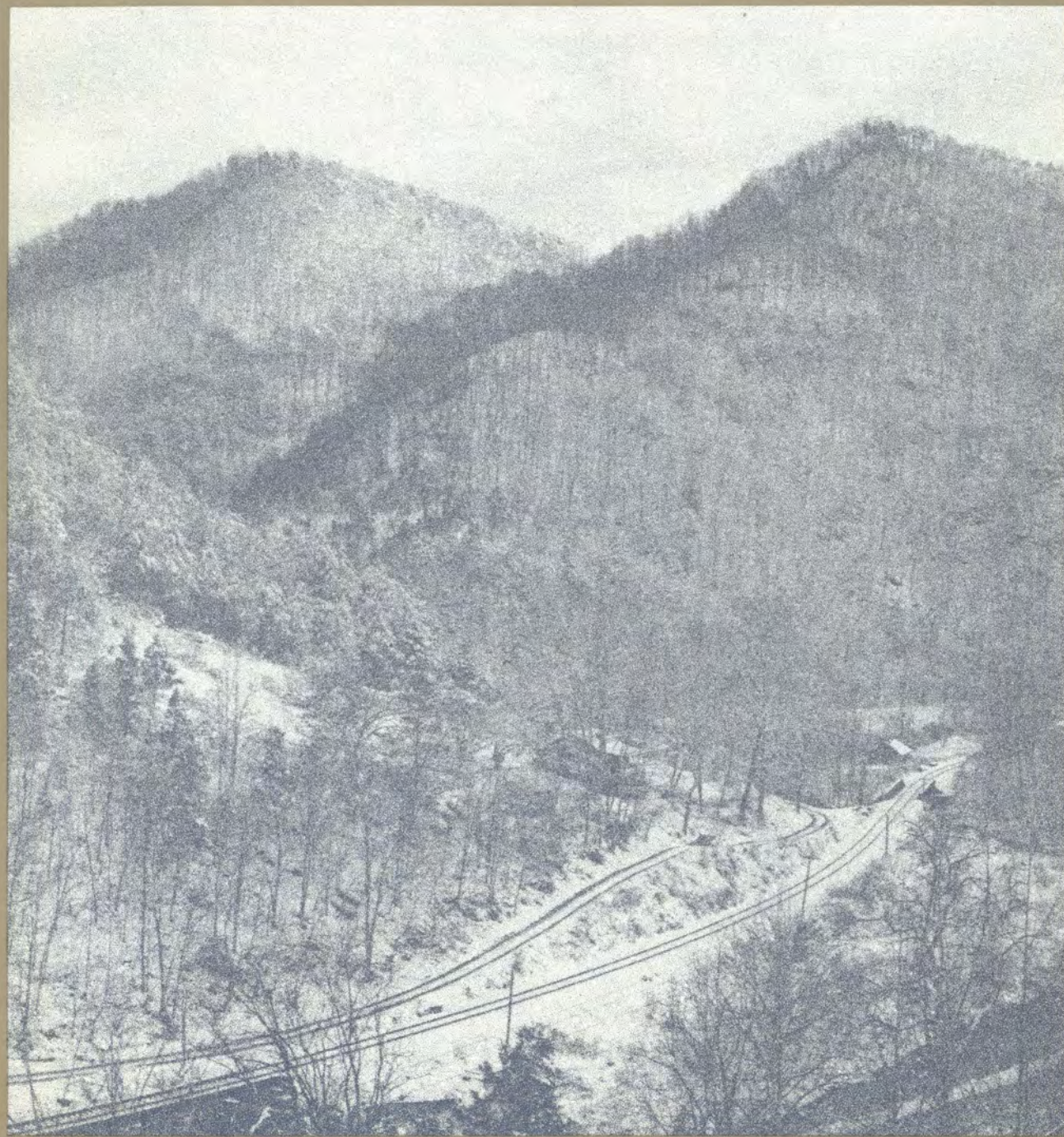


Southern Exposure

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**WHO OWNS
APPALACHIA ?**



Albany Movement Reunion

Is Your School Doing Its Job?

Philip Simmons, Charleston Blacksmith

The First Days of Freedom

and more...

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Volume X, No. 1

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

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- 2** Letters from Our Readers
- 3** Southern News Roundup
- 9** Resources
- 10** Voices of Our Neighbors
- 13** Facing South
- 14** Philip Simmons, Charleston Blacksmith
profile of a craftsman, by John Michael Vlach
- 20** Twenty Years and Still Marching
reunion for the Albany Movement, by Joe Pfister
- 28** Harder Times Than These
reflections on life in Mississippi, by L.C. Dorsey
-
- 32** Who Owns Appalachia?
a special section on land and taxation
- 34** Digging the Facts
by John Gaventa and Bill Horton
- 36** The Day the X-Man Came
a poem, by Jim Webb
- 39** Old Timer to Grandchild
a poem, by Lillie D. Chaffin
- 40** Land and Life in the Mountains
the findings, in brief
- 42** How to Find the Facts
by Bill Horton
- 45** Appalachian Spring
a poem, by Bob Henry Baber

- 45** Blood Money
a poem, by Gail V. Amburgey
- 47** This Land, Full of Said Regions
a poem, by Jim Stokely
- 47** Roofing For Aunt Pearl
a poem, by Bob Henry Baber
- 49** Tax Revolt in Kentucky
by Joe Szakos
- 50** Take Back the Land
by Jackie Van Anda
- 51** The Beans
a poem, by Maggie Anderson
- 52** This Has Gone Far Enough
by David Liden
-
- 53** Is Your School Doing Its Job?
lessons from the Foxfire experience, by Eliot Wigginton
- 60** The Story of Thurnell Alston *a portrait*
from McIntosh County, Georgia, by Melissa Fay Greene
- 70** The Challenge of the Children
the black freedom struggle, 1865, by Vincent Harding
- 79** Reviews
- 88** Voices from the Past
human rights and freedom, by Malcolm X

The New Format

This is the first issue of our tenth volume. (Whew!) It also marks the beginning of our new bimonthly schedule — six issues a year for \$16.

If you keep your subscription up to date, you'll receive four general issues in 1982 and two special theme issues — one on the Coastal South for May-June and one on the military and human needs for November-December. Each general issue, like this one, will include several regular features, as well as an assortment of articles, interviews, photo essays, reviews and reports.

A new version of *Southern Exposure* for new times! But one that we hope retains the best of the old.

We welcome readers' reactions to, and contributions for, the new sections. Send material from a magazine, newspaper or another source, with or without your additional comments, and let us know if one type of feature suits you better than another.

