookstore) soon after they moved to New Orleans. Gita says operating the store is based on an analysis that "The U.S. government's financial and military backing for dictators in Central America is the main obstacle to progress for people living in those countries. It's important for us to do what we can to change our government's policies and to build understanding and alliances between people here and people there."

The *Libreria* provides bilingual literature and a broad range of progressive materials on Central and South America, African liberation movements, political theory and labor history, as well as translation dictionaries and the daily newspapers from Nicaragua and Honduras. Its customers can also receive assistance in tasks like filling out immigration forms and in lining up low-cost English lessons.

In addition, *Libreria del Pueblo* is a frequent meeting place of the New Orleans Nicaragua Solidarity Organization (NONSO) and the New Orleans chapter of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). While the organizations remain distinct, their prime movers are drawn from the ranks of what one pessimistic pundit has called the "New Orleans 40." Actually, the figure is closer to 200 regulars.

Most of them are active in local issues as well. The police brutality that Cathy Watson mentions is a case in point. In the past year, intense local organizing has focused on police violence directed primarily at the black community. In November of 1980, New Orleans Police Department squads killed three young blacks in a supposed attempt to arrest two of them for allegedly shooting a police officer. Physical evidence and reports of neighbors strongly suggested that they were executed. Community groups have accused the local district attorney of blocking any effective investigation. Federal attempts to pursue the case have been sporadic and ineffective.

These killings are only the most notorious of at least five other deaths caused over a six-month period by what residents call an "unaccountable, racist police force." Huge demonstrations, a sit-in at City Hall, marches, exposes of "killer cops," the resignation of the police chief and a barrage of publicity has made police violence an issue this winter and kept the pressure on officials to reign in their

Preceding page: a mural in Nicaragua by New Orleans artist Cathy Watson: "I asked if there were a woman guerilla who I could include in the mural. Yes, there was the beloved Arlen Siu, a Chinese Nicaraguan who'd fought boldly in the mountains and been killed at age 19."

troops. Marty Lefstein served as the Libreria collective's liaison with the umbrella Police Brutality Committee, and others in the collective have supported one or another of the groups organizing around the issue.

Similarly, bookstore and NONSO members have worked with the Survival Coalition, a broad-based, racially integrated group that mobilized the local response to the Reagan budget cuts. The Coalition pulled 250 people for a Sunday afternoon "fight-back" rally and another 300 the next morning to picket Reagan's speech before the National Association of Police Chiefs. Representing NONSO, Ed Lampman was one of 35 speakers at the fight-back rally. His remarks emphasized the connection between domestic cuts and increased military spending.

Lampman is a serious, carefully spoken carpenter who served in the Air Force in Vietnam. "My experiences in Vietnam gave me a basic anti-imperialist perspective," he says. "Vietnam was a very powerful experience for me. The strength of the Vietnamese people is really amazing."

He moved to New Orleans to use his GI Bill benefits. "I had had four years of high school Spanish. My solidarity work began at the bookstore. Marty and Gita jerked me into it!"



THE

bookstore traces its origins to an ad hoc group that organized a forum in 1976 for a woman from the M.I.R. (Movimiento Izquierdo Revolucionario), one of the most militant parties in Chile during the optimistic years when Salvador Allende was president. The turnout of over 200 people encouraged the organizers to establish the Latin American Support Committee (LASC).

"It was the Latin American Liberation Support Committee," reports Marty, "but someone thought it was too 'ultra left' so 'liberation' was dropped."

Libreria del Pueblo bookstore in New Orleans on the day it was dedicated, July 19, 1981.



"This was to be a mural for the workers, dedicated to one of their own; to say, more or less, that it is not just those whose names or faces are known that are heroes, but just as much we ourselves, when we give unselfishly to the society in general, as this young worker had."

— Cathy Watson

The energy and personnel of LASC were eventually absorbed into other projects, but its lasting offspring is the bookstore. Libreria del Pueblo is operated by a collective with only one three-quarter-time paid staff person. It is the visible symbol of solidarity work in New Orleans and has sometimes suffered accordingly. It has been set afire by arsonists five times in a little over two years. The three most recent attacks happened within a week — two within about three hours of each other.

"The firemen cut the padlock off the first time, so I took one down to Marty," remembers one collective member. "We had just gotten back to sleep when he called to say they had come back and started another fire. I said I was all out of locks but would come down anyway. What a way to spend a Saturday night!"

Every attack on the bookstore has followed close on the heels of an effective public event or demonstration dealing with Nicaragua. The torch job last February occurred after the first evening of a series of films from and about Nicaragua and El Salvador. The day before the film showing, an anonymous male who said he was with

Alpha 66 phoned the bookstore to say that "the program would not happen." Alpha 66 is a rightwing Cuban terrorist organization that has taken credit for carrying out 30 armed actions within Cuba during the six months from October, 1980, to March, 1981.

The attack on the bookstore late the night of the first films panicked Loyola University into trying to cancel the film series. Deprived of university facilities, NONSO, CISPES and the Tulane University Center for Latin American Studies representatives moved the screening to a Catholic community center half a block from the mostly black St. Thomas housing project. Prevailing wisdom in New Orleans is that right-wing Cubans will not venture into poor black neighborhoods. The room was packed to overflowing with an interested audience, and no disruptions took place.

Security for public events, which are often disrupted or at least picketed, has always been part of the local organizers' planning. Now, beefed-up security for the bookstore is also a part of planning for any pro-Nicaragua event anywhere in town.

The past year's activities have em-

phasized informing the public about the ongoing conflict in El Salvador, where the violent death rate is now up to 1,200 a month in a country of only five million people. The U.S. government has defended its policies toward El Salvador by trying to center the right-wing military junta between two supposedly warring factions of leftist guerrillas and rightist extremists. Solidarity organizations have assailed the credibility of that junta and exposed its intimate links with "Orden" and other paramilitary death squads.

The buildup in U.S. military aid to El Salvador, the presence of military advisors, the inability of this administration to visualize political solutions that will include the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the saber-rattling inherent in discussions of reinstating the draft all are reminiscent of the Vietnam War.

The other thrust of solidarity work has stressed defending the Nicaraguan revolution against repeated assaults from the Reagan administration that include economic warfare — cancelling food credits, interfering with Export-Import Bank loans — as well as Secretary of State Alexander Haig's overt bellicose posturing. These acts bring to mind the U.S.'s successful campaign to destabilize the Chilean economy under Allende and its less successful efforts to wreck the Cuban economy.

In mid-October of 1981, NONSO and CISPES sponsored a local speaking tour for Father Roy Bourgeois, the Maryknoll priest originally from Louisiana who disappeared last May for nearly two weeks with guerrilla forces in El Salvador. His talk at Xavier University drew nearly 300 people. A CISPES member who teaches civics at a public school on the West Bank arranged an assembly where Bourgeois was so well received that a number of students there are organizing their own version of CISPES called SAVE (Students Against Violence in El Salvador).

Last November, Haig and presidential advisor Edwin Meese refused to rule out military aggression against Nicaragua and Cuba as a policy option for American "diplomacy." As part of a joint national effort of groups working in solidarity with Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, a NONSO-CISPES telegram campaign targeted Haig and the chairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Illinois Senator Charles Percy) and the House

Foreign Affairs Committee (Wisconsin Representative Clement Zablocki). The campaign demanded a repudiation of the administration's "Speak loudly and carry a bigger stick" foreign policy.

Zablocki responded, "I share your basic concerns in this matter," and pledged that his committee would "continue to exercise its oversight responsibilities in this regard."

The New Orleans groups remained unimpressed and have continued to make anti-intervention work a top priority. In early December, 1981, they sponsored a Saturday mid-day march of 100 concerned New Orleansians through throngs of Christmas



"My visit to Nicaragua was aimed at celebrating with the people the first anniversary of the triumph of their revolution."

— Cathy Watson

shoppers in the busy Canal Street retail district. Meanwhile, a handful of counter-demonstrators stood across the street from the closing rally with a large "God Bless President Reagan" sign and shouted "communists" and "liars."



LAST

summer, an "action faction," concerned that solidarity groups in the city needed to reach a wider audience than the educational programs attracted, successfully argued for direct confrontation as a means of publicizing human-rights violations by military regimes supported by the Reagan and Carter administrations.

After finding the Salvadoran consulate locked tight during its regular business hours, the 20-person delegation from NONSO and CISPES ignored the highly agitated security guard at the International Trade Mart, where many Latin American consuls have their offices, and packed the tiny suite of the Guatemalan Consul General. They challenged him to pledge his opposition to human-rights violations in Guatemala and to reject U.S. military aid there. He, of course, refused, and police ushered the group from the building.

With reporters in tow, they next marched to the offices of Representative Lindy Boggs, where they delivered a thick stack of letters urging her to work toward cutting off military aid to the dictatorship of El Salvador. Boggs later answered every message with a non-committal, "personally" signed form letter.

The weekend before the invasion of the International Trade Mart, NONSO hosted a "kermesse" (Nicaraguan family-style party) for "the second birthday of the revolution." Almost 200 Nicaraguans, Anglos and blacks celebrated by consuming incredible amounts of nacatamales, arroz con pollo and beer; by dancing to live salsa music; by viewing political films; and by visiting with the Sandinista representatives who work at the local Nicaraguan consulate.

Perhaps the most daring direct action attempted by any solidarity organization here was a move to take over the Nicaraguan consulate two years earlier after what the Sandinistas call "the Triumph of the Revolution" — July 19, 1979 — when Somoza fled and the palace was

captured by the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN). Reasoning that they were in support of the FSLN, that the FSLN now represented the people of Nicaragua and that the Somoza-appointed consul did not, NONSO supporters thought it was entirely reasonable to seize the consular offices. The FBI presumably used similar logic and had the place filled with their own troops by the time the NONSO contingent arrived.



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key question, of course, about any alternative political work is: what good does it do? Beyond that, it's probably reasonable to wonder: what do the people doing it get out of it?

Lampman believes that the El Salvador work, particularly the May 3 mass demonstration in Washington that drew over 100,000 people, has significantly delayed Reagan's plans for intervention in Central America. "They not only took up the struggle against intervention, they also took up the struggle against racism and domestic cutbacks. That was the way they got 100,000. It took *years* in the '60s to learn those lessons.

"The movement against intervention is much more strongly organized and based than at a similar point in the movement against the war in Vietnam."

Moncha Moreno, a Nicaraguan student active in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, points to grassroots results from local activities: "I've talked to Nicaraguans on the bus that I've seen at programs and I think the programs have helped people understand things better. Most people come with an open mind, except people who have grudges," such as the "gusanos" (rightwing Cubans, literally "worms") or former Somocista National Guard members.

Ramon Acevedo, another Nicaraguan student, adds, "Especially the Latins, because in this city they never get exposed to films and speeches except on Radio Mil (KGCA)." Radio

Mil is a popular Spanish language station but has an openly rightwing editorial stance.

"I found people very interested and concerned. Older guys that don't change much from day to day are beginning to change their minds," adds Acevedo.

For Lampman, a person not given to overstatement, the effectiveness of the work is more sweeping. "The value of solidarity work has been tremendous. It's clear to everybody that the movement against the war in Vietnam played a significant role in shortening U.S. intervention there. The Nicaraguan solidarity work played a significant role in keeping the issues before the American public at a time when there were sharp recollections of the U.S. in Vietnam and put pressure on the government that prevented a unilateral intervention in the final days of the insurrection."

In an avocation that offers no financial benefits, activists also point to personal and political growth as one of the rewards of solidarity work. Asserts Marty Lefstein, "From doing solidarity work, my political understanding advanced to seeing the ties between liberation movements abroad and the struggles here."

Gita smiles, not knowing if she is about to go too far. "Let me give you a rough quote from Malcolm X: 'You'll never get Mississippi straightened out until you start worrying about the Congo.'"

Cathy Watson has traveled to post-Somoza Nicaragua twice and Cuba once. In Nicaragua, she designed and executed three large murals on the sides of the Managua power plant that generates electricity for much of the country.

"I have been sustained by my contact with revolutionary people in the Third World. The things they have said are really humbling. It makes it impossible to belittle the validity of the work we do — no matter how small it may appear to us."

At a meeting she had last summer in Costa Rica with Salvadoran and Guatemalan exiles, she recalls being told, "We could never begin to tell you how important your work is . . . knowing that there are American people who understand and support our struggle."

She adds, "I had been going through sort of a political identity crisis. I was in Havana for the Carifesta in July

of 1979. [The Carifesta is a Caribbean area cultural festival that was set up to bring together performing artists from all over the region.] We were in the stadium when the announcer came out and said, 'Companeros, I have a surprise for you,' and he brought out two members of the FSLN [Sandinista] Directorate. They said to us, 'Brothers and sisters, we have wonderful news. Today Nicaragua is free; Somoza has fled the country.'

"The place just went wild. Everyone was holding on to each other and singing. And then I knew that solidarity work was something I would always continue to do." □

John Beam resides in New Orleans, where he is active with NONSO and CISPES. He teaches English as a second language and describes himself as an unemployed organizer.

I am here today because in 1969 I had to look at photos of the bodies of women and children and old people piled high in a ditch in a place called My Lai. And I knew then that I could no longer support a government that directed and financed those killings. Right now in places like Guatemala and El Salvador, men and women and children who want nothing more than to live their lives with dignity and independence are ending up dead in ditches and it is the same government that was responsible for My Lai that supports and finances these killings in these countries.

*anti-intervention rally speech,
New Orleans
December 5, 1981*

Photography by Robert Clare

SMALL TOWN FOLKS

IN TEXAS, much as they like to talk about what makes their home unique — not at all like the next town 10 miles down the road, even less like the one 500 or 800 miles cross country — still share a lot. Having fun at town festivals and fairs, for instance — and San Antonio photographer Bob Clare spends most of his weekends traveling to them and taking pictures.

Says Clare, “No matter what the reason for the gathering, and it runs the gamut from patriotic and traditional to downright silly, the people involved always concentrate on enjoying themselves. The results of this celebrating are beautiful, funny and sometimes rather curious.”

ARMADILLO LORE is rife in the central Texas area around Bastrop, and so are armadillos. Races are one feature of Bastrop’s Homecoming Celebration held every August to honor the town’s founding by a group of Dutch immigrants who came in the 1830s.



PRAHA is a small central Texas town settled by Czechs — “Praha” is just another spelling of “Prague,” the town folks will tell you — and they choose Veteran’s Day as their time for celebration.





THE WHOLE TOWN of Moulton, and as many of its expatriates as can make it, turn out every year in mid-May for a "Home-coming" that features food and flags and honors Moulton's heritage. As some town folk will tell you, "It's just a reason for a party." But it's a good one.

THE FIRST WEEK in October is Peanut Festival time in Floresville, a time to celebrate the harvest of the town's main crop. There's always a parade with floats and music and entertainment. Here the young dancers of the Ballet Folklorico de Navasota show off their traditional Mexican costumes and steps.



CUERO is the turkey capital of the world, as far as it's concerned. But there is a town in Minnesota that feels exactly the same way. So twice a year they try to settle the matter with a Turkey Trot – or race, to the uninitiated. Every summer, Ruby Begonia, a Texas turkey, goes to Minnesota and runs for her life against Paycheck, a Minnesota turkey. Every October, Paycheck comes to Cuero and they stage a rerun. The annual Cuero "Turkeyfest," featuring the Turkey Trot, is the time when the whole town turns out to party and parade, and the kids hold their own junior trot.



FOURTH OF JULY weekend in Stamford is the occasion for a Cowboy Reunion, put on every year for about the last 25 by the charter members of a group of honest-to-God West Texas cowboys. The old folks get together to reminisce and lament the passing of the old ways – and cheer on the young folks' demonstration of rodeo skills.



THE CENTRAL TEXAS TOWN of Luling lives on watermelon – it's the main crop – so what better way to celebrate than with an annual late June "WatermelonThump"? They have watermelon-eating contests, they auction off prize watermelons, they have a parade, and they crown a Thump Queen to preside over all the events.



A PEPPER-EATING CONTEST is one of the main events when the folks in Round Rock get together for "Sam Bass Days." Sam Bass was a well-known outlaw in the 1890s who came to Round Rock, robbed the bank, shot up the town and killed the deputy sheriff. For some reason, Round Rockians find this cause for celebration. They even have a parade and re-enact the gunfight and robbery. (By the way, the man who won the contest ate 400 of those peppers and took home \$100 for his trouble. Some people will do anything for a buck.)