Let your friends know about the new *Southern Exposure*, too. We need to keep our family of readers growing — it's our lifeline and the reason we exist — so encourage someone else to become a subscriber, even if it means giving away a copy or two, or a subscription.

We're the magazine of the progressive South, for hope and heartache, insight and inspiration, sunshine and dreary days. We're here for the duration, for better or worse. And so are you. Listening, leading, learning.



Photo by Michael S. Clark

FROM OUR READERS

Your "Festival" cover is a (probably to you) clever way to trivialize the writers and the issues raised inside. It is also racist and sexist, given the context of its appearance — a serious appraisal of mostly women's (and black women's) work and lives.

Please advise Stephen March to first listen to what black women are saying before he photographs them with their mouths open. Black women in red wigs are probably not saying very much.

You also failed to make it clear that my remarks about Uncle Remus were from an essay in progress, as you promised you would if I permitted you to use the excerpt. And the title you chose — though not bad — was not mine.

— Alice Walker
San Francisco, CA

The editors respond:

Ms. Walker's letter sparked another round in the continual process of self-evaluation among the staff of Southern Exposure: it reaffirmed our staff's awareness that efforts to overcome sexism and racism are not limited to stand-offs between "bigots" and "liberals" but are alive among those of us who consider ourselves progressive activists; we encourage our readers to raise questions about and make criticisms of our efforts.

We sincerely apologize to Ms. Walker for our failure to explain that her remarks on Uncle Remus were excerpts from a work in progress. We promised it would appear with the article; unfortunately, we inadvertently omitted this fact from the final copy.

A worthy journal like *Southern Exposure* depends in part on good faith between editors and contributors. I'm writing to redress a small slip in this regard. In your last issue on working women (Vol. IX, No. 4), the photos on pages 10, 11, 37, 64, 65, 99 and 101 given to you by the Women at Work project — a traveling exhibition produced by myself, Judy Hilkey and Allis Wolfe — went entirely uncredited. Thank you for the correction.

I've enjoyed and benefited from *Southern Exposure* over the past few years. The recent issue on civil rights proved an invaluable aid in communicating an important chapter of the recent past to my Duke University students.

— Susan Levine
Carrboro, NC

I want to congratulate you — and special editors Bob Brinkmeyer and Stephen March — on an altogether splendid piece of work in "Festival" (Vol. IX, No. 2).

I found Judy Hogan's history of Carolina Wren and "Everyday Bookshop" by Tom Campbell and John Valentine especially interesting and of value. I am grateful, too, for your inclusion of Jaki Shelton's work and the selections from Alice Walker and Max Steele.

Most of all, I thank you for including John Beecher's eloquent essay "On Suppression" and for Frank Adams's appreciation of Mr. Beecher's work. He was — he remains — one of the most important, the most readable, honest and compassionate poets of the twentieth century. Perhaps, now that he is dead, our "literati" may come around to a recognition of that fact.

— Leonard Randolph
Germantown, MD

My partner and I have just concluded an extensive investigation of the Monsanto Company's Springfield, Massachusetts, complex. It originally began as research into their waste disposal practices, but soon expanded to cover the effects on worker and neighborhood health from exposure to the same chemicals before and after dumping.

It is evident that these issues will increase, rather than diminish, in importance. Cuts within EPA will reduce federal enforcement actions to a meaningless level, while the Reagan emphasis on a return to states' control will only compound the problem. Most state governments are incapable of dealing

with an issue which requires the strict regulation of major employers and big businesses. Even Massachusetts, with its progressive image, has a regulatory history marked by ignorance, incompetence and outright collusion with hazardous waste generators. The record in the South is no better. The same collapse of regulation is occurring in the workplace, with the gutting of OSHA, and in the home, which has faced cutbacks in the Consumer Product Safety Commission and which had virtually no legal protection from other forms of toxic substances exposure to begin with.

If the link between threats to health and safety in the workplace, household and environment can be made, the universality of the threat will create a strong means to agitate and organize.

— Paul Bush
Amherst, MA

As a person involved in radical progressive political work and well acquainted with the Greensboro massacre, I found your report ("The Third of November") a useful addition to my previously collected materials. However, I continue to be amazed at how the best informed liberals such as yourselves fail to see government support for fascist groups as an indication that a more fundamental questioning of the realities of U.S. power politics is needed. Do you really think an earnest appeal from middle-class liberals will determine whether or not the rulers opt for fascism in this country? It didn't work in Germany during the Weimar Republic, nor in Italy.

— Dick David
Chicago, IL

Thanks for using Beth Epstein's cherubs in "Southern News Roundup." Since her debut in Mount Holyoke's *Choragos*, I knew she was destined to illustrate a first-rate publication like *Southern Exposure*.

— Maureen Kennedy
Charlottesville, VA

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

Church leader urges "hands-off" bombs

Amarillo is a dusty, conservative city in the Texas Panhandle that's been home, since the 1940s, to the federal government's Pantex plant, where every atomic bomb and thermonuclear device in the U.S. arsenal is assembled. The handful of local people who object to the plant's presence has never had much luck in organizing opposition. But now, in a town which is one-tenth Catholic, Amarillo's Roman Catholic bishop, Leroy T. Matthiesen, has called on plant workers to resign from their "unholy work."

His statement came in August, 1981, following President Reagan's announcement that the neutron bomb was going into production at Pantex. Calling it "the latest in a series of tragic anti-life decisions taken by our government," Bishop Matthiesen called for an end to the arms race and said, "We urge individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and to seek employment in peaceful pursuits."

A west Texas native and former pastor of a church near Pantex's entrance, Matthiesen told the *Texas Observer* that plant workers had come to him disturbed about their work — "Some of them are suffering from real guilt feelings," he said. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops had earlier issued a statement of "grave concern" about nuclear proliferation, but Bishop Matthiesen's appeal for workers to resign goes much further. It drew some predictably outraged responses, but his mail has run three-to-one in favor of his position, and the other 11 bishops of Texas issued a statement to "fully support his appeal."

Ironically, in the "liberal" North, New York City's Terence Cardinal Cooke, who had supported the Vietnam War, made front-page news in that city in December by declaring

"the strategy of nuclear deterrence morally tolerable" and "those who produce or are assigned to handle the weapons that make the strategy possible and workable can do so in good conscience." Fortunately, within two days, 60 prominent nuns, brothers,



Bishop Leroy Matthiesen

church officials and lay members of the New York archdiocese condemned the Cardinal's open letter, pointing out that he deviated from church policy by not "joining his fellow bishops in the call to conversion from mutual assured destruction."

Making money by selling the Sunbelt

We're not journalists," says Gary McCalla, managing editor of *Southern Living*, the monthly magazine noted for its recipes, gardening tips and travel features. "We show a positive side of the South. Other people can take care of the other part."

The upbeat approach brings the magazine an upper-income audience approaching two million and an advertising-to-copy ratio that other publishers have long envied but not known how to duplicate. Now it looks like *Southern Living's* monopoly in "home"

magazines aimed at the growing regional market will get its first substantial test.

In March, *Ladies Home Journal* will introduce a Southern edition. Designed largely to attract advertisers with rates that start at \$13,000 per full-color page (less than half the rate of *Southern Living*), the new edition promises prospective clients it will talk "directly to our 4.6 million Southern readers on subjects from food to fashions to decorating and travel — in their own language."

Da . . . y'all hear dat?

Power of boycotts challenged in court

Boycotts of businesses to achieve political and social ends will soon get their day in court when the U.S. Supreme Court hears the NAACP's appeal of a judgment against it arising from its late-1960s, three-year-long boycott of white merchants in Port Gibson, Mississippi. The action was designed to bring jobs, municipal services and voting rights to the black residents, and it worked. The town has abandoned the Jim Crow style of segregation, and most of the important political offices in the county (which is 75 percent black) are held by blacks.

But the white business leaders did not accept defeat quietly. Thirteen years ago, they filed a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against the NAACP and 91 individuals, holding them liable for business losses they suffered during the boycott. A lower court in Mississippi agreed, awarding the merchants \$1.25 million in damages. The Mississippi Supreme Court upheld the ruling in December, 1980, and barred the defendants from participating in future boycotts, but the jurists felt the damage award was excessive and ordered a new trial to determine a more equitable settlement.

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

The NAACP has appealed this ruling to the high court in Washington, arguing that it threatens the right to organize group protests, a right dating back to the Stamp Act boycott when American colonists refused to buy British-made goods. The ACLU, AFL-CIO and NOW have filed friend-of-the-court briefs in support of the NAACP's argument that the injunction against future boycotts is a "prior restraint" violating their First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear arguments in the case during its 1982 term.

Wealthy can bank on Reagan's "cuts"

A host of reports are now coming out which document how Reagan's economic program works as a massive transfer of money rather than a straightforward cutback of government funds. The bias in the spending and tax cuts amounts to a New Deal in reverse: changes in programs for the 16 million families living near or below poverty — two-fifths of them in the South — will reduce at least half their income, while such changes as the elimination of inheritance taxes on estates under \$600,000 and the regressive personal income tax cuts will enrich the already rich.

The most striking study we've seen comes from A. Gary Shilling & Co., a New York financial consulting firm. It calculates the gains and losses for the current fiscal year for households of various income levels, and gives a figure for the net change in billions of dollars:

Income of	\$11,500 or less	\$11,500- 22,900	\$22,900- 47,800	\$47,800- and up
Budget Cuts	-\$9.0	-\$15.5	-\$10.1	-\$2.0
Tax Cuts	\$1.1	\$4.7	\$10.7	\$12.0
Net Effect	-\$8.0	-\$10.8	0.6	\$9.2

Obviously, the poor and two-income working-class households are meant to subsidize the wealthy under the Reagan program. Over the next four years, the Shilling study shows that the proposed federal changes will escalate the subsidies mightily, supposedly in the hopes that the rich will create jobs and ul-

timately more income for everybody.

So far, the data shows the average industrial worker's wage is 18 percent below what it was in 1977, while executive salaries for 1981 jumped 12 percent in one year, according to the Princeton, New Jersey, management consultants, Sibson and Company.

If you'd like a less scientific definition of what Reaganomics means, ask Tom Dudley, who works at an ice house on the coast of North Carolina. "There've been more sail boats and yachts out here [coming down the Intracoastal Waterway, heading for Florida] than I've seen ever before. Money's not getting hurt, but the little guy is going to feel it bad."



Blacks moving South in record numbers

For the first time in the twentieth century, blacks are heading South faster than they are leaving. Drs. James Johnson of UCLA and Warren Farrell of the University of Wisconsin say their survey shows two distinct groups of migrants: young, educated singles and couples coming for economic opportunities, and older, mainly blue-collar workers who once lived in the region and are returning for family or quality of life reasons.

Forty percent of the newcomers are moving to nonmetropolitan areas, while the majority are headed for medium and large cities, especially Washington, Baltimore, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston.

Blacks began leaving the South in huge numbers (estimates range from

300,000 to one million) between 1910 and 1920. In the five years between 1965 and 1970, about 161,000 left the South and about 90,000 moved into the region. The 1980 census now shows that between 1970 and 1979 the number of black migrants to the South exceeded the flow to the North and West by 26,000.

Union leader gets jail for CETA work

North Carolina labor leader Wilbur Hobby will go to jail for 18 months if the *Raleigh News & Observer* and U.S. Attorney Sam Currin, a former top aide for Jesse Helms, get their way. In August, 1979, the normally moderate-to-liberal newspaper began a crusade against the CETA program and assigned a veteran reporter to document its evils. Insiders say the paper's editor, Claude Sitton, thought the job training program was a political boondoggle and made people lazy rather than productive.

In the first month, the *News & Observer* ran 10 front page stories and five editorials accusing Hobby, then president of the North Carolina AFL-CIO, of getting CETA contracts as a pay-off for his support of the Democratic governor, Jim Hunt. As the stories' innuendos escalated, Democrats backtracked, fearful the Republicans would use the material, regardless of its accuracy, as ammunition against the governor's re-election. Led by Helms's Congressional Club, the GOP did exactly that — and Hobby soon found himself the odd man out, abandoned by his former allies and an easy target for the revenge of those he had fought for years, including the state auditor.

By early 1981, Hobby and Mort Levi, the black administrator of the training programs conducted by Hobby's private printing company, were indicted for conspiracy and fraud by a grand jury. Evidence showed that the CETA contract in dispute was completed for \$42,000 less than the \$130,000 authorized, resulted in 37 of 40 students being trained and 32 of

them finding skilled jobs; but during the trial, the U.S. Attorney convinced an all-white jury that an equipment leasing arrangement and inappropriate bookkeeping procedures, which the state CETA administrators approved, were proof of criminal conspiracy to defraud the government of \$4,840. In the political atmosphere surrounding the case, the judge sentenced both men on December 29 to 18 months in jail and five years of probation; he also gave Hobby a \$40,000 fine. Both men are appealing the case.