THE TEXAS ARMY lives and fights again every October in Gonzales, at the "Come and Take It" celebration. The first shots in the Texas War of Independence were fired here — a small group of Texans held a hill with a lone cannon, daring the Mexican army to "come and take it." They did. The Mexicans won handily; the Texans were massacred. But the folks in Gonzales call it an occasion for a parade and a grand re-enactment of the battle. They also like to show off replicas of Texas's first flag, flown from their hill: a white banner with a black cannon on it, with the legend, "come and take it."



ENDLESS WAR



photo courtesy Southeast Asia Resource Center

O

fficially it was named "Operation Hades," but it was commonly known as "Operation Ranch Hand." Between 1961 and 1970, the U.S. military operation dumped 40,000 tons of the defoliant Agent Orange on five million acres of South Vietnamese land. That works out to about 16 pounds per acre; the normal application for agricultural purposes is one-half pound per acre.

Agent Orange is actually a 50/50 combination of two chemicals, 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, both of which are known carcinogens and teratogens (birth defect producing). In combining the two defoliants to produce Agent Orange, a third and far more dangerous chemical is generated: dioxin – 2,3,7,8-TPD. Dioxin is estimated to be one million times as dangerous a producer of birth defects as thalidomide.

2,4,5-T and 2,4-D were developed during World War II at the Army's center for chemical warfare research at Fort Detrick, Maryland. The war ended before the new substances could be put to military use, and U.S. chemical companies – most notably Dow and Monsanto – began producing them as weed-control agents for agricultural use.

By 1961, the chemicals were put to their original use in Vietnam, ostensibly to eliminate jungle and forest hiding places for the Viet Cong. In the process, Vietnamese farms became wastelands, and rural villagers were forced to take refuge in the cities.

As the war escalated, the toxic properties of Agent Orange became a frightening reality for American workers as well as for the South Vietnamese and U.S. military personnel. In 1965, Dow Chemical's Midland, Michigan, plant had to be closed down after 60 workers developed chloracne, a virulent skin condition, after exposure to dioxin. In New Jersey, workers at a 2,4,5-T plant also developed chloracne and a host of other initial symptoms commonly associated with exposure to Agent Orange: disorders of the central nervous system, chronic fatigue and depression.

International scientific and political protest against the use of Agent Orange began mounting. In 1966, 5,000 scientists petitioned President Johnson to halt biological warfare against the Vietnamese. The General Assembly of the United Nations followed suit by overwhelmingly passing a resolution which stated that

by Celia W. Dugger

defoliant was outlawed under the Geneva protocol prohibition on the use of chemical or biological weapons. But by 1967, the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam doubled.

In the meantime, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) – a federal agency – awarded Bionetics Laboratories of Bethesda, Maryland, a \$2.5 million contract to conduct experiments into the effects of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D on laboratory animals. Bionetics turned its initial findings over to the NCI in 1966. Three years later the first official statement on the study was released by President Nixon's science advisor: "Offspring of mice and rats given relatively large oral doses of the herbicide during the early stages of pregnancy showed a higher than expected number of deformities." That same year, 1969, Agent Orange spraying reached its peak in Vietnam.

The "higher than expected number of deformities" found in the Bionetics study turned out to be 39 percent deformed fetuses at the lowest oral dosage – an amount comparable to that which would be absorbed by an average-sized Vietnamese woman drinking two quarts of contaminated water per day. The larger doses in the Bionetics study produced fetal abnormalities at 90 to 100 percent.

Birth defects found in the Bionetics test animals have a haunting familiarity for Agent Orange vets and their families: cleft palates, cystic kidneys, enlarged livers, intestinal hemorrhages, miscarriages and stillbirths.

Today – 16 years after the Bionetics research – the U.S. government and the Veterans Administration (VA) maintain that there is no evidence that Agent Orange causes birth defects or cancer or neurological disorders or anything except chloracne. Dow Chemical, on the other hand, argued recently before the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals that the corporation should not be held liable for the medical problems of Vietnam vets who were exposed to Agent Orange; Dow had warned the Department of Defense of the chemical's potential hazards and therefore it was the government's responsibility to warn its military personnel of the dangers they were being exposed to. The Second Circuit ruled that the veterans in this case had no claim in federal court, but left open future possibilities for such suits if they are filed on behalf

of plaintiffs from several states. In December, 1981, the Supreme Court let the Second Circuit's decision stand.

In January, 1982, 26 Agent Orange victims and their families from Georgia and other Southern states filed suit against the government on behalf of themselves and the approximately 2.4 million American servicemen exposed to Agent Orange between 1962 and 1971. They are using Dow's defense as part of their grounds for litigation.

In Atlanta and many other areas of the country, Agent Orange has become the focal point for organizing among veterans of the Vietnam War. Through the support gained in uniting around common concerns, these vets and their families have extended their organizing to gain other basic rights as veterans and as citizens.

The veterans, many of whom came to the suit through Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta, have demanded that the VA stop using powerful mood-altering drugs to treat them, provide adequate medical care, including genetic counseling, and notify veterans of potential health hazards connected with exposure to Agent Orange. They charge the VA with medical malpractice in treating the diseases and illnesses caused by exposure to dioxin.

The VA is only willing to concede that chloracne is traceable to Agent Orange. So veterans receive no special disability for more serious illnesses and diseases they believe have resulted from their military service.

Until December 2, 1980, Lynda Gwaltney and Reverend Tom Champion had never met, but they had both become part of the unending, unseen toll of the Vietnam War. Mrs. Gwaltney's 34-year-old husband Robert, exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam, had died in April, 1980, of a blood cancer usually suffered only by elderly men. Reverend Champion, a 37-year-old Vietnam veteran, had learned in September that he too had a cancer of the aged. His doctor gave him five years to live.

At first neither the Gwaltneys nor the Champions connected their plight with Vietnam and Agent Orange. They shared only the isolation, loneli-

In Atlanta, Agent Orange, a defoliant used by the U.S. in the Vietnam War, has become the focal point for organizing among veterans and their families.

ness and fear common to those who fight alone against physically and financially devastating disease.

A week before her husband died, a Veterans Administration employee made a private visit to Mrs. Gwaltney's home to tell her Robert was a victim of a poisonous herbicide used in Vietnam to defoliate the countryside and destroy food crops that supposedly sustained the Viet Cong. Reverend Champion later heard Mrs. Gwaltney on television describing the symptoms of Agent Orange exposure. He saw himself in her words.

Mrs. Gwaltney listed off the problems complained of by too many veterans: chronic, severe acne known as chloracne, stomach and lymph cancers, children born with genetic defects, inexplicable depressions and rages, extreme susceptibility to colds and viruses, liver damage.

Mrs. Gwaltney, a mother of two and a housewife, decided to become an activist, a role that took her by surprise and changed her life. Her first tentative step was to place a blind ad in the newspaper quietly announcing a meeting for Vietnam veterans who believed they had been exposed to Agent Orange. A radio reporter picked up her story, as did a television reporter and the effect of her small notice was magnified. On December 2, 1980, sick veterans, black and white, came to the meeting with wives, children and friends.

Tom Champion, a tall black minister with a resonant voice, was among those present at the first meeting. The group elected him chairman, a post he has held since.

In the beginning, the veterans and their families and friends met several times a month just to talk to each other and take comfort from shared experiences. They named their group Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta and began to reach out to educate the community about the thousands of veterans in the area whose service in Vietnam was boomeranging on them. The Atlanta press was increasingly receptive to airing their side of the story.

In the spring of 1981, Mrs. Gwaltney and Reverend Champion approached Cable Atlanta and proposed a show on the public access station that would focus on the situation of the Vietnam veteran. Their request was granted, and week after week Mrs. Gwaltney gently persuaded veter-

ans to tell their chillingly similar stories on camera. Ironically, Reverend Champion used the television training he received in the military for the production aspects of "Vet's Forum."

Here Lynda Gwaltney and Tom Champion tell their own stories, testimonials to the power of the human will to transform personal tragedy into a force for justice. Champion was interviewed just after being released from the hospital.

I met my husband here in Forest Park, Georgia. He was 17, I was 18. He had just entered the service and was stationed at the Atlanta Army Depot. He went on to Vietnam from

here. When he came back we were married on the depot by a Green Beret chaplain on November 5, 1966. He was 20, I was 21.

He was from the North Carolina mountains. His family was very poor and as soon as he turned 17 he went into the army. He would never have gone to college. There was no money for that. So the only choice he had was to work in cotton mills the rest of his life or go in the army.

As soon as he came back he had a rash on his body. He complained of getting it while he was there. He had lots of complaints about his stomach also. But his psychological problems were what I had to notice most. He would go into depressions. He was paranoid. He kept a little black book of people he thought were trying to do things to him. Before he had been so easy-going, a gentleman. He was



photo by Ed C. Thompson

Lynda Gwaltney has been helping Vietnam veterans who are victims of Agent Orange, the defoliant which killed her husband.

raised to be a very calm and loving man.

We had two children. And then his two teenage brothers came to live with us. He was trying to support us all and just coming back from Vietnam he had his own problems. There were problems with our marriage we could never understand. And then it got to the point where he would get angry over almost nothing. He would fly into a rage and hit me. I had black eyes. Finally, as an abused wife, I did go to a hospital. It was the hardest thing I ever did. The doctors asked, "How did this happen to you?" When I told them my husband did it to me, they were disgusted.

In about 1976, he discovered he had a knot on his neck. It started off very small and it kept growing and growing and growing. He didn't have hospitalization and put off going to the doctor. Finally he went to the VA. It didn't take them long to figure out he had a type of blood cancer that usually occurs only in very old men [non-Hodgkins lymphoma].

He was susceptible to anything that came around. If the kids had something, he was sure to get it, too. As the disease progressed, he had tumors all over his body. Under his arms. On his neck. Between his knees. His lungs were full of them. He had two in his groin that were just massive. And then they started chemotherapy.

He was afraid to kiss me, afraid that I wouldn't want to touch him. I can't say the tumors never bothered me. He knew he was dying and tried to become distant from me.

Four years later, it was like he was 80 years old. He looked like a living skeleton. He had always been a tall, lanky man, a handsome man. I experienced the total decline of a healthy young man of 17 to a 30-year-old skeleton. There is no nightmare that could have been as horrible. In the end, he had no skin because of the radiation treatment, I guess. For his skin to come off under my fingernails and you realize it's your husband. To have him under my fingernails!

He would scream in such pain. They would make me bathe him in vinegar water and he had no skin on him. I'd have to put him in that tub and he would just scream, "Don't do it! Don't do it!"

About a week before he died in April of 1980, a man from the VA came to our house to talk to us.

I won't mention his name because he was overstepping his limits in coming to talk to us. This man came to talk to us about Agent Orange. I'd never heard of it. Never heard of it. He told me my husband was a dead man.

My husband's fever was so high there was nothing more I could do. I have no qualifications to take care of somebody so ill. I put a cot next to him. I would take my work breaks and go home just so he could have a drink of something. He couldn't even lift a glass with a straw in it.

Finally it got so bad that I took a few days off. The days blurred into endless pain. Then one day we knew there was nothing else we could do. So I called the VA hospital and they wouldn't admit him. They just would not admit him. They would say he could be treated at home. He would go out there again and again and they would say it was a slight cold and send him home. I was working as a courier at Clayton General Hospital at the time, so I took him there for a second opinion. They said he had pneumonia. They called the VA and told them there was no choice but to admit him. He was transferred, but by then he was completely helpless.

At the end he was literally coming apart. He didn't have any skin left on his body. He couldn't see. After he died, they had to put him in a body bag.

The coroner who examined my husband's body advised me that I might have a legal case at some point and suggested I go to former governor Carl Sanders's law firm. They told me about Agent Orange and referred me to Sanders's associate, Anne Meroney. In July, we filed suit against the chemical companies that produced Agent Orange.

For a few months things were in limbo. I stayed with my parents awhile and just existed. In November, I was invited to speak to an Agent Orange group in Brunswick. When I stood up and looked at their faces, I saw the rashes and tumors they had. There was one fellow that sat in the back of the room who had eyes like my husband. I have no idea what I said. I was terrified.

I came back to Atlanta asking questions, reading, meeting people. At the Veterans' Outreach Center, I heard the same things over and over. Putting two and two together, I decided there was definitely a need for a



group in Atlanta. If there was me and my family, there were plenty more like us.

If you had told me before my husband died that I would organize anything I would have thought you were crazy. But out of loneliness and need to find people who had been through the same things, I did it. I would never have dreamed that from the need for a rap session would grow a group that faced one of the biggest human tragedies of our time, the wiping out of men who fought for us.

So I put a blind ad in the newspaper asking people to come to a meeting for veterans at the Jewish Community Center. Several radio and TV people called and we got the word out that way. Anne Meroney sent letters to the veterans she knew.

On a cold, rainy night in December, my father and I held the first meeting. We had a good turnout. About 40 people – men, women and children – came. The veterans were very hesitant. They wanted to know if we were connected to the government. But I was a woman whose husband had died, a widow. I was not threatening them.

One of the people who walked in was Reverend Tom Champion, a tall black minister wearing a clerical collar. We elected him to run the meeting. We decided we'd name our group Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta and meet once a month.

Reverend Champion helped reach the black community. We knew it was not a time for prejudice. One of the men said, "We fought in Vietnam together, and it looks like we're all going to be buried together and soon."

Women were the backbone of the group. The men often felt if they admitted they were sick they would lose their macho image. The wives had had enough of children born with birth defects, enough of their husbands being so angry and so sick.

I've found that women will ask questions. Many nights I've had phone calls from women who say, "Please

don't tell my husband I called. But why does he beat me like he does? Why am I afraid to leave my child with him? Why is my husband so sick he can't work? Who can I get help from? I go to the VA and they tell us they don't know what we're talking about."

They are women who never thought they'd find anyone who understood. They are so relieved just to have someone who will listen.

And our group has grown. Not all our meetings are big. We don't have any dues. There are no qualifications to belong. We had so much to learn ourselves.

And we educated the public. Before Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta, I don't think people had even heard of the problem. We tried to tell them it was their problem, too. They think it's just veterans who suffer from exposure to dioxin. But look at Love Canal! On our cable TV show, we called in people from Georgia 2000, an environmental group concerned with hazardous waste dumps. They were semi-regulars on our show. We had pictures of toxic waste sites that were so highly contaminated people had to put on plastic gloves to pick up the debris around them. We showed public parks where people picnic that were contaminated.

We made these comparisons so that people identified with the problem right here in our own state. It doesn't only happen in Vietnam. It happens right here.

And we provided moral support

to our own. We took people to the hospital. We babysat so women could take care of their husbands. We gave them food, if they needed it — anything like that. When vets got in trouble with the law, we went to judges and tried to explain the situation to the court.

In the spring of 1981, a couple of the men and I decided we weren't reaching enough people. So we went to public access TV, that's what it's there for. We went to Cable Atlanta with our idea to do a show for veterans. They agreed and for 13 weeks we interviewed veterans on TV. It was the same story over and over. People began to make a connection. People could realize the vet wasn't just some jerk who wanted to get VA money because he was too lazy to get a job. Now the reruns are on until we go back to the studio and start taping again. I still get men who call and say, "I saw Vet's Forum and heard what you said."

Public access cable is there for the community to use.* You take a short course on how to use the equipment, pass a test, and they give you a certificate. Then you can use the equipment for free. You just have to pay \$15 per videotape. Anyone who has things they want to express can use it. It

* Public access to cable channels is usually determined by local city councils. To find out whether a public access channel is available in your area, contact the local cable franchise or your city council.

was like a blessing just waiting for us.

At first I didn't think the group was anything for me. I felt I was just doing it for other people. Then I realized I was changing, too. I believe the best therapy for a person is talking to someone else with the same problem. Not only did it help them. It helped me. It gave me a purpose.

I had never really done anything in my life besides producing beautiful children and cooking good suppers until I was 30 years old. At the time I thought, "Now my husband's dead. There's not much left for me except to raise my children and exist from day to day." And I find out life has a whole new meaning. I miss my husband, I still love him, but I'm a person now. Here's Lynda. I love life now, every minute of it.