In September, during the lengthy pretrial motions, Hobby lost his bid for re-election as state AFL-CIO president. He has now returned to his old factory job at American Tobacco in Durham. After the December verdict, the *News & Observer* piously recounted "the sad tale leading up to Hobby's conviction," which it admitted hinged on "political and ethical questions" raised by his receiving a CETA contract in the first place, not on issues of law or criminal conspiracy, nor on questions of how effective or efficient his particular training program was. Despite the newspaper's conclusion that the contract "was bound to cause trouble," Hobby told supporters, "I'm not ashamed of anything I've done. I'm proud of our success, and I'd do it again if I had a chance."

Don't worry, the danger is invisible

In 1950, the federal government announced it was taking over part of Barnwell County, South Carolina, for construction of the Savannah River Plant, a facility designed to produce plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons. Since then, the county has repeatedly been chosen as the site for nuclear industries, including an unfinished and unopened commercial reprocessing plant and the nation's largest operating commercial low-level waste dump.

Now a new generation of nuclear-related companies appears ready to move to Barnwell. But, for the first time, a great many residents are saying, "No more!"

Nuclear Metals, a Massachusetts company which uses "depleted uranium" (the U-235 has been removed) for industrial manufacturing, announced early last summer that it was planning to build a plant in Barnwell County. One reason: all South Carolina facilities are guaranteed access to the local low-level dump. The owner of the company admitted, "It was my suggestion that we go to South Carolina because I felt that they are more involved in the nuclear industry, and consequently there would be less resistance."

There was plenty of resistance.

The company asked the county to back a \$6 million industrial revenue bond to help finance the move to Barnwell. When county residents heard of the request they demanded and got a public hearing that packed the county courthouse with about 250 people. They were mad. "We're beginning to wonder if Barnwell doesn't already have its share [of nuclear companies]," said one woman. "Don't we have enough? Isn't it time to put some somewhere else?"

The next day, June 18, the Barnwell County Council turned down the company's bond request.

The company, however, kept pushing. It moved its site, made other changes in an effort to mollify local residents and asked the council to reconsider its vote. But residents — a loosely organized group who generally do not oppose nuclear power — continued to fight. The company next agreed to build more than one holding pond for its contaminated cooling water and to move the plant's site again, this time to a spot adjacent to the Savannah River Plant. "If it's there and anything goes wrong," explains one area man, "we'll know about it sooner."

Finally, after the company lowered its bond request to \$5 million and obtained a license to handle waste from the state's Department of Health and Environmental Control, the county council voted 3-to-2 to back the bond offering.

Barnwell County residents realize the powerful political and economic forces in the county which wish to keep the county tied to the nuclear industry. (The mayor, director of the Chamber of Commerce and owner of the town's only radio station and the state's long-time political kingpin, Sol

Blatt, all spoke in favor of the company at the public hearing.) But they think they can beat them. "Maybe not this time," says one farmer. "But the next time a nuclear company wants to come in here — and we hear a half dozen more are thinking about it — we'll stop them."

Meanwhile, a crowd of 5,000 attended a forum in Biloxi, Mississippi, organized by Citizens Against Nuclear Disposal to "send a message to Washington." Politicians, including state



attorney Bill Allain, Congressman Wayne Dowdy and the mayor of Biloxi, appeared on panels with scientists and unanimously deplored the possible use of Gulf Coast salt domes for nuclear waste burial. Allain promised a lawsuit to block Washington from using the state as a dump, and Dowdy is sponsoring a bill with Mississippi's seven other congressional representatives to give states veto power over the location of federal dump sites, unless the veto is overridden by both houses of Congress.

The issue proves that nuclear waste is hot in more than one way. "You're not looking at a bunch of hippies," a state legislator at the coliseum told one reporter who asked about the impact the massive turnout would have on policy makers. "There are people here from 8 to 80. It's a cross section of all our people — and our voters."

Thanks to Stephen Hoffius of Charleston, South Carolina, and Groundswell for this news story.

Klan members sued for personal injuries

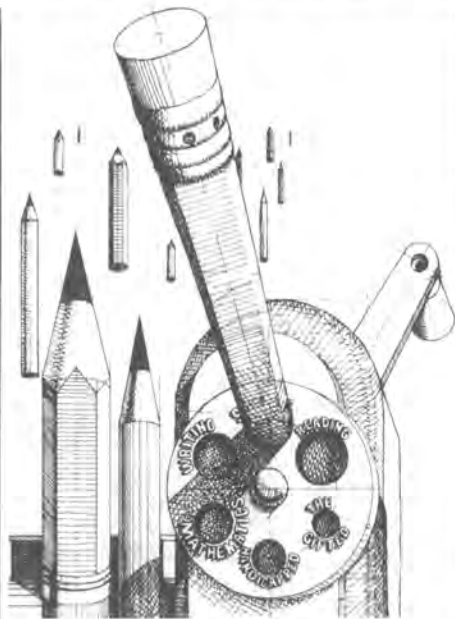
One of several recent lawsuits against members of the Ku Klux Klan and other right-wing terrorist groups is likely to be tried in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in February. Lawyers for the NAACP and the Center for Constitutional Rights have filed a civil damage suit seeking a total of \$1.5 million for injuries sustained by five elderly black women on the evening of April 19, 1980.

As they drove away from a double cross-burning in Chattanooga's black community, Klansmen fired three shotgun blasts from their car, wounding Viola Ellison, Lela Evans, Opal Jackson and Katherine Johnson, who were standing on a street corner. A few blocks further on, they shot out the windshield of a parked car, and flying glass ripped into Fannie Crumsey as she worked in her garden.

Three members of Justice Knights of the Ku Klux Klan — Larry Payne, Marshall Thrash and William Church — were arrested and charged with felonious assault with the intent to commit murder. Tried in state court, Payne and Church were acquitted by an all-white jury and Thrash was convicted of a misdemeanor assault charge.

Randolph Scott-McLaughlin, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights, explains that seeking monetary damages from individual Klansmen who injure people during racially motivated attacks will serve as a strong deterrent against future racist violence. "In Tennessee," he notes, "a person's property can be attached and the judgment against them is good for 15 years, so if these guys get any property we can come in and attach it."

In addition to the \$1.5 million damage award, the class-action suit asks for an injunction against the Justice Knights which would prohibit the Klan from "engaging in acts of violence, intimidation and terror" against the city's black residents. In an unusual twist, the Southeast Tennessee Legal Services Corporation will represent the Klansmen in the civil proceedings, despite protests from legal aid attorneys in other Southern states.



Southern schools on federal dole

Southern states — whose politicians often lead the fight against federal spending for social programs — rely far more heavily on Washington for their public schools than do most other states. A tabulation in a recent issue of *State Government News* shows that 8.7 percent of what the average state spends on its schools comes from federal sources. But the fed's contribution to every one of the 13 Southern states is more than that — significantly more in most cases. Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee each get 14 or 15 percent of their education budgets from Washington.

Even with the extra help, the South as a whole spends only 70 cents per pupil in elementary and secondary school for every \$1 the non-South spends on its students (\$1,468 versus \$2,010 per pupil).

Mississippi gets more federal help than any other state — 23.4 percent of its total education budget — and Governor William Winter warns that federal cuts will be "difficult to make up." *Education USA* reports that in Sunflower County, school superintendent Herbert Hargett says there is an "air of uncertainty" about the cuts. A 25 per-

cent drop in federal funds will mean a reduction of teachers and aides and the elimination of a computer program that teaches basic math and reading skills to fourth through eighth grade students in four counties. The program is credited with the substantial gains in student achievement test scores over the last few years, but the state has no plan for alternative funding once it loses its federal "handout."

Race major factor in region's elections

Recent elections in the metropolitan South confirm that "race always matters and never more than when the agenda of black voters progresses from 'a piece of the action' to 'calling the shots.'" A review of returns by Mark Pinsky in the *Boston Globe* shows that a high turnout by both races can be expected when a black mayor or black majority in the city council might be elected.

Thus in Birmingham, Alabama, which is 56 percent black, the challenge of a so-called black slate running for the city council with the black mayor's endorsement, sparked a turnout of 60 percent, twice the city's average. Running against an all-white slate, four of the five blacks were defeated, giving the new nine-member council only two black members, one less than before the election.

Some observers note that racial polarization, often promoted by media coverage, distorts the degree to which black and white candidates may have similar agendas. In Atlanta, where Andrew Young defeated a white business leader in the mayor's contest, "the fear that happened with the white downtown business community is unbelievable," said Tony Axam, a black attorney in the city. "Even after Young's victory, I think they're going to keep trying to 'reclaim' Atlanta. They assume the two communities are completely different."

Young won the election by a 55 to 45 margin, which is a single percentage

point from matching the ratio of black to white voters. He received only 10 percent of the white votes, and his opponent, Sidney Marcus, got 11 percent of the black vote.

When the black population is less than 40 percent, observes Pinsky, and elections are determined by an at-large system of voting, "it is virtually impossible for black representation to keep pace with black voting strengths." In Jackson, Mississippi, no black candidate has ever been elected to city office even though blacks make up 47 percent of the population. A suit challenging the city's at-large system is now before the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

A similar suit for Columbia, South Carolina, was rejected because the Supreme Court's *Mobile* decision makes at-large systems illegal only if they are proven to discriminate by "intent and purpose." The revised Voting Rights Act now before the U.S. Senate would specify that it is enough to show that an election procedure has the "effect" of discrimination for a court to rule it illegal. Apparently, the business and political leaders of Columbia have decided the at-large system is doomed; after successfully opposing the ACLU's court suit and a referendum initiated by Carolina Action to shift to a mixed system of six single-member districts, two at-large seats and the mayor's at-large post, they finally agreed to sponsor a compromise 4-2-1 system (similar to those in Florence and Greenville), which voters overwhelmingly approved in December, 1981.

Blacks and progressive whites in Greensboro, North Carolina, have also tried for years to get elections by districts. In neighboring Winston-Salem, a single-member district system helped four blacks win seats on the eight-member city council last November. But in Greensboro a flush of reactionary sentiment, stirred by the business conservatives who felt threatened by victories of progressive candidates in the primaries, knocked out the sole black incumbent, giving the city an all-white council. Durham also has at-large voting, but a split in the conservative ranks and an effective black-white coalition ousted the reactionary mayor and elected three blacks and a progressive white to the city council.

"The black turnout was high in all three North Carolina cities," said Dr.

Paul Luebke, sociology professor at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. "What makes the difference is the system of voting as well as the strength and effectiveness of black-white coalitions to unite on progressive candidates."

Austin voters say "no nukes"

Voters in Austin, Texas, decided by a 52-48 margin to sell their city's share in a nuclear power plant being built by Houston Lighting & Power (HL&P). The vote last November 3rd hits the already shaky nuclear industry especially hard since even in the booming Sunbelt private utilities have found it necessary to get help from publicly-owned municipal electric systems, like Austin's, to finance new power plants. The future of HL&P's project was further clouded when city officials in San Antonio announced they too might withdraw financial support for the proposed nuclear reactors.

"The critical issues in this vote were hard economics and who to believe," commented Robert Young, a consultant for the Austin anti-nuclear campaign which spent about \$50,000 for door-to-door canvassing, well-man-

aged press conferences and a series of clever television ads.

Pro-nuclear forces spent about the same amount of money but could not overcome a stream of revelations about the project's soaring costs and shoddy construction. HL&P reluctantly admitted the price for the two-unit power plant complex is now almost five times the estimated \$1 billion it gave in 1973 when Austin voters first approved a bond sale for the city to buy a 16-percent share in the project. Two months before the November referendum, a Nuclear Regulatory Commission report card rated the plant "below average," and in late October, a consulting firm hired by HL&P released a report confirming earlier evidence of poor construction and questioning the plant's ability to perform safely.

These new developments helped tip the balance in a hotly debated issue that had gone back to voters three more times since the 1973 bond approval (see *Southern Exposure*, Winter, 1979, for details). By election day this time, anti-nuclear forces included not only ACORN, the Central Labor Council, Black Citizens Task Force, Mexican-American Democrats and a majority of the city council, but even the University Republicans. Said one University of Texas student member, "I voted to sell it not because I'm against nuclear power but because of the way it's built."

A few days after the referendum,



Dwane Powell/News & Observer

Brown & Root quit as the construction contractor because it could not negotiate a new contract with HL&P. The power company announced it would suspend all construction for six months while it phased out Brown & Root. And on Wall Street, the company's bond rating dropped from AA to A+, further jeopardizing its ability to raise the capital it needs to meet a proposed 1986 completion date.

By mid-November, Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio compared his city's increasingly controversial participation in the project to the divisiveness of the Vietnam War, and he suggested withholding further support for the plant. Cisneros's shift in position was prompted in large part by the vigorous efforts of the Community Organization for Public Service (COPS), a grassroots group which has called on the city to sell its entire 28 percent share in the plant. Beatrice Cortez, new president of COPS, commented, "We applaud the mayor's growing recognition that the South Texas Nuclear Project has become a disastrous quagmire."