Thank goodness that my heart hasn't grown hardened to other people's tragedies. My heart grows softer with each person affected by Agent Orange. We have to cry for other people. We have to feel it in our heart. More people should cry. They should just sit down and look at things like they are and cry.

If people think one person can't make a difference, they're wrong. I have found that out. One person can change lots of things. First it's one and then it's one more that joins them and then another one and then you can change things. And how can you feel sorry for yourself at a time like that? We have to sit down and cry together and then figure out, now what do we do to make it better?

TEXAS ENACTS MODEL LEGISLATION

As Congress and the Veterans Administration continue to turkey trot around their responsibility concerning the effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam Veterans, the Texas legislature has taken the bull by the horns. The Long Horns recently approved a bill which will provide \$500,000 over the next two years to conduct an epidemiological study involving all Texas vets who believe they were exposed to Agent Orange during service in Vietnam.

Under the Texas Agent Orange Assistance Program, more common-

ly known by its legislative number — HB 2129 — Texas veteran-residents who feel they are suffering from exposure to the defoliant should contact their own doctors or a VA outpatient clinic; the examining physician will then notify the state Health Department that the vet wishes to participate in the study.

The health department will send each vet a detailed questionnaire which will seek information on service history, employment history, recollection of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides, and health problems or symptoms the vet feels may be the result of exposure.

Texas's Attorney General is

given authority under HB 2129 to file class action lawsuits on behalf of Texas vets under the Freedom of Information Act for the release of information regarding veterans' exposure to Agent Orange during Vietnam duty as well as to obtain the release of individual medical records.

Information from the questionnaires and military records will be categorized and tabulated by hand (no funds were appropriated for computer analysis) and forwarded to the University of Texas Health Science Center which will select 40 veterans for clinical screening. Criteria for selecting the candidates to be screened is based primarily on the amount and duration of

I was born in 1943 and raised up at the corner of Broomhead and Henry Streets in Atlanta. My father was a traveling salesman. In those days it was hard to find a black traveling salesman, but that's what he did. My mother ran a boarding house for 10 or 12 men who worked at a fertilizer plant.

During high school I was very athletic and had a lot of scholarship offers to college. But the thing to do was to go in the military. We had a lot of men from World War II and Korea around, and they said, "Go be a soldier." So I didn't go to college like I should have done. In 1960 I jumped into the air force at the age of 17. I got some benefits out of it. I went into armed forces radio and TV. I went to college in the military. I learned to be a pilot. I really wanted to stay in the service 20 years, I thought.

In November, 1966, I was sent to the Da Nang air force base, where I ran the stateside mail terminal. I was there for one rough year. I would rather have been a dope addict on the corner than to be in Vietnam that year. I saw a lot of men lose their lives.

The first time I was aware of Agent Orange was when the trucks came around. You remember when you were a kid they'd spray for mosquitoes? They did that at Da Nang.



photo by Ed C. Thompson

We thought they were just spraying for insects. But where they sprayed that stuff the trees withered and fell over. They told us it wouldn't hurt us. I breathed it. When the wind blew, I breathed it.

I got there on November 15. On December 5, I was treated for a severe case of acne, which I now know is chloracne, the thing that Agent Orange brings down. I had ulcers on the outside of my skin, severe stomach problems. I got to one point when my skin was so sensitive that I couldn't shave. They allowed me to grow a beard.

I got discharged August 16, 1968. Friday at 12:20 p.m. I loaded up my car and I put that Plymouth toward Atlanta and I haven't looked back since.

I still suffered from the problems of Agent Orange and didn't know what caused them. When I got out of the military I had my bachelors degree in electrical engineering. I was a certified radio and television producer. I got a job at Channel Five TV, and in about a year quit for no reason. I worked at the Post Office for three months, and I know why I quit there. It was still military. Couldn't handle

documented exposure to Agent Orange, but the seriousness of the vets' health problems will also be taken into consideration.

HB 2129 also provides genetic counseling for vets in the screening program whose children have birth defects or whose wives have had miscarriages or other obstetrical problems associated with the husband's exposure to Agent Orange.

The data compiled in the larger epidemiological study, as well as the findings of the screening program, will be made available to the legislature, state veterans' groups and the general public.

HB 2129 was never expected to pass the Texas legislature, but it sailed through almost without op-

position. Its success may well lie in the fact that it is the product of the coordinated effort of a wide range of agencies, organizations, legislators and individuals. "We brought together people who had never worked together before," says Linda Mencin, staff assistant to Representative Larry Don Shaw, a sponsor of the bill. "A few of them were almost hostile to what we were trying to do, but as we worked people began to open up." Potential conflicts with the chemical industry was avoided by not seeking damages.

The Texas bill is considered to be the most far-reaching Agent Orange legislation to date; a number of states are looking to HB 2129

as a model to propose to their own legislators. For a copy of HB 2129, write to: Larry Don Shaw, Texas House of Representatives, PO Box 2910, Austin, TX 78769.

Vietnam veterans who are residents of Texas and wish to participate in the Agent Orange research should contact their personal physicians, the nearest VA outpatient clinic or Dr. George Anderson, Texas Department of Health, 1100 W. 49 St, Austin, TX 78756.

VIETNAMESE DOCUMENT AGENT ORANGE EFFECTS

No one can dismiss the plight of Agent Orange victims in the U.S., but we must recognize that our vets were exposed to relatively small amounts of the poison for a relatively short period of time. Millions of South Vietnamese – most of them innocent farmers and villagers – have lived for more than 20 years on dioxin-contaminated land, used dioxin-contaminated water for drinking, bathing, irrigating gardens and watering livestock.

The environmental devastation in South Vietnam is almost incomprehensible: 43 percent of the farmland and 44 percent of the forests are barren and remain toxic. Although dioxin will break down in the soil in approximately six months, it is not soluble in water and may remain toxic in rivers, lakes and ponds for 20 years.

Despite our government's claims to the contrary, documented research has been done into the effects of Agent Orange on humans. In April, 1980, Hanoi's *Vietnam Courier* published the findings of Dr. Ton That Tung, an internationally recognized expert on dioxin.

Dr. Ton's research focused on several aspects of dioxin exposure:

Initial contact: Immediately after being sprayed, victims reported intense burning sensations of the mouth, eyes and skin. This was followed by uncontrollable sneezing and vomiting, headaches and extreme weakness. These symptoms usually lasted three to four days.

Secondary effects: For up to three months after exposure, victims suffered from prolonged, intense weakness, insomnia, headaches, sexual impotence in men and menstrual problems in women. Eighty-one percent of the study group complained of visual weakness; most could not focus their eyes to read for more than 10 minutes. Dr. Ton found corneal lesions and scars in almost 25 percent of the study group.

Genetic Effects: Dr. Ton found abnormal chromosomes at a rate of 5.88 per 100 cells in spray victims; the rate in control samples was 1.14 per 100 cells. In a small group of mothers who were sprayed during pregnancy, abnormal chromosomes were found in 7.33 percent of the mothers' cells and 13 percent of the children's – five times the rates seen in children of Hiroshima survivors.

Liver cancer: Animal experiments show that the liver is the main concentration point for dioxin in the body. Dr. Ton compared liver cancer rates in four hospitals from 1955 to 1961 (before U.S. spraying began) with rates from 1962 to 1968. Prior to the spraying, there was an average of 26 cases per year; the rate leaped to 144 cases per year during the Agent Orange years.

Mutagenic effects on children:

Dr. Ton and his research team interviewed 786 war veterans who had been exposed to Agent Orange in the South but who had married women from the North who had never been sprayed; the control

group consisted of 418 couples who had never been sprayed. The rate of miscarriages for the veterans' group was 14.42 percent, compared to 9.04 percent in the control group.

Children born with congenital malformations – the result of chromosome breakage – comprised 3.14 percent of births among the veterans; the rate among the control group was 0.21 percent. The most common birth defects were heart defects, anencephaly (without a brain), paralysis of external eye muscles, cleft lips and palates, and a host of limb deformities ranging from abnormal number of fingers and toes to grossly misshapen arms and legs.

Dr. Ton's research was conducted primarily on North Vietnamese war veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in the South. Because of severely limited funds for research staff and equipment, the studies were conducted only in North Vietnam. We do know, however, that in the Tay Ninh region, a heavily sprayed area northwest of Saigon, 25 percent of all pregnancies result in miscarriage. Those may be the fortunate ones, for the kinds of birth defects found among the children in Dr. Ton's study make the thalidomide deformities look mild in comparison.

Special thanks to John Spragens of the Southeast Asia Resource Center for providing us with a copy of Dr. Ton's report and to Dr. Rick Elion of Duke University Medical Center for assistance in interpreting the report.

it. I went to Channel 46 and couldn't deal with the people. I went back to school and took some courses and was able to get my masters degree equivalence. I taught vocational education in a high school. I left there and started a cab company. In two years I sold my portion because I couldn't deal with the stress. In the last 14 years I've had about 14 or 15 jobs.

All of my children have suffered from birth defects. My oldest boy, man, every weekend we'd have him at the hospital. They said it was asthma or bronchitis, but they never really knew. My daughter has unexplained stomach problems. When my

youngest son was born they wanted to do open heart surgery on him and I said no way. You suffer. Then your children come and they suffer.

In December of 1979, I was working at a local gospel radio station and I found myself going downhill. I felt real sick and didn't know what to do. I was really dying. Finally I got so sick I couldn't keep nothing on my stomach. In September the Lord spoke through my wife, and she said, "Why don't you go to VA and let them check you out?"

They tested me for everything. Finally, they made me take barium, the stuff that makes your insides light

up and shows up anything that's abnormal. The doctor said, after the x-rays were taken, "We got to put you in the hospital. Something's blocking your small intestine." I was taken in for exploratory surgery. I'm laying in there and feel like somebody got their TV stuck in my gut. If my hair moved, I hurt.

A couple of days later, the surgeon came into me and said, "Mr. Champion, I got something to tell you and I don't know how." He closed the curtains and said, "You're going to die. You have terminal cancer of the small intestine and you've got six months to five years." He didn't give

me much hope. "It's going to be a very slow, somber passing," he said. "So I suggest you go home, do what you want to do and enjoy yourself."

Medically there's no reason I'm still alive. I'm just depending on the Lord. I was very attentive trying to find out why I had tumors at 37 that usually only a 90-year-old man would get. But that's what Agent Orange do for you. It gives young men tumors that are only found in men twice or three times their age.

About that time – October, 1980 – I started hearing about Agent Orange on the TV and in the newspapers. I saw Lynda Gwaltney and Orville Blackmon on TV. And they said anyone in Vietnam from 1961 to '71, these are the symptoms you can look for. And I had every one of them. In December they had the first meeting of Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta at the Jewish Community Center down on Peachtree.

I came in simply to tell the people about my diet and how it was helping my health and I ended up being the chairman. I had no intention of being the chairman.

There were about 10 or 12 blacks and about 50 or 60 whites. I noticed they were there discussing voting. So first thing they said was, "I know a good chairman." Nobody knew me. "The Rev, let's make the Rev chairman." Someone seconded it and it was done.

When I go out, I do wear my clergy because that's what the Lord has given me to do. I started to preach in Vietnam in 1966. That's where my ministry started. I've been preaching now for 15 years.

The accomplishments that I can attribute to Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta are, one, the Veterans Administration board that rates you for service-connected disability, we've softened their shell. They were very prejudiced against the Vietnam vet because they're World War II and Korean soldiers. The Vietnam vet is unpopular because we lost an unpopular war. They would deny a Vietnam veteran without even checking his records. Now we get a reasonable shake. It's not fair, but it's reasonable. They still don't give us what we deserve. They've told me my cancer isn't service related so I get no disability for that at all.

We've softened up the hospital as far as treatment is concerned. The

photo courtesy Southeast Asia Resource Center



Vietnam veteran was nothing. Men would get there at eight a.m. and still be in the waiting room at 11 at night. We had a doctor tell one of our men, "Hey, we're doing you a favor treating you." I hit the ceiling. Now when a Vietnam vet goes in, he's out in two or three hours.

We've been able to inform men about what's wrong with them. We've talked to about 4,100 people and led them in the right direction. We've showed them how to get on the computer for the Agent Orange screening exam. That's an exam the federal government requires all Vietnam veterans to take. They go in a mass computer in Washington so if and when any benefits come down that's what they're going to pay by. We've had about 900 men get into that.

The people involved in the lawsuit filed in January came to it through our group. We also have an Agent Orange bill in the Georgia legislature modeled on the one passed by Texas. This week we're going before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify.

Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta has been a refuge for a lot of people. The first Monday night of the month we have a meeting and every Tuesday night we have a rap session. I don't think a lot of these men would have survived without that support. They could always get in touch with me. I'm on the phone eight, sometimes 10 hours a day, just talking with guys. Get in jail, run out of gas, no food, we help them out.

I think the Vietnam veteran is going

to catapult in the future because we have society on our side now. When we came back, people literally hated our guts. They'd spray shaving cream all over you at the airports. We were mobbed on college campuses. We came back to being the last hired and the first fired. You find now that society realizes that they done us a great injustice. The political pressure is on the government. Agent Orange is real. The society knows that. You got people now who don't mind standing with the Vietnam veteran. We're going to win this thing.

Personally, the Atlanta Agent Orange group has meant a lot of comfort and self-satisfaction to me. I like to help people. I've had a lot of men call me and say, "Man, if I had not met you I don't know what I would have done. I was cracking up. I was about to lose my mind. But when I sat down and talked to you, things changed." Often people don't give you any flowers, and to hear someone appreciate what you do is satisfying.

Agent Orange Victims of Atlanta has been another church. We had no money, just people who needed help. For some strange reason, the Lord chose me to be their minister. I know why I'm here. In order for me to live, I have to be here. □

Celia W. Dugger is a reporter for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

ON THE

The Only Question

Scientists claim the polar ice caps are shifting, turning land sideways and blue oceans into lakes of turmoil. The only escape seems to be in flight— not across land, as we used to know it, but into the atmosphere, like the birds around us. The only question is— where?

— Toni Hayes

First Fish of the Day

Sometimes I feel like my eyes, my legs, my arms, my whole body is imprisoned in stone. Grey stone. My mind is all that's free.

I imagine I'm at my favorite spot on the Bayou Bank. I concentrate on my line, hoping to catch my first fish of the day.

I am at peace.

— Carol Phillips

"On the Wing" is taken from a book of poems, vignettes and art of the same name produced by women in the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women.



It's hard for a free fish to understand what's happening to a hooked one.

— Carol Phillips



WING

All were participants in a 13-week creative writing course taught by Karen L. Jaeckel and sponsored by the Women's Advocacy Bureau of the Department of Human Resources.



The LCIW Education Trailer

(Emulation of Elizabeth Bishop's "Visits to St. Elizabeth's")

This is the trailer
left for uselessness
with no logical reason

This is the trailer
left for uselessness
for no logical reason
one day opened

This is the trailer
left for uselessness
for no logical reason
one day opened
to shed some light
upon living people
who at times appear
DEAD!

— Lisa Saltzman

Indian Warriors Under The LCIW Education Trailer

(Emulation of Elizabeth Bishop's "Visits to St. Elizabeth's")

This is the trailer that sits
on top of state property
beneath which thousands of
dead Indian warriors are said
to lie.

This is the trailer that sits
on top of state property
beneath which thousands of
dead Indian warriors are said
to lie, within which sit many
souls who anticipate seeing the
outside walls and dread walking
back down the lonesome halls.

This is the trailer that sits
on top of state property
beneath which thousands of
dead warriors are said
to lie, within which sit many
souls who anticipate seeing the
outside walls and dread walking
back down the same lonesome
halls that lead to a room, a
four-cornered room that crowds
minds with memories of yester-
years, the mistakes, the ups
the downs the laughter the
frowns.

This is the trailer that sits
on top of state property
beneath which thousands of
dead Indian warriors are
said to lie, within which sit
many souls who anticipate
seeing the outside walls and
dread walking back down the
same lonesome halls that lead
to a room, a four-cornered
room that crowds minds with
memories of yester-years, the
laughter, the tears, the ups
the downs the smiles the
frowns the empty souls longing
to find their way back to
society's crowds.

— Carolyn Wyatt

1980s

SHARECROPPING

By Paul Cromwell & Tom Israel

On December 8, 1980, Cecil Walker of Meridian, Mississippi, went out to cut and haul a load of pulpwood. At 6:30 in the morning, he departed from the Kemper County woods 30 miles north of the city. He was driving his '57 Ford



truck, rebuilt with four posts welded onto the back two thirds of his chassis in order to hold the four cords of five-foot-three-inch pine logs he was about to cut. Cecil was anxious to get working that day since he had spent the past week and a half repairing his truck's engine and scraping together the money to cover the parts. His bills were running late, Christmas was coming, and Cecil needed the \$70 that each load of wood would earn him.

Usually, a pulpwood cutter goes out with a crew of two to four other people. It's not uncommon to find family members, often the cutter's children in their early teens, serving as helpers. Once the tree has been cut with their hand-held, gasoline-driven chainsaws, the cutter and his crew begin the arduous task of loading it. With the help of a boom that swings a metal cable over the side of the truck, the wood is hoisted and stacked onto the truck, often towering 20 feet off the ground. On December 8, however, Cecil was performing the task alone. Six hours later, with his truck stacked, his clothes covered with saw dust and the buzz of his chainsaw ringing in his ears, Cecil left the woods for the long and winding drive down Highway 45 back to the Meridian woodyard.

Cecil was a big man, about 30 pounds overweight. He was missing one arm from the elbow down, the

result of a chainsaw accident incurred four years earlier. His friends say that it's no wonder he was unsuccessful in bailing out when his brakes gave way and his speeding truck crushed him against the wooden embankment, killing him instantly. On December 8, Cecil Walker became the third United Woodcutters Association (UWA) member in five weeks to be killed or permanently disabled because he cut pulpwood for a living.

WHO ARE THE WOODCUTTERS?

Pulpwood cutters are as important to the paper industry as farmers are to the production of food, or assembly line workers are to the manufacturing of automobiles and steel, or textile workers are to the manufacturing of clothing and linen products; and yet, the majority of pulpwood cutters lack basic employee protections such as worker's compensation, disability insurance, social security, unemployment insurance and retirement benefits. High operating costs and exaggerated suffering caused by the spiraling cost of living have thrown many woodcutters into a cycle of economic debt and dependency. They suffer from a rate of accidents and fatalities second only to mine workers in this country. And woodcutters are unprotected by any legal remedies to the problem of "shortsticking": the mis-

measurement of the wood they sell, accounting for heavy economic losses.

The majority of Mississippi's 10,000 pulpwood cutters are black, living off dirt roads in pocket rural communities outside the nearby towns and

villages. Their lives and their jobs closely resemble those of their sharecropping forefathers. When we asked one UWA member what his father did for a living he responded, "farming." When we asked him what and where he farmed, he replied, "You know, sharecropping. He worked for Joe Riley. I'm cutting wood off his son's land now."

The woodcutter is responsible for supplying all of the equipment necessary to get the job done. This includes his truck, chainsaw and the replacement parts and many gallons of gasoline needed to keep them running. Out of his paycheck also comes the stumpage fee: money paid to the landowner for timber. To get himself started and keep himself in business, the woodcutter often borrows money from the local woodyard operator. It's not uncommon to see payments for a truck, a chainsaw and even mortgage payments on the cutter's house under the deduction column on his paycheck. And the interest rates are often exorbitant. One cutter told me, "I borrowed \$1,400 about four years ago to replace the engine in my truck, fix my pickup and buy a new chainsaw. He's been taking five to 10 dollars out of every load I haul. About a year ago I asked him how much I still owed. After he checked his books he told me — \$1,400."

THE WOODYARDS AND THE PAPER COMPANIES

After a pulpwood cutter has spent a long day in the woods, cutting pine or hardwood with his chainsaw into five-foot-three-inch lengths and stacking the wood on his rig, he delivers the wood to one of the approximately 200 pulpwood receiving facilities (woodyards) in the state. It is the woodyard operator who measures and purchases the wood from the cutter and in turn ships it by truck or train on to the pulpmill where the wood will be manufactured into paper, particleboard, cardboard and a host of other products.

It is the woodyard operator with whom the pulpwood cutter has daily contact. Although the price paid for a cord of wood has increased only about 20 percent over the past 10 years, the woodcutter's operating costs (and profits of the paper companies) have soared 300 to 400 percent. As the woodyard operators have continued to shortstick in the measurement of a cutter's wood, woodcutters' anger has naturally focused on this most immediate culprit, the woodyard owner and operator.

The woodyard operator is, in fact, a convenient middleman serving the interests of himself and the paper companies. The term middleman or "labor contractor" — a person who makes a deal with a firm to supply a certain product and in turn supervises and coordinates the labor involved in getting that product — is the most accurate description for the woodyard operators.

Almost all of the 200 woodyards operating in Mississippi are capitalized by one of the major paper companies. Operating and owning a woodyard is an expensive venture. Initial investment capital is required for the land where the yard is situated, loaders which move the wood off the trucks and onto the train cars and trucks, and to buy wood before it is shipped off and sold to the paper companies. Capital is also required to hire a couple of yard operators and to loan money to the cutters to buy saws, trucks and other equipment. In return, the paper companies receive a long-term, first-refusal contract with the woodyard. It is believed that the paper companies set quotas on how much wood and the type of wood bought by the yards on a per week basis.

They also set the price per cord.

The following hypothetical example illustrates this dependency of the woodyard on the paper companies. St. Regis capitalizes a local woodyard in return for 200 to 500 cords of wood per week. If a woodyard buys more wood than the week's quota, they are free to sell it elsewhere. St. Regis normally buys the wood for \$400 per train car load, but announces for the next few weeks that the demand is low and that they will only pay \$375. The woodyard operator is then in a position of taking the loss

Richton Tie & Timber, based in Perry County, owns 17 woodyards throughout Mississippi.

The major ramification of this system for the woodcutter is the lack of basic employee protections and benefits. By law the woodcutter is considered an independent businessperson. This permits the paper companies to avoid having to contract directly with the woodcutters and provide any benefits. Whether by calculated intent or sheer neglect, the woodyard system serves the financial interests of the paper companies.



photos by Mike Russell

PULPWOOD CUTTERS ARE AS IMPORTANT TO THE PAPER INDUSTRY AS FARMERS ARE TO THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD.

himself, cutting back on the price per cord he pays the cutter or underestimating the amount of wood the cutter has delivered (shortsticking). The wooddealer is caught, having very little control over the situation. An excellent real example of this dependency occurred this past summer when a Crown Zellerbach mill was partially destroyed by fire and all of the yards supplying the mill were forced to cut back drastically or completely shut down.

Who are the wooddealers? In general, they are the prominent businesspeople in the small Mississippi communities where the yards are located. They may own the local hardware store, saw shop or, as in the case of Bennie Garner of Mendenhall, Mississippi, the local Ford and Tractor dealership. There are also individuals who do nothing else but own and operate several yards in an area.

PAPER COMPANY PROFILES

The major paper companies operating in Mississippi are International, Weyerhaeuser, St. Regis, Masonite, Crown Zellerbach and Georgia Pacific. They are all billion dollar companies, listed in the "Fortune 500," operating pulp mills and owning extensive land holdings throughout the South. All are multinationals and conglomerates.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, they began a program of worldwide expansion. All have investments in at least two of the three underdeveloped forest regions in the noncommunist world: North America, the Amazon region of Brazil and the Philippines. A number of them also have economic holdings in South Africa.

In the middle '60s each company began a pattern of diversification and conglomeration, investing in profitable areas such as land holdings, oil and

natural gas, chemicals, plastics, etc. Because of their vast land holdings, they are able to drill and explore on this land for oil and natural gas. While many of them contract with the oil companies to do research and development and thereby receive royalties with high profit margins, International Paper Company and Georgia Pacific have purchased their own oil companies.

In the area of chemical production, the companies have had their foot in the door from the start since a wide range of chemicals are needed in the production of paper. But in recent years, the companies have shifted from ownership and production of

chemicals for their own use to sales on the open market. In 1960 chemical firms owned by Georgia Pacific sold 80 percent of their production to their own pulpmills, whereas today 85 percent is sold on the open market.

Besides being multinational and conglomerate in scope, the paper companies and paper industry are highly concentrated. Whereas a lumber yard and mill are small ventures, needing a small amount of capital to get started, pulpmills are expensive, highly mechanized operations requiring 24-hour-a-day operation at 95 percent capacity to register profits. The five largest paper companies account for over 33 percent of the

Southern pulp producing capacity, with the top 10 accounting for 48.9 percent.

The timber industry needs the South and the South needs the timber industry. The South supplies 45 percent of the country's forest products, including paper, lumber and building products. In 1970, timber companies owned over 2.5 million acres of land in Mississippi alone; they are continually buying up and long-term-leasing poor people's small land holdings. There are five major pulpmills in Mississippi and plans for at least three more in the near future. The superstructure of rail lines to and from the woodyards and pulpmills, along with a trained work force and vast forest regions, means that the companies are in the South to stay.

The state of Mississippi needs the timber industry as much as the industry needs Mississippi. One out of every four dollars in the Mississippi economy comes from the manufacturing and sale of forest products. It is estimated that beyond the 10,000 pulpwood cutters in the state there are 7,000 jobs in the paper industry, 18,000 jobs in the furniture industry and 23,000 jobs in lumber and wood products.

There are many reasons why Mississippi and the South provide a favorable business climate to the timber and paper industry. Trees simply grow more rapidly in the South's warm and damp climate. Whereas the Douglas Fir of the Pacific Northwest requires 65 to 75 years to grow and mature, the Southern Pine requires only 30 years. With the recent boom of the sunbelt economy, greater demand for paper, construction and other wood materials provides for expanding markets. European markets are also expanding as Scandinavian wood production has reached its output capacity.

In the Pacific Northwest the public sector owns extensive forest lands, but in the South only nine percent of the forests are not in the hands of private owners. Low taxes, low wages, strong "right-to-work" laws (in Mississippi, these statutes are built into the state constitution), and very few conservation restrictions are further reasons why the paper and timber industries are happy to return to their Southern roots.

WOODCUTTERS SUPPLY ALL THEIR OWN EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING THE TRUCK, CHAINSAW AND REPLACEMENT PARTS.



THE WOODCUTTERS ORGANIZE

Legend has it that two friends were walking along the road, one of whom bragged about his talent with a bullwhip. Growing tired of this boasting, his friend finally challenged him. "If you're so good with that thing, let me see you knock just one leaf off that tree." With a flash, one crack of the whip had the leaf floating to the ground. After further walking and bragging, his friend challenged him again. "If you're so good, let's see you knock one petal off that flower." Sure enough, done as before. Finally, the companions approached a beehive hanging from a tree. "See those bees flying around that hive? If you're really as good as you say you are, let's see you hit just one of them bees." Our friend with the bullwhip stopped in his tracks, turned to his friend and quickly exclaimed, "Are you kidding! Bees are organized! You knock one of them bees off that hive and the whole herd will be after us!"

If we have learned anything from the gains made by auto and steel workers in the '30s, the Civil Rights Movement in the '50s and '60s and the organizing of farmworkers in the '60s and '70s, it's the lesson that alone and divided we shall fall, but organized and together we shall win. Solid organization is the key to the United Woodcutters Association's strategy for improving working conditions for Southern woodcutters.

Woodcutters have been trying to improve working conditions for as long as they have been cutting wood. At the turn of the century, the Industrial Workers of the World helped Louisiana woodcutters to organize. But as severe government repression crushed the Wobblies, so too did it destroy the efforts of the woodcutters. In the early '70s the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF) provided substantial support for an organizing drive among woodcutters. But when political infighting destroyed SCEF, the woodcutters' organizing fell victim as well.

If there is a lesson in this history it is that the nature and extent of community support for poor people who organize is critical. Given the importance of the church in the rural South, the United Woodcutters Association has placed a priority on building support in the religious community. Begun in 1978 and sustained by the

funding and support of major national and local religious denominations, the Southern Woodcutters Assistance Project provides support and technical assistance to the organizing of Southern pulpwood cutters.

Project director Reverend Jim Drake brought 16 years of experience with the California United Farmworkers Union to this project. Using organizing styles and tactics developed by Fred Ross, Saul Alinsky, the Industrial Areas Foundation, Cesar Chavez and the UFW, woodcutters have been organized into locally based UWA coops and credit unions across the state.

The United Woodcutters Associa-

tion is the official workers organization with members in 43 of the largest wood-producing counties in the state. Upon becoming a UWA member and paying his \$36 a year dues, a woodcutter can purchase his oil and chainsaw replacement parts at about half the retail cost from a fellow member who serves as the coop representative. The reps collect dues and sell the parts out of their houses, which are restocked once every two weeks. Coop sales for 1981 were \$112,000.

The United Woodcutters Federal Credit Union was begun in 1980 as a means of breaking the dependency and credit trap woodcutters find them-

THE UNITED WOODCUTTERS ASSOCIATION HAS ORGANIZED 43 COOPS AND CREDIT UNIONS.



selves in with the woodyard operators. Members of the credit union make regular contributions, apply for loans of up to \$500 to their local credit union committee consisting of their fellow woodcutters and wives, repay the loans at low interest rates and share in the year-end profits that the credit union has accumulated. All initial loan decisions are made by local credit committees representing both woodcutters and their wives. Twenty-five percent of the elected officers of the credit union are women.

Besides providing substantial economic savings, the coop and credit union have allowed woodcutters to work together and trust one another.

By building stable institutions in the local communities, organizers have been freed to move into new counties, building a statewide organization.

FAIR SCALE

Currently the UWA has over 1,200 members. Six-hundred-and-fifty people attended the August, 1980, Second Annual Convention. There the UWA voted that its first campaign would be to end the "shortstick."

When a woodcutter takes a loaded pulpwood truck to a woodyard, the woodyard operator measures the amount of wood for sale with a calibrated stick. Using the height, width

and length measurements, the dealer figures the number of cords for which a cutter will be paid on a conversion table. Inaccurate measuring causes cutters to lose, on an average, between \$2,000 and \$5,000 a year.

The lack of legislative protection against shortsticking has led the woodcutters into a campaign to get the Mississippi legislature to pass the UWA "Fair Pulpwood Scaling and Practices Act." The purpose of the act is to set standards as to how wood is measured and to establish an arbitration board to settle grievances and issue penalties against yards found cheating on the stick or harassing haulers who file complaints.

In the fall of 1980, woodcutters held community meetings to inform their state legislators of the shortstick problem and to urge them to vote for the law. The Kemper County community meeting serves as a good example of woodcutters and their families coming together. As the cutters and their wives gathered a week prior to the meeting to plan the agenda, one of the cutters asked, "If the dealer finds out that I am passing out leaflets about this meeting, and he cuts me off, which one of you is going home with me to tell my family that I'm out of a job?" The debate and discussion which followed surfaced the fears of reprisals and intimidation that are rampant in the pulpwood industry. Six days later, despite heavy rains and the muddy access to the community center, 100 people came to present their concerns and to witness their two legislators promise to support and sponsor the act.

The UWA's legislation was killed in the 1981 session by the active lobbying of the paper industry and the collusion of the state's powerful legislative leadership. But the UWA continued building support for the legislative proposal.

Early in the year, representatives of five religious denominations constituted themselves as the "Mississippi Clergy and Laypeoples Committee for Woodcutter Justice." Based on testimony gathered at a special hearing, the Committee issued press statements and testified before legislative committees in support of the woodcutters. In the fall, Bishop C.P. Minnick of the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church published a statement calling for fair scaling legislation. Soon thereafter, Bishop Joseph Bru-



I WAS RAISED UP IN THE

woods, more so than in the fields. But I did some of all of it. It took it all in order to live back then — you had to farm, cut wood, whatever you could do. That was back in the days when they used crosscut saws. We got about \$2.50 a cord for cutting it, peeling the bark off and stacking it up in pins. It takes five pins stacked six feet high to make a cord. The man would come and measure it in the woods and then his own trucks would come and haul it out. That was in the '30s and '40s. Back then times was hard enough that people, if they made a dollar, they was so proud of it they didn't complain.