San Antonio is now exploring various energy alternatives. Recently, Cisneros, Cortez and several city council members traveled to Mexico to discuss possible energy supplies from that country. In the meantime, it may not be easy for the city to unload its share of the reactor, since neither HL&P nor the project's fourth partner, Central Power & Light of Corpus Christi, have expressed an interest in buying a larger portion of what is fast becoming one of the nation's biggest nuclear lemons.

In another setback to the nuclear industry in the South, Carolina Power & Light (CP&L) announced in December that it is cancelling two of the four units planned for its Sharon Harris reactor complex now under construction near Raleigh, North Carolina. The company cited new energy demand projections which eliminated the need for the plant. The decision came at the end of a hard year for the company's nuclear program: its two Brunswick reactors have been shut down repeatedly because of operating defects; its Robinson reactor was hit with a stiff penalty for improper safety procedures; and the same Robinson reactor now faces a lengthy shutdown for repairs in its steam supply system.

One development lessened the blow for the power company. On the day it announced its cancellations, the North Carolina Utilities Commission granted CP&L a 13.3 percent rate increase, including a hefty amount for the unbuilt plants. The utility's rates have now risen 50 percent in the last two years, and it has already announced plans to hike them an additional \$187 million to pay for the abandoned units, once again penalizing customers for saving energy.

Houston picked for union campaign

With much fanfare, leaders of the AFL-CIO have announced a coordinated organizing drive that targets Houston, Texas, for a multi-year "saturation campaign reminiscent of the 1930s." Thirty international unions are donating organizers and money to the effort, which leaders say could consume \$1.7 million a year.

Ironically, a little-publicized coordinated campaign centered in Tupelo, Mississippi, recently ended with little to show except a revived central labor council in the area and one successful election. Conflicts between old and new organizing styles, strategies and leadership, a sagging economy and an entrenched network of anti-union businesses doomed the drive after three years of sporadic effort.

Unions are encouraged in Houston by a booming economy, a progressive city government and a base of union membership which represented 13 percent of the city's "organizable" work force in 1977. Alan Kistler, director of the AFL-CIO Department of Organization, kicked off the Houston Organizing Project at a gathering of 200 union leaders in the city and proclaimed it organized labor's biggest challenge to the nonunion Sunbelt.

Everything from radio advertising to social service staff will augment a team of two dozen organizers. Since the city is also home for several major anti-union consulting and law firms, including one headed by Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, it is not

likely labor will initiate an election at one of the area's plants until it is confident of a solid victory. A bad defeat in the "test case" of the Tupelo project apparently turned top union officials sour on its future prospects.

Marchers in South on peace mission

A group of Japanese Buddhist monks and nuns began the Southern U.S. leg of the World Peace March in New Orleans on January 1, 1982. The march has already made its way through Japan, where it began last April, and through Europe, where three march routes converged in Paris on Hiroshima Day, August 6.

Marchers in the western U.S. began walking in October and will meet the Southern and Northern contingents in New York on June 5 to participate in the United Nations' Second Special Session on Disarmament. The session seeks action on a UN mandate adopted in 1978 to draw up a program of general and complete disarmament, with dates attached to each step. It was initiated by non-aligned and Third World countries which felt "they were being held hostage by the nuclear superpowers; not free to escape the horrible consequence of nuclear war, not free to turn their energies to peaceful development of their own countries and the alleviation of widespread hunger."

The World Peace March will move along secondary roads, stopping in cities and towns to discuss disarmament and introduce people to the devastating effects of nuclear attack through photos and films of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The marchers ask that supporters along the way join the march "for an afternoon or a day."

Major Southern stops for the World Peace March include: Mobile and Birmingham, Alabama; Atlanta; Barnwell and Columbia, South Carolina; Charlotte, Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina; Portsmouth and Richmond, Virginia. For further information, contact the War Resisters League Southeast, 604 W. Chapel Hill St, Durham, NC 27701.

RESOURCES

Act now on voting rights

The final push to extend and improve the Voting Rights Act will require a coordinated focus on Howard Baker and the Republican Senate.

For background materials on the Act, write for the *Information Kit* from the Joint Center for Political Studies, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20004. Write us, too, and we'll send you materials from several sources, including a copy of the Southern Regional Council's special issue of *Southern Changes* on the Act. Our address is P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

Living black history

Black History Month (February) is more than learning that G.F. Grant, a black man, invented the golf tee in 1899, or that "the real McCoy" was named after Elijah McCoy, another black inventor who held 57 patents, including one for a unique applicator of heavy lubricants — the real McCoy. New resources for a substantive course on black history include an hour-long documentary on Ella Baker entitled *Fundi*, a film which traces the Civil Rights Movement of the last 50 years through the life of a tireless freedom fighter. From building NAACP chapters in the '30s to serving as the first executive of SCLC in the '50s to being the "mother" of SNCC in the '60s, Ella Baker's story mirrors the larger struggle of blacks in America, and the film's documentary footage appropriately complements interviews with her notable colleagues. *Fundi* is excellent for community groups as well as schools. Get it shown on your local public TV, too! The rental fee is \$75. Write producer Joanne Grant at Fundi, P.O. Box 195, New York, NY 10014. Or call (212) 674-0741.

John O'Neal, a SNCC veteran and co-founder of the Free Southern Theater, also brings a personalized portrait of black history to audiences through his one-man play, *Junebug Jabbo Jones*. Scenes from his dramatic, often humorous production range from the plantation field to shoe shine stand to the modern urban church. For details, con-

tact John O'Neal, 1307 Barracks St., New Orleans, LA 70116.

The long-awaited curriculum on racism and the Klan is now available, and it could make an ideal unit to use during Black History Month. Prepared by the Connecticut branch of the National Education Association and the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC), the dozen lesson plans include documents, lists of audio-visual aids, discussion ideas, supplementary readings, class projects and suggestions for teachers to put racist ideology and organization in an historical, concrete framework for better understanding. Copies of the \$4.95 curriculum can be obtained from CIBC, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, or from the National Anti-Klan Network, P.O. Box 10500, Atlanta, GA 30310.

Test your schools

Testing Our Children: A Parent and Consumer Handbook, by Pamela George, focuses on North Carolina elementary and secondary schools, but its survey of what test scores mean, when testing is inappropriate and how to protect your child's rights makes the 152-page book an excellent resource for everyone concerned about IQ, achievement, competency or special education testing. Send \$5 for a copy to ACRE Test Project, 604 West Chapel Hill St., Durham, NC 27701.