Woodcutting is really a rough, dirty work, and a hard work. During the summertime it's about as hot a work as you can get into, and in the winter it's about as cold a work, and about as muddy. You just have to learn to ignore that. And it is dangerous work. I've cut wood around sloughs and lakes where you'd have to notch out a place to stand and climb up on where you could cut — old swell-bellied gums that you can't cut down low because they are too big.

And when I was a young guy I used to think that a tree didn't grow too big but what it couldn't be carried on a man's shoulder. But I really don't know anyone that works in the woods that uses much safety equipment. I thought about getting insurance for some years, and I've talked to dealers about the need for it. They'd agree there was a need for it, but that's about as far as they went. And I couldn't afford it on my own.

I could have followed other lines of work but it just wasn't appealing to me. I did some factory work, at the Stonewall Cotton Mill, but I didn't care for the racket or the dust. And the production set-up, the machines always keep you going. I guess the main thing I like about woodcutting is that if I get

ready to sit down and listen to the birds sing a while, I can do it. I just like the scenery in the woods, I like to get far enough back to where there's not a power saw or anything running, and the onliest thing I can hear is the wind blowing through the pine trees and the birds chirping. And I wonder if everybody that lived 50 or 100 years ago enjoyed the peace and quiet as much as I do.

Just a few years back — I don't know if it's changed or not — you couldn't get an FHA loan or anything to buy a home, if you were just a woodhauler. A lot of the public considered that nothing. But I've never denied being a wood-

in a bind for grocery money that they'll flood them out on whatever kind of wood they're buying. And these big companies have grabbed up all the land. When I got out of the service I sold my land for \$25 an acre to a pulpwood dealer — that's what land was selling for back then. And I haven't been able to buy me a place since.

So far I think the main thing we've accomplished is we've opened their ears. As far as the individual just going and talking to them about it, I don't think they'd get very far. I think the only way they're going to recognize the woodhauler is through strength. And that applies not only to the

“The only way they're going to recognize the woodhauler is through strength.”

hauler. I have pride in it because it's an honest day's work. But I have regretted it some in the last few years, comparing what I could have made at other work to what I actually have made fooling with the wood.

I was surprised at my first meeting with the United Woodcutters Association to find how big a thing it was. I joined up at the first meeting — I'd been wanting something like this to come along. There are places that really do need a law about the scaling. There's a lot of unfairness, particularly when things tighten up to where you can only sell a certain type of timber, or only to a certain yard. The dealers refuse to do anything but fatten their own pockets. And usually there's enough poor people

timber companies but to the politicians. And it has improved. I think they've recognized that the woodhauler is a man that's going to have to be dealt with.

Raymond Heard is a white woodcutter from Hickory, Mississippi. The son of a tenant farmer and cotton mill worker, Heard has become a full-time pulpwood hauler after one year of sharecropping cotton — “the hardest year of work I ever put in for nothing.” Since joining the United Woodcutters Association last May, Heard has become the tool cooperative and credit union representative for the woodcutters of Newton County. The interview was conducted by Tony Horwitz.



nini of the Jackson Diocese of the Catholic Church also issued a statement of support, as did the Central Mississippi Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church U.S.

Months of work came to fruition in November when the Mississippi Farm Bureau's convention endorsed a call for fair scaling legislation. The UWA had long maintained that timberland owners were cheated along with the woodcutters by shortsticking. A groundswell of concern by the state's small timberland owners moved the generally conservative Farm Bureau into action.

The UWA's 1982 legislative campaign centered on a statewide "Truck-in for Justice" caravan. For three weeks a member of the UWA Executive Board drove the lead pulpwood truck through 20 UWA locals around the state. Each stop was an occasion for a parade, a community meeting or an action at the local woodyard. These events received extensive press coverage in county papers and on small radio stations across the state. On January 29 the caravan returned to Jackson for a parade and rally. The day when a dozen raggedy old pulpwood trucks, and 20 pickups and cars, paraded through downtown Jackson at the lunch hour will be remembered for a long time to come by the woodcutters of Mississippi.

At the time of this writing, the UWA's proposed legislation had cleared the full House of Representatives by a vote of 111 to six and was before the Senate Agriculture Committee.

The fight against shortsticking is just the beginning. Even if woodcutters were paid for the full size of their load, they would still be trapped at the bottom of the economic ladder. Victory over shortsticking would mean a significant shift in the power relationships at the woodyards. The industry's historic ability to cheat and harass woodcutters would be severely restricted through the mediation of the state. But the fundamental issues of the price paid per cord and basic employee benefits continue to loom over the woodcutters and their families.

FAIR PAY

The 1,000 people who attended the UWA's Second Constitutional Convention in September, 1981, moved the organization forward into new

A FRIEND ONCE TOLD ME, "WE ARE ALL

fundamentalists, it's just that we all have a different set of fundamentals." The church has displayed some essential fundamentals in their support of Mississippi woodcutters, both in the financial and moral support given to the Southern Woodcutters Assistance Project and in the courage displayed by members of the Mississippi Clergy and Laypeople Committee for Woodcutter Justice. Without devaluing or discrediting much of the important work that American denominational institutions have done among the needy, there is a need for the church in this country to move from a "charity" to a more "liberation" perspective and approach. The following are a few key fundamentals that a liberation perspective and approach should bear in mind.

The Judeo-Christian tradition is one which believes that God takes sides in people's struggles for freedom. The Biblical story of the Exodus is a good example of God responding to the outcries of an oppressed people and siding with them in their fight for freedom. This belief requires that the church must align itself with the poor and oppressed rather than simply mediate a situation, thereby creating a false sense of peace and reconciliation without real justice.

When reporters asked how objective the Mississippi Clergy and Laypeople Committee for Woodcutter Justice was in their hearing and their lobbying for woodcutters,

one of the key committee spokespersons replied, "It is an appropriate and important role of the church to be a conscience of the state. We were objective in our hearing by inviting both sides, the paper companies and the woodcutters, to testify. And when it comes to lobbying, we were no different from any other special interest group, except that our special interest is to see that justice is done." The Committee listed its

that to know God is to do justice.

At the heart of rural Mississippi woodcutter communities, and many working-class communities across this country, is the institution of the church. Churches have for years provided the social space where people have been able to gain a sense of self-worth based on who they are in the eyes of God rather than in the eyes of a society which values status, prestige, wealth and violent power. Labor, commu-

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream."

—Amos 5:24

findings in a report entitled "Work Without Wages" based on a scripture from Jeremiah.

*Shame on the man who
builds his house by unjust
means and completes its
roof-chambers by fraud, mak-
ing countrymen work with-
out payment, giving them no
wage for their labour!*

—Jeremiah 22:13

And by lobbying on behalf of the woodcutters, the Committee lived out the Biblical mandate

nity and women's organizers need to examine and work with these religious communities, calling upon them to live out their Biblical faith. It is not at all difficult to see the analogy between the events of Biblical history and the Mississippi, South Korea and El Salvador of the present. Under the Carter administration, Jesus would have been called a fighter for human rights; under Reagan, a political terrorist. Such is the context out of which we must continue to work. □

and challenging directions. Taking the lead of the courageous Fayette haulers, the convention expanded the rallying call of the association from "Fair Scale" to "Fair Scale/Fair Pay."

During the summer of 1981, the UWA led a successful strike that brought the pulpwood business in Fayette, Mississippi, to a complete halt. Woodcutters stayed on strike for four weeks, shutting down all three

yards in the Fayette area.

It was a difficult strike; even picket duty was problematic. It was too hot to leave picketers outside the yards for long shifts: 95 degrees at 10:00 in the morning and over 100 all afternoon long. A system was worked out where the gas stations were watched to be sure no woodtrucks fueled up, and patrols were sent out every half hour to check the yards

and be sure no wood was being delivered. One of the strike leaders began receiving threatening phone calls at home. Another striker had his woodtruck repossessed by the yard.

But the strikers held firm, meeting daily to receive reports from the strike committee and to divide up responsibilities. Of the 51 woodcutting crews in the Fayette area, only two continued hauling through

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UWA CREDIT BOARD. STANDING IS SAM CARTER, A BOARD MEMBER FROM PHILADELPHIA, MS.



the strike. But the most noteworthy development was the support given by other woodcutters across the state. Delegations of UWA members drove hundreds of miles to join the Fayette haulers in marches and on picket duty. Dozens of locals made financial contributions to the strikers.

After one month the first yard gave in. They agreed to a set of scaling regulations, which are now posted at the yard, and a raise in the price paid per cord (by giving a "bonus cord.") They also agreed to buy wood from all the haulers in the area, regardless of where they hauled prior to the strike or how active they had been in the strike. With that settlement the worst was over. It was six more weeks until the second yard reopened with a raise on the wood.

The third yard never reopened. It was International Paper's woodyard. Jake Morris, the dealer, had reached a tentative agreement with the haulers, but returned to say that the company forbade him from finalizing it. There is little remorse, however, for Morris was the worst dealer in the county. He was renowned for excessive cheating on the stick and for loan-sharking on haulers' debts. The lesson is clear, though: while the independent dealers were willing to settle, International Paper — the giant of the industry — chose to take the hard line.

International Paper is the kingpin. For conditions to improve in the industry, change must start with them. Woodcutters have a long struggle ahead before they can realize the basic benefits and living wages most American workers take for granted. But with the leadership developing out of the coop, credit union, fair scaling campaign and local strikes like the one in Fayette, the United Woodcutters Association is building a strong core from which to work. □

Paul Cromwell, a student at Union Theological Seminary, spent a year and a half as an intern with the Southern Woodcutters Assistance Project. Tom Israel is Assistant to the President of the United Woodcutters Association. Portions of this article previously appeared in Radical Religion.

CRYSTAL CITY IS A HOT AND DUSTY TOWN

OF 10,000 PEOPLE IN SOUTH TEXAS'S ZAVALA COUNTY, LESS than 50 miles from the Rio Bravo, more commonly known as the Rio Grande. In the 1950s, Crystal City's leaders designated the town "Spinach Capital of the World," in honor of local agribusiness and the Del Monte packing plant which were, and remain, the town's major employers. They erected a statue of Popeye, the spinach-gobbling cartoon sailor, in front of City Hall. In December, 1969, Popeye acquired a shiny coat of brown paint, courtesy of Chicano high school students — and a revolution began in South Texas.

Crystal City was 90 percent Chicano — but Anglos owned 100 percent of the farmland and 95 percent of the small businesses. There were a few Chicanos in local government, but they were known as *vendidos*, sellouts, who had given their loyalty to the Anglo establishment.

The most odious manifestation of economic and political inequality was the Anglo-controlled school system. The system worked to eradicate in Chicano children any pride in themselves or their own culture, any belief that they could succeed in life without conforming to Anglo expectations. Instruction was entirely in English. Students who could not understand English or do well on

culturally biased standardized tests were classified as retarded. History was taught from an Anglo perspective: the history of Texas began with Anglo settlement and the subsequent war that led to independence from Mexico; the defenders of the Alamo were heroes, the Mexican army was an invasion force; the U.S. conquest of the Southwest was seen as the inevitable triumph of a more progressive culture. Teachers were often racist.

A painful symbol of Anglo control of the schools was the quota for cheerleaders. Of four cheerleaders in the mostly Chicano town, three each year were white and one brown. It is not surprising that few Chicanos finished school.

In December of 1969, 700 students walked out of Crystal City high school demanding bilingual, bicultural education, removal of racist teachers, better physical conditions in the schools and other reforms. A boycott in the spring of that year had been short-lived and unsuccessful, but this time the students, and the Chicano community, were much better organized. The boycott quickly spread to the lower grades, with the active support of the parents. Thanks in part to some national attention the boycott received, the Board of Education caved in on most of the demands. The student revolt marked a dramatic change in social relationships in Cristal, as the town is called by Chicanos — but it was not a spontaneous occurrence.

Earlier that year, a Cristal native named Jose Angel Gutierrez had

returned to Zavala County after completing his master's degree in political science with a thesis on the objective conditions for revolution in South Texas. He had come home to put his conclusions into practice, with the help of his compadres in MAYO, the Mexican-American Youth Organization. MAYO organized the student rebellion to build pride and hope in the Chicano community, preparatory to organizing an independent mass political party which could seize power in Zavala and surrounding counties.

Gutierrez has been a model for other Chicanos to stand up to the gringo. As he told one interviewer, "It's either me or him. That's the kind of life it is down here, and I'm just tired of being pushed around. Psychologically, if you give in to one of those bastards, you've had it. That's been the life of our parents. That's why they go around with their hats in their hands. This has to be stopped. We have to be just as arrogant." Gutierrez concluded a speech in 1970 by saying, "To the gringos in the audience, I have one final message to convey: up yours, baby. You've had it, from now on."

But it is not as a public speaker or as a public example of Chicano pride and anger that Gutierrez has done the most for the movement. He was responsible for the thorough, professional organizing which made the revolt in Cristal a success, and which made La Raza Unida party viable.

photo by Susan Nelson



ROOTS OF STRUGGLE

The "Chicano Movement" which gave birth to La Raza Unida is generally thought of as dating from the mid-'60s. But Chicano historians trace their struggle all the way back to the 1840s, when northern Mexico was made part of the U.S. through conquest. Under the 1848 treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the U.S. acquired what is now New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Colorado, Utah and parts of other states. In return, Mexico received a token payment and a promise that the rights of Mexicans and their descendants within the conquered territory would be respected. (Texas had been annexed by the U.S. earlier, after Anglo settlers revolted.)

The U.S. honored its treaty obligations to the Mexicanos about as well as it honored its treaties with the Indian nations — which is to say not at all. The Mexican citizens in question were themselves either Indians or people of mixed Spanish and Native American descent with mostly Indian culture, except for the Spanish language.* Land grants from the Spanish crown, for example, were often held in common by an entire village, in an attempt to translate the native concept of land tenure into a European equivalent.

The U.S. refused to recognize any such communal holdings, and simply confiscated them. Individual holdings were stripped from the Mexicanos by discriminatory taxes, fraud and violence. The Mexicanos soon became a landless laboring class. Along with the economic base, the political machinery passed into Anglo hands.

Armed resistance included social banditry and more politically conscious organizations like Las Gorras Blancas (White Caps), who cut the barbed wire

the Anglos used to enclose their stolen range land. Political parties were formed, including one called La Raza Unida in 1856.

Los Caballeros del Labor, the Mexicano affiliate of the Knights of Labor, was active in the 1890s and was apparently connected with Las Gorras Blancas. Los Caballeros added a dash of Mexican nationalism to the Knights' vision of cooperative commonwealth. A few years later, syndicalists were active in the area, including some organizations with roots in Mexico, and the Industrial Workers of the World (known as the Wobblies), a movement which grew out of Anglo socialism and industrial unionism.

The Mexican revolution was an important influence on Chicano thought, and the long exile in the U.S. of Mexican revolutionary Ricardo Flores Magon resulted in a growing understanding between Mexicano radicals on both sides of the border. But Mexicanos in the U.S. were unable to make any headway.

For one thing, they were increasingly employed as migrant workers, which made electoral action almost impossible. Repressive violence was also rife. Police and Texas Rangers had a virtual license to kill Mexicanos. According to some sources, lynchings of Mexicanos were more common than lynchings of blacks in the Deep South.

Chicanos cite cultural repression as one of the greatest obstacles to their progress. Mexicanos were asked to accept the paradoxical idea that anybody could "make it" in the U.S. if he or she would only accept Anglo values and the notion that struggle as a nation or class was irrelevant when the real problem was one of personal success. A few successful *vendidos* were always there as examples. Mexicanos were treated as immigrants in their own land. They were told it was their fault if they could not acquire Anglo culture and succeed in Anglo society. But the schools failed to prepare them to do so, even if they had wanted to.

There are many theories as to why, in the face of these obstacles and after a long period of relative quiet, the Chicano movement erupted with such force in the 1960s. Some people say the Chicanos were inspired by the black civil-rights movement or by the revolts of colonized people in Africa and Asia. Others point to simple



Jose Angel Gutierrez, a founder of La Raza Unida, at the Marcha para Justicia in support of the Texas Farmworkers Organization, 1977.

demographics: there had been a wave of Mexican immigration to fill the labor shortage during the Second World War, and the children of these immigrants were just coming of age. Also, a larger number of these young people were in college, and much of the early impetus for the Chicano movement came out of student organizations. Many point to the work of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers as reawakening the Chicano sense of national identity and pride.

As important as Chavez and the union were as inspiration, they have had little connection with the Chicano movement as a whole. Most Chicano leadership is more radical than Chavez on economic issues, and more nationalistic. Their notions of Chicano nationalism encompass a spectrum of long-range goals, from the creation of a new sovereign nation to reunification with Mexico to Chicano control of Chicano communities within a more progressive, decentralized U.S.

* It is really inaccurate to refer to Chicanos as "Hispanics." Unlike the English, who brought entire families to the New World, and simply removed or exterminated the natives to make room for themselves, the Spanish sent mostly male settlers, who intermarried with the natives and attempted to extend Spanish dominion over the existing population. Middle-class, assimilated Chicanos have attempted to define themselves as "Spanish-American," believing that a claim of European ancestry would win more status in U.S. society than admission of native roots.



MOMENTUM BUILDS

An important forerunner to La Raza Unida was Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres, an organization in northern New Mexico which seeks to recover the stolen Spanish land grants. The Alianza made a quantum leap in numbers and militancy in 1965, when hundreds of small farmers had their grazing rights on federal land severely restricted, apparently as part of an attempt to put them out of business and run them out of the area.

Led by Reies Lopez Tijerina, the son of a sharecropper and former itinerant preacher, 350 Alianzistas occupied part of the Kit Carson National Forest in October, 1966, and declared themselves the Republic of San Joaquin del Rio de Chama, after the name of the original land grant. As a result of a bloodless confrontation with Forest Service rangers, Tijerina was eventually sentenced to two years in prison.

As Tijerina was awaiting trial in June, 1967, one of the most dramatic events in the history of Chicano armed resistance occurred, the famous "Courthouse Raid." The Alianza planned a mass meeting at Coyote, New Mexico, within the San Joaquin land grant. *Vendido* District Attorney Alfonso Sanchez tried to outlaw the meeting, claiming the movement was "Communist inspired." Sanchez issued warrants for Tijerina and other leaders, and set up roadblocks on the highways leading into Coyote. Eleven Alianzistas who tried to slip through were arrested for "unlawful assembly."

The leadership decided to make a citizen's arrest of Sanchez, and 20 members went to Tierra Amarilla courthouse on the morning of June 5 to carry out their plan. Sanchez, it turned out, was not there. But state police and sheriff's deputies were. There was a shootout in which a policeman and deputy were wounded. The Alianzistas fled into the hills, pursued by National Guard troops with tanks and artillery. Sanchez rounded up 50 innocent Chicanos, mostly elderly, and imprisoned them in a muddy sheep pen without food or water, hoping the Alianzistas would reveal themselves in an attempt to liberate the prisoners.

The governor, embarrassed by Sanchez's extraordinary zeal, sent the U.S. army home and promised there would be no bloodshed if the fugitives

surrendered. Tijerina and his followers accepted these terms.

Tijerina was finally acquitted of all charges stemming from the courthouse raid, but was later jailed on trumped-up charges of destroying federal property in connection with the burning of a U.S. Forest Service sign. Later, new charges were brought in connection with the courthouse raid, and this time he was convicted. The two years he spent in jail, and his long period of probation, were enough to take the steam out of the land grant movement.

Others, meanwhile, continued the development of the Chicano national movement. One of the most important figures was Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, a Chicano from Denver who had made money as a prizefighter and then become a successful businessman and Democratic politician. In the mid-'60s, Gonzalez repudiated the Democrats and the Anglo establishment and founded La Crusada para la Justicia, a community organization especially notable for redirecting the energies of alienated barrio youth into social service and political activism.

Gonzalez gave the movement much of its vocabulary and vision. It was he who popularized the name "Chicano" to replace cumbersome and even misleading labels such as "Mexican-American" or "Indo-Hispano." The word comes from the Aztec name for citizens of their empire.

Gonzalez also revived the Aztec name for the Chicano homeland. Aztlán, located in what is now northern New Mexico and south Colorado, was the original country of the Aztecs before they migrated to Mexico. And it was Gonzalez who called the Chicano Youth Conference in the spring of 1969, at which 1,500 delegates adopted the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, the seminal document of modern Chicano nationalism. The document is in part a poetic statement of race and national pride, and in part an articulation of specific ideological currents in the movement.

Chicano radicalism looks to the Indian *pueblo* for many of its social and economic ideals. It borrows from Marx and other Western thinkers, but it doesn't accept any form of dogma uncritically. Chicano radicalism finds in its cultural background a profound respect for the natural environment, a successful model for communal ownership of the means



In 1979, a march and celebration were held in Crystal City commemorating the 10th anniversary of the school walkout.

photo by Susan Nelson

of production at the village level, and egalitarianism with a spirit of unselfish cooperation — all combined with freedom from European-style bureaucratization of social authority. The interaction of feminism with the Chicano movement produced an analysis which traces the fall in the status of women to the contamination of Native American culture by European feudalism and its capitalist successors. Women's issues are now important to the movement, and though Chicanas had to struggle early on against the sexism of male leadership, a concerted effort to develop female leadership has apparently been fairly successful. Finally, Chicano radicalism is very conscious of the struggles of oppressed and colonized people throughout the world, and expresses its solidarity with them. Against this background Gutierrez and MAYO set out to organize La Raza Unida.



photo by Susan Nelson

BIRTH OF THE PARTY

During the school boycott in Cristal, the students spent afternoons in special "freedom classes." But they spent their mornings in a door-to-door registration drive and recruiting for Ciudadanos Unidos, a community group MAYO had originally organized as a parent support group. During the New Year holidays, MAYO voted to run candidates for local office under the banner of a new party, La Raza Unida. By the time the school boycott ended early in January, Ciudadanos Unidos was strong enough that its adult members could take over the organizing work with the help of a full-time paid staffperson.

Partido de la Raza Unida won control of the school board and city council in Cristal in the April, 1970, election — just a few months after the founding of Ciudadanos Unidos and the school boycott. The courts denied the Partido ballot position for county-wide contests; nevertheless, write-in candidate Roel Rodriguez became the Partido's first county commissioner. In 1974, the Partido actually took control of the county government, with the election of Gutierrez as county judge.

The Partido's success in the Winter Garden area of Texas impressed Chicano leaders throughout the country. In October, 1971, the Partido had a Texas state convention at which it decided to go statewide and run a candidate for governor. Gutierrez was uneasy about this decision. Outside of the Winter Garden, the organizing work had not been done;

there was no party at the grassroots. La Raza Unida's candidate for governor in 1972 won six percent of the vote statewide, compared with 52 percent in Zavala County.

Gutierrez was even more uneasy about the convention of September 1-4, 1972, in El Paso, Texas, at which, mainly due to the urging of Corky Gonzalez, the national Partido de la Raza Unida was founded, with Gutierrez as chair. The Zavala County victories had probably looked too easy to outsiders; they didn't appreciate the tedious work of building the party at the grassroots which had gone before. Gonzalez wasn't really interested in grassroots organizing. He wanted to create a revolutionary vanguard party, grounded in Marxist-Leninist principles, with a cellular structure. His party would get involved in elections only as a way of educating the people. Gonzalez believed that the masses would rise to a declaration of Chicano nationhood dedicated to the elimination of capitalist exploitation of the Chicano people and homeland.

Gutierrez had different ideas. He wanted to build an independent electoral party at the grassroots, using the organizing techniques learned in Cristal. His strategy was to begin in rural areas and move into the cities only when the rural base was strong. He was less interested in ideology than in organization; ideology, he felt, should develop only in conjunction with the growth of an organized base. Gutierrez was afraid that declaring a national party before there was any grassroots organization would only lead to defeat and embarrassment.

The split between the *Corquecistas* and *Gutierristas* could no longer be contained by 1974, when Gonzalez led the Colorado branch out of the national party. La Raza Unida has never won an election in Colorado, but by that time the Partido was enough of a threat to the Texas establishment that it provoked a furious counterattack.

RETALIATION TAKES ITS TOLL

In Cristal, the new school board had established bilingual, bicultural education. Culturally biased IQ tests were eliminated. Textbooks were replaced. Thirty Anglo teachers and administrators resigned in protest, a move which undoubtedly pleased the

new school board. The city council declared the town off-limits to Texas Rangers. The Urban Renewal Commission's priorities were redirected away from downtown beautification to housing and neighborhood improvement. Statewide, La Raza's 1972 gubernatorial campaign had taken enough votes away from victorious Democrat Dolph Briscoe to make him a minority governor, with only 48 percent of the vote.

In 1973, the legislature raised the minimum vote total for a party to remain on the ballot from five percent to 20 percent. The Partido was able to have the first decision reversed in time for the 1976 elections, using the protections of the Voting Rights Act. Nevertheless, the episode hurt the Partido. Many people had heard that La Raza Unida had been outlawed. Raza voters were confused — would a vote for the Partido count? Many did not expect to find the Partido on the ballot and had already made up their minds to vote Democratic by the time they entered the voting booth. These problems may have prevented La Raza Unida party from increasing its totals statewide, but the Partido was nevertheless able to increase its total of elected officials at the local and county levels.

In 1978, the Democrats took more direct action — they sent in Judge Troy Williams to hear challenges by defeated Democrats to the 1978 elections in Zavala County. Williams's mission was to destroy the party, and he didn't fool around. The Democratic challengers claimed that the Raza Unida victories should be voided because undocumented people had voted. The judge forced the Partido members from office and ordered new elections, most of which the Democrats won. Chicanos thought if they voted they would be hauled into court to prove that they were in fact the persons who cast the ballots; they assumed that a vote for La Raza Unida wouldn't count in the end anyway.

The Partido did manage to keep bare control in Cristal, although the situation there is very volatile and there has been no progress since 1970. A meeting of the leadership in 1979 made a decision to rebuild the Partido, starting with a constitutional convention in 1980. The 1980 constitution calls for the building of a mass party and makes some general ideological statements. It calls for the creation of



an independent, socialist Chicano nation but rejects Marxist dogmatism and affirms solidarity with oppressed and colonized people throughout the world, including the poor of all races within the U.S., and women. The constitution also outlines a national party structure.

According to Juan Jose Pena, new national chair of La Raza Unida, the party now has a good base in "10 or 12 counties," not only in South Texas but also in northern New Mexico, in south Tucson and in the Fresno, California, area. About 40,000 people are registered Raza Unida voters, but this does not include Texas, where there is not party regis-

tration and where more than 200,000 voted for La Raza's candidate for governor, Ramsey Muniz, in 1972.

The Partido is limited by finances. Dues vary from \$12 per year in Texas to a nominal sum in New Mexico. Some money comes in through grassroots fundraising and from public speaking and royalties on publications. At the moment, however, there is little money for organizing or electioneering.

La Raza Unida has therefore turned to an organizing model that does not depend on a full-time organizing staff, one based on existing institutions in the community. Says Gutierrez, "After you hook up with one or two individuals, from them you get to

know their extended family, which is very important in the Chicano community. Then we use what I would call quasi-kinship relationships to get into other families. That is, everybody has a godfather and godmother, who is like another relative. We also work through community institutions such as . . . social clubs and the church." The idea is not to build a coalition of existing groups, but to use these networks to reach individuals who will support the Partido.

The ideal structure is still that of Cristal, however, where the precinct electoral machinery is combined with a community organization, Ciudadanos Unidos, which holds officials

IT WAS A GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

like myself. What I learned was that we actually had to go out and do a lot of walking in the street compared to sitting in an office behind a desk and saying, "Well, we're going to organize people." You had to do some door knocking and convince some of our own people, who seemed to me ultra-conservative. I couldn't understand. Here were people who were getting abused, mentally, physically, economically by the so-called Anglo establishment and still refused to accept any other kind of direction. That was very hard for me to accept mentally because all the material that I'd read said that all you had to do was show people that they're oppressed and they would organize. Not so. Not so.

We used to go to rallies over in La Placita, New Mexico. They started at eight o'clock and you had to be there at five o'clock so you could get a parking space. It was a social gathering, it wasn't just a political rally. It was a reinforcement of one's belief in what we were doing. You'd have people making snow cones over in the corner, there was some beer over here, there was food being served and cooked right there, and kids

running around, playing with balloons or balls. It was family participation in electoral politics, which is rare you know. Usually you talk about a smoke-filled room with maybe 50 guys, all smoking cigars, in suits, with ties, making decisions. Here you're talking about families actually coming together to listen to speakers — their own people.

You can talk about Crystal City almost any place in this state and people will say, "Oh, yeah, I heard about Crystal City." It had impact.

For me, Crystal City was the example of controlling one's destiny and setting one's own direction. You noticed a different feeling within the Chicanos there. A feeling of more pride. In South Texas and a lot of small towns you don't see that feeling. The people are more timid, a little more shy, saying, "Well, you know, we're Mexicans and that's the way we've always been treated and we know our place." But coming to Crystal City, people say, "Hey, we're Mexicans and we *control* this place!" It is a hell of a place to live. Those people organize for a pet fight! A dog fight! Anything! It's something that's been implanted in people and it's developed within

themselves. Or maybe it's something that was there all the time and it took a little incident, one or two, to bring it out.

People say, "Ah, La Raza Unida, it was a bad experience," or "It was a good experience," or "It was a way of learning." It was a vehicle for people to get involved, for people to get educated to processes whether electoral or social change processes. They did get involved. They were educated.

But now you stand here, 10 years later, and you say, "Was it worth it?" I say yes. A lot of valid things came out of it. Even if it's just that feeling of unity that came out of those rallies. People saying, "Hey, yes we can, *si, se puede*. We can do whatever we want to do."

It may take a little shock to get people back into that togetherness — a good strong victory against someone to pull them together. I think Crystal City will exist for a long time because of all that energy, all that awareness. Politically it has to mature a little more. In the sense that you can't be fighting yourselves anymore. There's a bigger and better enemy outside. And I think people will come to that realization. Within the next year or two.

Carlos Reyes joined the staff of Jose Gutierrez in 1972. He is now working on a tenth anniversary celebration of the first Partido Raza Unida state convention to be held this summer. Cliff Kuhn, a radio producer and historian based in Atlanta, interviewed Reyes about his involvement with the Partido and its role in Cristal as part of a project on the history of American social protest movements produced by ACORN.

accountable. In Cristal, everyone — the school board, the city council, the CDCs established by the Partido — must report to regular meetings of Ciudadanos Unidos.

The Partido's short-term priorities are to regain a position on the ballot in Texas and find alternatives in other states, such as non-partisan races. In the Fresno area, for example, there are Partido members on the school board or city council in four small towns where these elections are non-partisan. Frank Shaffer-Corona, La Raza Unida member on the school board in Washington, DC, is the only Chicano "statewide" elected official in the eastern U.S. For a third party to get on the ballot in most states is a formidable task. Even in Texas, the Partido may try to get on the ballot only as a regional party, which would mean collecting the necessary signatures only in those jurisdictions where it wants to run candidates, but which would preclude running a candidate for governor. All in all, there are about 45 Raza Unida party elected officials in the U.S.

In addition to internal divisions (now apparently behind them) and legal and illegal harassment, the Partido's problems, according to Gutierrez, are attributable to "the traditional means by which independent parties are destroyed by the majors," namely co-optation of issues. La Raza Unida's early struggle for bilingual education was taken up by the Democrats. Finding new issues with local handles that will clearly separate the Partido from liberal Democrats can be difficult. This is one reason the new constitution calls for ideological development of the party and the Chicano people — as a means of sustaining the organization where there is a shortage of indigenous local issues.

Some new issues the Partido is looking at include a demand for dual citizenship; proportional representation, which would be a "step beyond single-member districts" and an important politicizing issue; and local ownership and control of natural resources. This last issue is important because the Partido sees Chicanos as a colonized people. Large corporations extract energy, timber and minerals from Aztlan, with little or no benefit accruing to the poor and working-class residents. Options for local campaigns include municipalization of oil and gas wells and various

taxing schemes.

In Cristal, the city distributes natural gas to residential customers. In 1975, the city council refused to pay a 500-percent increase in gas rates and the supplier, Lo Vaca Gathering Company, shut off the gas in 1977. Winters in South Texas are short but cold enough that a few elderly people died as a result. The city's response has been to develop locally owned renewable energy resources, including wind, solar and bio-mass energy. The community has become something of a showcase for the appropriate technology movement, despite efforts by Democrats to obstruct the programs.