The Southeastern Public Education Program (SEPEP) has produced several valuable materials for parents and teachers concerned with such issues as testing, school discipline, federal and state desegregation programs, student advocacy, and parent advisory councils. Write for a listing of resources: SEPEP, 1338 Main Street, Columbia, SC 29201.



Be an organizer

In addition to Si Kahn's new book, *Organizing* (see review, page 79), a few other resources for neighborhood leaders and community organizers deserve attention. *Getting People Together in Rural America*, by Barbara Swarzy, is specifically designed for organizers concerned with consumer issues in areas characterized by dispersed population, strong traditions of self reliance, agrarian values and relative isolation from mass media feedback. That description fits much of the South, so even though the author draws largely from experiences in the mountain states of the West, the easy-to-read, 40-page lesson plan serves as a handy guide for Southerners organizing local or county-wide campaigns. Ask for a free copy from the Northern Rockies Action Group, 9 Placer Street, Helena, MT 59601.

If it's a consumer or producer cooperative you have in mind for your rural area, also write the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, P.O. Box 95, Epes, AL 35460. Ask for John Zippert's illustrated booklet, *Some Ideas for Community Organizers*, and other materials on the particular type of co-op venture you want to start.

Neighborhood leaders should take advantage of a free collection of material recently assembled by the National Trust for Historic Preservation — a surprising source for practical information on building rank-and-file citizens' organizations. Describing everything from neighborhood fairs to fundraising, the collection can be ordered by writing *Organizing Kit*, National Trust, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

A new "journal for organizers" offers in-depth articles analyzing the successes and failures, tactics and theories of all types of organizing. A recent issue of *The Organizer* includes articles on La Raza Unita's third party politics, the use of law suits in organizing, nuts and bolts of door-to-door contact, potential movements among the victims of Reagan's cutbacks and new techniques in labor union organizing. A single copy costs \$3, and a year subscription (four issues) is \$12. Write *The Organizer*, 1638 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Arizona

Don't let them take your land

The 360 Yavapai Indians, the last of thousands who once lived on 10 million Arizona acres, have won their first great victory over the white man. He wanted to stuff some \$33 million into their pockets. They told him to get lost.

The money would have been paid for Yavapai land flooded by the proposed Orme Dam, the keystone of a \$1 billion federal water project that practically every element of Arizona's political and economic power structure has lusted after for 13 years. The huge dam at the confluence of the Salt and Verde rivers would have inundated up to 17,000 of the 25,000 acres the tribe has left, and forced its relocation from the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation.

So the Yavapai (pronounced yah-vuh-PIE), who were never even consulted about the dam when it was first authorized in 1968, dug in for a last stand. They lobbied in Congress, marched on a "trail of tears" to the state capitol and picketed Senator Barry Goldwater at a public appearance. "This was our last piece of homeland," says tribal chairman Norman Austin. "There was no other place for a people who had been sent wandering over the desert for so many years."

The government, of course, could have just condemned the property, kicked out the Yavapai and paid them off anyway. But confronted by their refusal to sell voluntarily at any price, by rising public sympathy for them and by the certainty of a lawsuit by the Indians and their environmentalist allies (the dam would have drowned the south Verde's riparian habitat, bald-eagle nesting sites and archaeological ruins), the dam's proponents are caving in.

Now most of them have reversed

course, to support an alternative plan that won't affect the Yavapai. The final decision will be made by Interior Secretary James Watt, who has already informally backed the alternative; official approval won't be announced until environmental-impact statements are completed, but it is generally agreed that the Orme Dam is dead.

"It's pretty amazing," says Lawrence Aschenbrenner, an attorney for the Native American Rights Fund who aided the Yavapai in their struggle. "All sorts of well-intentioned people told the Yavapai they were sticking their heads in the sand. What these



people have done is an example to others who can now say, 'By God, if we get together and don't give up, we can win too.'"

Like other tribes, the Yavapai hold their land in common, not as individual plots, and they view it as an integral part of their religion and culture. "Land should not belong to people — people belong to the land," says Virginia Mott, an outspoken opponent of the dam.

Tribal religion and culture have been in decline, slowly eroded by neglect and by white influences. The Yavapai tongue is dying out, the last medicine man is gone, and knowledge of the old faith and customs resides

mostly among the elders. But enough of the Yavapai way remains in the tribal consciousness to make even the thought of drowning the land a desecration.

Beyond their reverence for the land itself, the Yavapai also harbor a historically justified skepticism about white promises. In the 1860s the U.S. cavalry promised them food, clothing and land if they would settle near Army forts; they got starvation and smallpox instead. Lumped in with the Apache (they are still called Mohave-Apache, though their language is entirely different), they were mowed down by Army rifles at Skeleton Cave, Bloody Basin, Skull Valley.

Rounded up again on land they were told would be theirs, they were again displaced and sent on a forced march of 180 miles to the Apache reservation at San Carlos. Many died. They finally got their own reservation here in 1903 and have clung to it since, despite repeated threats to move them into the nearby Salt River reservation with their ancestral foes, the Pimas.

Though they apparently have won the fight against the Orme Dam, the Yavapai have little confidence that they will be left alone from now on. Tribal member Phil Dorchester, noting that water wells in Phoenix and Scottsdale have been poisoned by chemicals, says fatalistically: "They'll come up here sooner or later to try to get more water from the Verde. They'll have to."

The young will have to be vigilant, says John Williams, 77 and wheelchair-bound. "I am a man of rubber now," he says, indicating his useless legs, "but I would tell the young people this: The God behind blue heaven made this land for his people. Hold it. Put writing on papers. Do not sell it. Do not lease it. Pass it down. All this my own father told me too." □

— William E. Blundell
— reprinted by permission from
The Wall Street Journal

South Korea

Founder of center for women mixes tradition and change

On a swelteringly hot day in August, 1956, when the streets of Seoul, Korea, still bore the scars of war, Lee Tai-young inaugurated a Women's Legal Aid Center in the rented corner of a small office. A one-desk operation which Mrs. Lee herself financed with the proceeds from her law lectures at Ehwa Women's University, the center had goals that were twofold: to help women fight prejudicial divorce and inheritance laws, and to oppose Korea's notorious wage discrimination against females.

Mrs. Lee's first case was, as she now recalls, a "monumental flop" — she won the desired divorce for her client, but not before the husband had transferred all his property to relatives and declared himself bankrupt, incapable of paying alimony. That first year she handled 149 cases. "I was alone," she recollects, "and I would take each weeping woman in my arms and cry and sigh with her. If I didn't respond to their needs, who would?"