La Raza Unida has also gone after economic power in Cristal. From the earliest days of the rebellion, Anglo businesses were boycotted one by one to force employment and wage concessions. Many that would not give in went under, leaving room for the expansion of Chicano-owned businesses. The Partido's energy strategy includes employment of local youths in nonprofit enterprises to manufacture solar energy devices and utilize other local resources.

Maria Elena Martinez, current state chair in Texas, offers a rather gloomy assessment of the current situation. In Cristal, much of the original base has been lost. "People are really burned out," she says, not only because of legal harassment and the difficulty the Partido has had carrying out its programs while sharing power with Democrats, but also because of intimidation of individual members. "The original base of the party was in the poorest part of town, and that's where the people are the most vulnerable. The people on welfare and the old people on Social Security are threatened, and then they don't want to participate any more."

In other towns in South Texas, most notably Robstown and Kingsville, the Partido has made gains by functioning as a direct action community organization more than an electoral party. Martinez sees most of the Partido's impact in the near future coming from work in coalitions. In the long run, she says, "If a third party is ever going to work in this country, it will have to be a coalition of progressive forces — black, white, Chicano, etc." She doesn't think that will happen until there is a major unifying issue, like the Vietnam war or massive economic problems.



Diana Serna Cantu, one of the leaders of the student walkout that led to the founding of La Raza Unida.

After 10 years, says Gutierrez, the Partido is back where it started. "What would you most like to see in an article about La Raza Unida?" he was asked.

"I would want you to talk about the pain and hurt we have suffered. Many organizers don't understand all the obstacles. For every lever of power you move, the establishment can move seven. You shouldn't go into any kind of organizing without appreciating the reaction you'll get."

"What do you hope the legacy or accomplishment of La Raza Unida will be?"

"For me, it would be a satisfactory legacy if we could get the idea of independent electoral action ingrained in the minds of the colonized," says Gutierrez. □

Bart Laws is the Director of the Institute for Social Justice's project on the history of social protest, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This article is excerpted from The Organizer, published by the Institute for Social Justice (1638 R St NW, Washington, DC 20009), which provides training and technical assistance in the principles of community organizing.

REVIEWS

by Albert Goldman.
McGraw-Hill, 1981. 598
pages. \$14.95

ELVIS

Elvis Aron Presley was such a seminal figure in American life between the mid-1950s and late 1970s that it is difficult to imagine those years without him. While by no means the first to sing rock'n'roll, this son of Mississippi sharecroppers was the first to invade the national consciousness, launching a multi-billion-dollar industry whose worldwide impact is still being assessed.

During his early years, Presley captured the hearts and imagination of legions of youth and aroused the ire of an equally impressive number of adults, some of whom regarded him as a threat to morality and racial segregation. His middle years presented us with a milder Presley, one whose domain was that seemingly endless stream of cinematic corn: Elvis movies. In his final era, after a stunning 1968 television performance, it appeared as though he was attempting not only to reclaim his roots but to outshine his early fame — only to devolve into obesity, Las Vegas and drug addiction. When the end came in August, 1977, Elvis was reduced to a pathetic parody of himself and a caustic metaphor for what seemed to be wrong with the nation. Like Muhammad Ali, Elvis

was a global figure who represented much of what America is to most of the world.

Far from being a discarded relic in America's cultural attic, Elvis seems to be with us now as much as ever. The litigations involving his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, and Memphis physician George C. Nichopolous are national news. A new made-for-TV movie, *Elvis and the Beauty Queen*, was given a prime-time airing by a major network, while Elvis movies from the '60s are late-show regulars across the land. "New" Elvis records from RCA's tape vaults appear on the record racks regularly, while a heated controversy has arisen over the English release of a recording of the "Million Dollar Quartet" — the long-sought-after 1956 recording which included Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins.

Then there are the books: the life of Elvis Presley has become a literary cottage industry. Since his death, Elvis has been the subject of at least 25 books, ranging from reminiscences by relatives and acquaintances (many of which bear the tell-tale "with-help" authorships) to adoring treatises by fans as far away as London, Copenhagen and Berlin. Unfortunately, most of these bear more in common with Elvis's movies than with his best musical and stage work: many are shoddy pieces of fast-food literature, destined for some huge scrap heap of throwaway Elvis memorabilia.

Thus it was with no small amount of anticipation that Albert Goldman's *Elvis* arrived on the scene, promising to be the first serious chronicle of the entire life of Elvis Presley and the *definitive* biography. Not only had Goldman previously authored the biography of another rebel, Lenny



Elvis at 19, just after the release of his first record.

Bruce, but he had also written about music. Goldman studied for his doctorate at Columbia under renowned intellectuals Lionel Trilling and Jacques Barzun, raising expectations that this Presley book might be characterized by some degree of long-needed academic detachment. Lastly, Goldman had interviewed no less than 600 persons connected with Elvis during the course of his research. What more could we ask for?

As it turns out, a lot. Goldman either blindly condemns, or utterly fails to understand, most of the elements that made up the world of Elvis Presley. Compassion need not be a requisite for a good biography, but some semblance of reasoned comprehension is. Rather than viewing the intense and breathtakingly innovative recordings of the mid '50s —

combining elements of rhythm and blues, country and western, and gospel music — as a new musical genre, Goldman dismisses rock'n'roll as “a throwback to an earlier and more naive kind of music than the commercial jazz or the Broadway show tunes that had dominated the American consciousness during the '30s and '40s.” Rather than acknowledge that the new music posed a serious challenge to the intensely segregated world of popular music (some of Elvis's first records made the Top 10 on the rhythm and blues charts, while those of black rocker Chuck Berry were best sellers on the country and western charts), Goldman dismisses the culture of rock'n'roll as being “profoundly regressive — in all senses of the word,” and resting upon nothing more than “simpleminded adolescent infatuation.”

Goldman's misunderstanding of what early rock'n'roll was all about is surpassed by his lack of knowledge about the South. Indeed, his characterizations of Southerners are so shallow and venal that one cannot help but wonder how they survived the reviews of the editorial staff of a respected publishing house like McGraw-Hill. Goldman's favorite target is white Southerners, particularly “hillbillies,” whom he considers incapable of appropriately responding to the exigencies of twentieth-century life. After Elvis began to experience violent nightmares as a teenager, Goldman informs us: “Any ordinary family of that day who observed their child exhibiting such startling symptoms would have taken him straight to the doctor. The Presleys were not an ordinary family: they were hillbillies, on familiar terms with the weird.” Similarly, Elvis's Memphis high school is dismissed as “a dumb working-class school.”

Other individuals in this book do not fare much better. Rather than providing us with studied portraits, Goldman grants the reader an array of clichés and character actors: “the classic Jewish stage mother,” “an Archie Bunker type,” “the original Beverly Hillbillies,” “a jive talking Jew of a type found in every black ghetto.” Ironically, Goldman presents us with these television-quality personae while at the same time condemning Elvis for living in a “comic book” world.

Such characterizations are not limited to third-person descriptions, however, as he also slips into an unusual narrative form purporting to describe how such people talked or thought. A handy example is his conception of white Memphis radio station owners approaching the idea of having “black-oriented” programs on their stations during the 1950s: “You couldn't sell the culleds unless you spoke their language, of course. But what if you found some good ole boy with a crazy line of jive like the nigger puseality jocks that could towahk the same shit! Hey! You'd have yesself sumpin', wouldncha, son?”

Lastly, not content with merely creating shallow stereotypes, Goldman



Elvis in his most spectacular outfit in 1968.

also attends to the world of Southern “folkways” — some of which might come as something of a surprise to most Southerners. When Elvis partook in some daredevil motorcycle stunts, Goldman tells us that: “He would experience what Southerners have always been best at experiencing: the ecstasy of self-destruction. They call it ‘Going to Jesus.’”

With blacks Goldman is more discreet, using the white ploy which holds that after one first establishes “credibility,” one can attend to business as usual. He praises black gospel music early in the book and not-so-casually mentions the names of

a number of black secular musicians. With that out of the way, he then condescends to blacks at will, particularly on the subject of alleged dress and “mannerisms.” In a description of the source of some of Elvis's stage behavior, he states: “He loved above all else to impersonate the jive-ass nigger pimp, who snaps his elbows into his wrists and as he flings his long fingers out from bent wrists and then with a head tilted provocatively awry and a killing look in his eye, runs those tight elbows up his sides in a pants-hitching gesture that says, ‘Ahm ready for *anything*, bitch!’”

If all of this weren't bad enough, Goldman is a lousy historian. The infusion of comparisons from Greek dramatic theory to Teutonic myth gives *Elvis* an air of learned commentary, but the book is irreparably damaged by the misuse and misreading of evidence. In some cases, Goldman cannot even keep his facts straight. On page 129, he tells us that “references to religion were out of the question at Sun Records, whose proprietor regarded himself as something of a preacher.” This will undoubtedly surprise Sam Phillips, the proprietor in question, who recorded and released such exclusively secular songs at Sun as “My God Is Real” and “Look to Jesus.”

Goldman's use of overstatement and exaggeration is a more common flaw, particularly in regard to his descriptions of Elvis. In his relations with women, Elvis alternately appears to be a puritan, a pervert, a moralist, a prude and a voyeur — depending on the particular point Goldman is making at the time.

Consistency in interpretations and cautioned reasoning are not the only qualities of a good historian that Goldman lacks. One common, interpretive sleight-of-hand trick which he uses is to transform his own hypotheses into fact, confusing his own opinions with those of others. In one instance he makes it appear that Elvis felt that bluesman Arthur Crudup was a “mediocre” musician (Goldman's description), whereas the existing historical evidence points to a much different conclusion. Elvis had memorized a number of Crudup songs prior to his first recording session at Sun, and in later years helped to finance a session for Crudup on another label.

Goldman's grand design appears to have been to unmask what he refers to as "the Presley Myth." Even while using such an all-encompassing ordering device, Goldman runs into trouble trying to account for some of his subject's actions, particularly when he finds Elvis doing things that do not fit into his overall portrait of Elvis the debauched, the cruel, the selfish. Rather than speculate why the same person who recorded gospel albums and read the Bible regularly also apparently took part in sexual activities that would not gain a stamp of approval from the Moral Majority, Goldman tells us that there were two Elvises: Elvis the Good, and Elvis the Bad! Although he spruces up his language later in the book ("bifurcated"), the result is still a third-rate psychological analysis that never manages to deal with the complete Elvis.

Perhaps we will not have to wait long for a decent biography of Elvis, one whose hallmarks are all of those good qualities that Goldman's book was supposed to have, but doesn't. In the interim, those interested in learning more about Presley need not despair — or confine themselves to reading the reminiscences of those whose contact with Elvis was less than frequent. Peter Guralnick's various essays on Presley are excellent starting points, particularly those collected in his *Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1979) and in Jim Miller (ed.), *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll* (New York: Random House, 1980). Longer and more detailed works include Jerry Hopkins's two books — *Elvis, A Biography* (New York: Warner Books, 1971) and *Elvis: The Final Years* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980) — the best of the currently available biographies. A stunning photographic portrait of what was perhaps Presley's greatest year is Alfred Wertheimer's *Elvis '56: In The Beginning* (New York: Collier, 1979).

But to gain a sense of how high the stakes were with Elvis Presley, both in terms of what he did and did not offer to the South and to the nation, one must turn to three quite different sources. The first of these is Greil Marcus's brilliant essay, "Elvis: Presliad," in his insightful *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock'n' Roll Music* (New York: Dutton,

1976). By firmly placing Elvis within the context of American cultural history, Marcus reveals both the height of Presley's accomplishments and the depth of his tragedy. Marcus's essay is not only the best piece ever written about Elvis, but is an inspired work of modern cultural criticism as well.

A second source, though only tangentially about Elvis, nevertheless

resounds with virtually unexplored aspects of his character. Alice Walker's "Nineteen Fifty-Five," in her *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981), is a haunting, richly textured and multi-layered short story focusing on a fictionalized account of the relationship between Elvis and blues legend Willa Mae Thornton. In it,

A View from the Mountains

Elvis by Albert Goldman was heralded by its author, some critics and the publishing company, McGraw-Hill, as the first serious biography of Elvis Presley. The book's dust jacket calls it the "definitive biography . . . a monumental achievement." It's about to come out in paperback, and a movie deal has been struck; Goldman stands to make millions.

Goldman did some valuable research on Presley, the ambience of Memphis in the '50s, the tyrannical, money-grubbing manager, Colonel Parker, and the Las Vegas nightclub world. He has a flair for creating novelistic, dramatic scenes, for intellectualizing about archetypes and historical precedents and showing how these phenomena shape present-day perceptions and cultural trends.

What strikes me the most about this book, however, is its racist nature. A Southern Appalachian, I found it one of the most prejudiced against my kind I've ever read.

Although the Presleys are not usually acknowledged as hailing from Appalachia, they are from the hill country of northeast Mississippi, the southernmost portion of the economic designation of Appalachia, where according to Goldman, "A race of Rip Van Winkles . . . a distinctive breed of Southern yeomanry," resides. "A more deracinated and restless race could not be imagined. . . . The hill folk wandered endlessly. . . . The hillbillies had no real aware-

ness of the present, they had no grasp on the past." You get the message? This is a big bad book, on a par with the infamous 1958 article by Albert N. Votaw in *Harper's Magazine*, "The Hillbillies Invade Chicago," in which the migrating Southern whites are portrayed as degenerates.

Anyone who knows anything of Appalachians and Southerners knows how false the "deracinated race" statement is; most families in the area have roots going back generations. Simply asking people or checking courthouse records would verify this. And what yardstick is Goldman using when he says the Presley family is weird, and that Elvis's father is a "dullard and a donkey?"

A former professor at Columbia and a widely published journalist, Goldman is a man who has bought every myth about "hillbillies," a term he assumes is appropriate for intellectuals to use. He goes so far as to hypothesize that Elvis's drug addiction was the result of defective genes owing to his heritage. The derisive remarks and simplistic stereotypes of this biography are too many to catalogue, the book being practically drenched with them.

In fact, the ultimate value of this book may be that it gives one access to the mind of an unapologetic bigot. Read it only with the skeptical eye it deserves. □

— John Mark Tipper

we see an Elvis who is at once confused, covetous, generous, authoritative, respectful, *unhuman* and yet very human. But unlike Goldman, Walker has been able to integrate these personal attributes into a very believable whole. "Nineteen Fifty-Five" is not only a forceful commentary on American society and the expropriation of black culture by whites, it is a work of fiction of the first magnitude.

The final source is, of course, Presley's music itself. Marcus's *Mys-*

tery Train contains an excellent annotated discography whose contents need not be repeated here. Two comments, however, would appear to be in order. For the tragedy that Elvis became, the promise unfulfilled, one need only listen to virtually any of his motion picture soundtrack albums. For his accomplishment, the promise fulfilled, one must begin with his Sun records (re-released on RCA as *The Sun Sessions*). To put it bluntly, they are essential. □



Elvis overwhelmed by obesity after years of starvation.

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by Dale Worsley. Vanguard Press, 1980. 80 pages. \$10.00.

THE FOCUS CHANGES OF AUGUST PREVICO

Veins stretched up out of my arm into a jar hanging from a silver rack. I fell asleep again focusing on a dream room like a poor church, where a man was playing a guitar that didn't make no sound.

"How can you play a guitar and make no music?" I asked him.

"Got the music deepa on down," he said, and I came to again.

— August Previso, under sedation after his first escape from Lee State Institution for the Mentally Retarded.

Crouched beneath the iron lid on a sewer tunnel, Previso ruminates on being "human garbage thrown away by folk who thought they was better because they was smarter." The black teenager, champion sprinter at the olympics for the retarded, peers up through holes bored into the lid:

"The moon, Mr. M&M, came up

full as the sun set and for a few minutes I could see the gold reflection of the sun at one end of the sewer and the silver reflection of the moon at the other."

Whooping with joy, August hurtles out into the magic light, waving his arms at passing cars until one finally stops. It's kindly old whiskey-sipping Fountain Forest, who takes the boy to his shack, feeds him sausage and greens, tenderly commiserates with him about *haints*, gives the boy traveling advice, then turns him out into the yard where a dozen cop cars switch on their headlights at once.

Despite its reek of rotten human behavior (the well-meaning variety as well as its sadistic cousin), more love and aching vitality rise flowerlike out of *Focus Changes* than from any novel I've read since *Tropic of Capricorn*. The boy Previso emerges as a complete "man" regardless of the literal gridwork of self-inflicted scars on his body and the gloomy promise of a life in and out of confinement.

A picaresque novel, *Focus Changes* goes nowhere but deeper into life, a Fielding world populated by a Joycean hero with a supporting lineup out of D.W. Griffith and Samuel Beckett. Best of all, there's an original vision developed in *Focus Changes* which seizes upon the phantasms of daily life and turns them inside out before restoring them to their mundane disguises. Because he promotes wonder, mystery and the loonybird truth of language above any social platitude, author Dale Worsley relaxes and fortifies the reader in spite of the subject matter. We expect this trait routinely in our modern masters but rarely get it in a first novel. As with Previso's dream guitarist, we find that Worsley's music is "deepa on down."

— John Verlenden

Dale Worsley grew up in Baton Rouge and is the author of an award-winning radio play, a number of short stories and poems, and a recently published book on the Maritime Union for the Teachers and Writers Collaborative in New York City, where he currently lives. He has been a poet-in-the-schools for the state of

Georgia and now teaches in various New York schools, often in ghetto areas. He worked for seven months as a night aide at a state institution for the retarded in Tennessee and later interviewed various members of the hospital administration and staff. He discussed *Focus Changes* in a recent interview with John Verlenden.



photo by Sarah Wells

Dale Worsley relaxes beside a New York theatre set.

August Previso is retarded, but only insofar as the state judges him so. By its standards of behavior and performance, he is sub-normal. The only trouble is that state standards don't recognize qualities of innocence, imagination, individuality and creativity. August possesses these characteristics in rich abundance. So he is retarded, but what does "retarded" mean? By labeling certain people retarded, and by judging them on rigid, bureaucratic standards, the state consigns valuable members of society to institutional oblivion, and deprives us of their contributions.

Yes, there is a strong element of the "fool as oracle" in August Previso. I believe in that myth in that I think we can learn a lot about ourselves by listening to the mutterings of marginal people. They are the first to fall into the cracks of our society. They can tell us where the cracks are.

August has a kind of moral integrity that's more innocent than most, but I don't think he's emotionally whole. He's striving to be, but can't succeed, for any number of reasons. His innocence heals the rips in his emotional fabric, but scars are left, and his personality is in danger of becoming horribly contorted. As far as

the capacity for retarded people to be a spiritual balm in our society, I think many could be. Do you remember the Kiowa Indian woman who had a retarded brother? Her father, a respected leader and medicine man, pointed out to all the family that the boy was special, and that this was a blessing. He was a gift to the family, and he was to be honored. And he was honored. I think honor would be the birthright of the retarded in a healthy society.

People like August are certainly the easiest to persecute, so they're the most often persecuted. There are many people in our world like him; more than we are prepared to admit. This is a shame, too, and not just because we haven't been Good Samaritans about it. We have lost our own capacities for simplicity and innocence and elegance when we can't accept people like August into the mainstream of life.

Do I get the feeling that everyone's a bit retarded in my eyes? Yes. Don't you agree? When adults acting as our leaders conduct international policy like boys daring each other to cross lines, their fists clenched around nuclear warheads, we are behaving below our age levels. I think it's healthy to consider ourselves "retarded." It makes us realize we could do better. □

by Clayborne Carson,
Harvard University Press,
1981. 359 pages. \$22.00.

**IN STRUGGLE: SNCC and
the Black Awakening
of the 60s**

Given the color and topic selectivity of much of the American media, it is not surprising that Clayborne Carson's new book on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC] has yet to be reviewed in the big-time press. According to most of the media, the '60s are dead and there is nothing more to say about race relations in America, especially if it has to do with mass organizing. But as a black organizer once said, "If you don't know where

you've come from you don't know where you're goin'."

SNCC began in February of 1960 when four Southern black freshmen at A&T College in Greensboro, North Carolina, decided to challenge "Southern mores" at an F.W. Woolworth's lunch counter by sitting down and asking to be served. From the sit-ins SNCC went on to work to integrate other facilities, to register blacks to vote and to set up projects, actions and demonstrations to ensure the human rights which were supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution at the end of the Civil War.

In the early '60s, Howard Zinn wrote a powerful and exciting book called *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*. Dealing with SNCC's early years, it began, "For the first time in our history a major social movement, shaking the nation to its bones, is being led by youngsters."

Carson's is the first historical work to survey those early years from the backward glance of a later period and to add the full story of SNCC in the middle and later '60s when whites were expelled from the organization, when black power and ideology became central issues and when the same FBI which found it so difficult to protect civil-rights workers a few years before found it quite easy to wiretap, lie to, harass and arrest SNCC members and other workers for social change.

Whereas Carson's heart, admiration and political commitment favor SNCC's early years of mass organizing with Robert Moses and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, his best writing is on the later years of Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown. In the first third of the book, I kept wanting more audio-visual aids — old news clippings, TV footage and freedom songs — to recapture the idealism, spirit and danger of those early years.

But Carson really cooks in the last two sections, "Looking Inward" and "Falling Apart." This might be because the first part of the book relies predominantly on written sources, whereas the last sections depend more heavily on Carson's substantial interviews with over 60 black and white members of SNCC and other black movements of the '60s.

Looking back, one wants to know to what extent '60s movements like SNCC self-destructed and to what extent the FBI, the media and the established order did them in. Carson argues that both internal and external forces took their toll on SNCC. His evidence on the FBI's role in destroying SNCC and other black organizations is significant, but he also says that in trying to survive repression SNCC members became "even more concerned with internal security and ideological purity [which] caused them to engage in sterile political cant and abandon their roles as catalysts of black militancy."

In the end Carson's debt to SNCC overshadows his criticisms. "I learned valuable lessons from SNCC's achievements and from its failures." *In Struggle* closes with a list of SNCC's accomplishments for both black and white Americans. Carson tells today's blacks not to let "purposeful amnesia about recent Afro-American history" make them forget that the gains made are not "solely the result of their own efforts." He believes "SNCC's legacy survives not only in the deep South but also in the sexual, ethnic and class consciousness movements that adopted ideas and tactics from SNCC."

For those who were there, *In Struggle* is a way to help remember the love and pain of the '60s struggles. For those who weren't, read up, your time is at hand. □



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REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

Scott Ellsworth is a historian and former disc jockey who currently resides in Washington, D.C.

John Mark Tipper is a poet currently doing part-time research in Harvard University library.

John Verlenden is a free-lance writer currently living in Baton Rouge, La.

June Namias has been active in the women's movement. She is a Boston area teacher and writer and author of *First Generation: In the Words of Twentieth Century American Immigrants*. (Beacon Press)

BOOKS ON THE SOUTH

This list consists of books published since November, 1981. Book entries include works through March, 1982. All books are to be published in 1982 unless otherwise indicated. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index in September, 1981. All dissertations are dated 1981 unless otherwise indicated.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general interest to our readers are welcome. Recent works are preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: Xerox University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS

The American Farmer and the New Deal, by Theodore Saloutos (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1981). \$17.95.

Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth, by Wilson J. Moses (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press). \$17.95.

Cities in the Commonwealth: Two Centuries of Urban Life in Kentucky, by Allen J. Share (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky). \$6.95.

"Citizen Participation in Neighborhood Organizations in Richmond, Virginia," by Bruce William Ransom, II. Univ. of Virginia.

Class, Conflict and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies, ed. by Orville V. Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$29.95.

"Curriculum Formation in a Black College: A Study of Morris Brown College, 1881-1890," by Norman Calvin Rothman. Georgia State Univ.

"The Ecological Basis of Social Change: Urbanization, Industrialization and Party Competition in the American South," by Dorene Linda Hughes. North Texas State Univ.

"Economic Expansion and Urban Disorder in Antebellum New Orleans," by Richard Randall Tansey. Univ. of Texas at Austin.

The Federal Government and Equality of Educational Opportunity, by S. Macpherson Pemberton (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America). \$7.75.

From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans, 1920-1978, by Roger M. Olsen (Dallas: SMU Press). \$15.00.

Index to the American Slave, ed. by Donald M. Jacobs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981). \$45.00.

"Internal Colonialism and Decolonization in El Centro: A Sociohistorical Analysis of Chicanos in a Texas City," by Jose Villareal Martinez. Univ. of Texas at Austin.

"Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia," by David Tucker. Claremont Grad. School.

"The Making of the Mexican-American Mind, San Antonio, Texas, 1929-1941: A Social and Intellectual History of an Ethnic Community," by Richard Amado Garcia. Univ. of California, Irvine, 1980.

"Minorities and Representative Bureaucracy: An Examination of Areas of Compatibility and Congruence between Merit Principles and Minority Values," by Jayne Lucas Kaniss. Florida State Univ.

"Public Development for Private Purposes: The Impact of Water Districts on Urban Problems in Harris County, Texas," by Virginia Marion Lacy Perrenod. Univ. of Houston.

A Rock in a Weary Land: A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Civil War and Reconstruction, by Clarence E. Walker (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$18.95.

Science, Myth, Reality: The Black Family in One-Half Century of Research, by Eleanor Engram (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$27.50.

"Small Farm Operators in Texas: Their Information Needs and Sources," by William Frank Braden. Texas A&M University.

"The Study of Disclosure and Support in a Lesbian Community (Austin)," by Elizabeth Cudd Loftin. Univ. of Texas at Austin.

"The Transition of Political Culture in Alabama, 1865-1978," by Freeman Wallace Pollard. Indiana Univ.

TVA: Bridge Over Troubled Waters, by North Callahan (New Brunswick, NJ: Cornwall Books). \$17.95.

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Annie McCune: **Shreveport Madam**, by Goodloe Stuck (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing Corp., 1981). \$7.95.

"Growing Up in the Old South: The Childhood of Charles Colcock Jones, Jr.," by James William Berry. Princeton Univ.

To Raise Myself A Little: The Diaries and Letters of Jennie, A Georgia Teacher, 1851-1886, by Amelia A. Lines (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1981). \$20.00.

Toting the Lead Row: Ruby Pickens Tartt, Alabama Folklorist, by Virginia P. Brown and Laurella Owens (University: Univ. of Alabama Press.) \$19.95.

Westward Into Kentucky: The Narrative of Daniel Trabue, ed. by Chester R. Young (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1981). \$17.00.

CULTURAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

Avoyelles: Crossroads of Louisiana Where All Cultures Meet, Louisiana Commission des Avoyelles (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing Corp., 1981). \$24.95.

Bibliography of Black Music: Afro-American Idioms, Vol. 2, by Dominique-Rene DeLerma (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$29.95.

"The Celebration of Cajun Identity: Ethnic Unity and the Crawfish Festival," by Marjorie Ruth Esman. Tulane Univ.

"Church Control and Family Structure in A Moravian Community of North Carolina, 1753-1857," by Jo Ellen Patterson. UNC-Greensboro.

Ishmael Reed: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography, by Elizabeth A. and Thomas A. Settle (Boston: G.K. Hall). \$24.00.

"On Their Hind Legs Casting Shadows: A Psychological Approach to Character in Faulkner," by Marjorie Burton Haselswerdt. Michigan State Univ.

Our Pride: Point Coupee, by Bernard Curet (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing Corp., 1981). \$12.50.

"William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, A Critical and Textual Study," by Dianne Luce Cox. Univ. of South Carolina, 1980.

Witches, Ghosts and Signs: Folklore of the Southern Appalachians, by Patrick W. Gainer (Morgantown, WV: Seneca Books). \$5.95.

THE THIRD OF NOVEMBER

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM
THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES

From the publishers of the award-winning journal, *Southern Exposure*, comes the first comprehensive analysis of the 1979 Klan/Nazi shootings in Greensboro, North Carolina.

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Cherokee Removal: A Voice of Protest

by Jeremiah Evarts

People of the United States are soon to decide a most extraordinary question. It is: *Shall our nation violate its faith?* The question is no less than this. It cannot be made less. No sophistry can disguise it. No art can conceal it. No party clamors can drown the voice of reason and conscience, which incessantly cries, *Beware of National perjury.*

The question, then, for our young and boasting Republic to settle is, shall we deliberately make up our minds to forswear ourselves? Shall we calmly, and coolly, and after many months for consideration and reflection, proclaim to the world, in the face of Heaven, that we deem very lightly of our faith; and that we can break treaties by scores and by hundreds, without a pang, and without a blush? Shall we, the People of the United States, who formed all our constitutions of Government; who do not forget that we govern ourselves; and who expect our will, and not the will of a few privileged men, to be obeyed; shall we perpetrate an act, which combines all the baseness and guilt of the meanest fraud, the most barefaced falsehood, and the most deliberate perjury? Shall we perpetuate such an act, while, in all our intercourse with foreign Nations, we are talking of justice, and honor, and integrity? And are demanding in a high tone of morality, as if conscious of rectitude, that all our rights should be admitted, and all our claims should be regarded as unquestionable? Shall we perpetrate such an act, by encroaching upon the rights of the weak and defenseless, merely because *they* are weak, and *we* are strong? Shall we do this with reference to the descendants of men, who listened to the persuasions and entreaties of our fathers? Who consented to a peace at the earnest solicitation of Washington and other worthies and heroes of the Revolution? Who received from Washington, as Chief Magistrate of the newly formed Union, the very first pledges of the pure and uncontaminated faith of the rising Republic? And who accepted our solemn guaranty, as the great equivalent for large and rich domains, which they relinquished to our expanding population? After expressing, for 40 years, our determination to abide by these very engagements; after repeating and reaffirming these engagements by mouths, and under the seals of all the venerable and honored men whom we had selected as most worthy to hold the highest offices in the State; shall we suddenly have the hardihood, the audacity, the impudence, to absolve ourselves from all the obligations, which rest with such accumulated weight upon us? Was the man of

probity and honor ever transformed, all at once, into a knave, a swindler, a case-hardened villain, taking no pains to hide his villany? Was it ever heard of, that a chaste matron became, all at once, regardless of common decency? The Romans had a maxim, *Nemo repente fit turpissimus.* And shall we, in this early age of our growing Nation, after exhibiting to the world most illustrious examples of public virtue, suddenly cast away, as a worn-out Government, all regard to our national character, all respect for the opinions of mankind, all respect for ourselves, all consideration of our permanent interests, and all fear of God, the Avenger of the oppressed?

Is it possible that the People of the United States should hesitate on this question? No; they would not, if they saw that this was the question distinctly proposed to them, that they must answer it; and must be held responsible to the world for the answer. The danger is not, that a majority of the People will decide wrong, with a full understanding of the case; but that apathy will prevail; and the question will be decided the wrong way by interested voices; and thus the character of the country will be lost, before the country will be lost, before the country is aware of it.

The alarm should be sounded by all who can write, and all who can speak; an alarm more earnest and thrilling than would be required to guard against the approach of an invading army, the breaking forth of a pestilence, the conflagration of 50 cities, or the loss of half the property in the nation. If property only were destroyed, after the lapse of a few years the loss would not be known, and posterity would neither see nor feel it. But the loss of character is irreparable. Who would not rather have a son or a brother deprived of his last farthing, with his reputation uninjured, than see him placed in the pillory for manifest fraud and willful perjury, though he might console himself, in his infamy, with the wealth of both the Indies. The ordinary calamities of life are soon past and forgotten; but the deep wound of a ruined character — the ruined character of a nation — after ages are gone, is just beginning to show how disgusting and intolerable the gangrene is. □

Jeremiah Evarts, writing under the pseudonym William Penn, was the single most influential voice to speak out against the removal of the Cherokee and other Southern Indian nations from their ancestral lands in the 1830s. This piece is excerpted from a seven-part series, originally published in the New York Observer in 1829 as part of a lobbying effort to prevent the passage of laws by Congress that would legitimize the removal. Pressure from the Southern states prevailed and the removal acts were passed, but the words of Jeremiah Evarts attest to the fact that this act of government injustice did not pass without protest. The entire seven-part series, and other writings by Evarts, can be found in a recently published work, Cherokee Removal, edited by Francis Paul Prucha and published by the University of Tennessee Press.

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