From these modest beginnings the center, which in its 25 years of existence has handled well over 100,000 cases, is now established in its own six-story building, constructed entirely with donations from Korean women. Some of them sold their wedding rings and worked as maids to earn enough money to make contributions. And the youthful 66-year-old Mrs. Lee shows no sign of flagging.

Korea's first woman lawyer, Lee Tai-young was born into a society of rigid male-dominated traditions, many of which survive to this day. Her father died when she was two years old and, in accordance with Korean custom, her elder brother brought his mother and sister into his household and assumed responsibility for them both. Mrs. Lee still remembers her brother's unusual encouragement in her early years "to become a lawyer when I grew up, or another kind of spokeswoman for those in need."

In 1936, she graduated from Ehwa University (now the largest women's university in the world) with a degree in home economics, and years later she was the dean of its college of law and political science. In the 10 years between her graduation from college and the time she was able to undertake legal studies, Mrs. Lee taught home economics at a girls' high school in Pyongyang (now the capital of North Korea) and worked as a seamstress to support her four small children and her mother-in-law, who lived with them. For a number of those years, during World War II, her husband, Chyung Yil-hyung (later to become foreign minister and the longest-tenured national assemblyman in Korean history), was imprisoned by the Japanese for his activities in the Korean independence movement. In accordance with the Japanese rule that families of prisoners provide their food and clothing, Mrs. Lee sewed quilts out of odds and ends and sold the finished products door to door.

Released from prison at the end of the war in 1945, Chyung Yil-hyung returned to Seoul and composed a letter to his wife that was to launch her on a new career. He wrote:

I walk the streets of Seoul and no one follows me. My movements are unrestricted and there is no one to imprison me. I feel as free as a bird. Now, my dear, it is time for me to take the burden off your shoulders. The moment you have waited for has come and you should now undertake your lifelong desire to study law. I cannot, as the virtuous spouse of earlier days was expected to do for her husband, pull out my hair to weave you a pair of matted shoes, but in this way at least I can attempt to repay all you have done for me.

The days of freedom were not to last. In March, 1977, Mrs. Lee and her husband, along with 16 other Christian leaders, were found criminally guilty of having read a declaration at an ecumenical mass which accused the then President Park Chung Hee of "trampling on human rights" and urged him to resign. Both were given three-year suspended sentences and deprived of all their civil rights. But Mrs. Lee persists undeterred in what she regards as

her "Christian calling," her "patriotic task" of defending human rights in general and the rights of Korean women in particular.

A recently acquired "mobile legal aid" unit, designed to reach women who couldn't get to the center, is a case in point. Mrs. Lee can often be seen huddled in the back of the crowded little jeep as it makes the rounds of Seoul's outlying slum districts. Initially, she assumed that the police would expedite this activity — if only to keep her, so to speak, on the streets for women's rights and thus off the democracy/human rights soapbox. She was wrong.

Mrs. Lee was informed by the local police that she couldn't use the mobile unit. Why? Two reasons: its advertising was illegal, and it would obstruct traffic. Nonsense, she told them in no uncertain terms. The family-planning vehicle advertises, and so do taxis. As for the traffic argument, that was too frivolous to warrant a reply. She would use the vehicle anyway, she insisted, with or without permission. "You'll be fined," a police officer warned. "I won't pay," she retorted. "A few weeks of not paying," he continued, "and you'll be jailed." "And when I get out I'll use it again," she said to the now somewhat flustered policeman, "so you might as well just give me the permission I'm entitled to right now."

The mobile unit, of course, went on operating throughout the city of Seoul. Although the bespectacled Mrs. Lee is never strident, her adversaries have nonetheless learned not to mistake her gentleness for weakness. When urged by friends to cease her activities in opposition to the government, in the interests of the center's development, she categorically refused. "Human rights are indivisible," she insisted. "There's no point fighting for women's rights if we are not equally zealous in defending the human rights of others!"

With the loss of her civil rights making it impossible to continue as *de jure* director of the Women's Legal Aid Center, Mrs. Lee has nonetheless continued to involve herself in the center's day-to-day activities. Unsure as to the full implications of her suspended prison sentence, she devised a strategy that not only provides an insight into her special brand of humor, humility and tenacity, but also illustrates the

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

delicate process by which Koreans test the restrictive government.

Shortly after the trial ended, Mrs. Lee visited the center and began putting around in its garden. Since there was no official reaction, after a few days of this garden-variety work she took the next step by entering the building. Her first week's activity, however, was confined to sweeping and dusting the offices. Only when it was clear that there were no objections to her being at the center did she finally sit down at her desk to resume her regular duties — minus the title, of course.

The center staff is now composed of seven full-time and two part-time counselors, all women law school graduates. They deal with civil matters such as questions related to divorce, parent-child relations, adoption and inheritance; their criminal cases include adultery, rape, assault and fraud.

The redoubtable Mrs. Lee thrives on a pace of activity that exhausts younger colleagues. If she isn't working on a book — she has already published six — she is involved in a commission for the revision of archaic and discriminatory laws (a number of which have already been changed through her efforts); or initiating a "Grandmothers' School" to sensitize the traditionally imperious mothers-in-law to the need for better relations with their daughters-in-law and also to help them overcome their sense of uselessness; or at one point making three radio broadcasts a week answering listener-submitted questions regarding family problems.

Mrs. Lee also instituted a program of free marriages for indigent couples. "Why not help them marry?" she asks rhetorically. "We help them divorce." Her point is serious: 60 percent of Korea's unregistered "marriages" eventually dissolve. The price a poor couple pays for the free wedding is attendance at a compulsory preparatory course in family relations that examines such issues as mutual respect for one another's rights, family planning, home economics, child care and the like.

Lee Tai-young combines religious fervor with secular rationality, idealism with pragmatism, an abiding respect for people and institutions with an unyielding defiance of those who violate human dignity. A happily

married grandmother of 10, it is perhaps befitting a specialist on domestic relations that she has great respect and affection for women who remain in the home. Her fundamental view, quite simply stated, is that "peace and harmony in the home, based on justice and equality, lead to peace and harmony in the universe."

Like so many other societies in the West and East, Korea has a long way to go on both fronts, but thanks to Mrs. Lee and what she describes as her "quiet revolution," there has been movement in the right direction and promise of greater progress in the future. □

— David Finkelstein
— reprinted by permission from
Christian Century magazine

New Mexico

Belief in justice leads judge to quit

On the same day in October that President Reagan was in New Orleans winning the cheers of a group of police chiefs for pledging to support passage of mandatory sentencing laws, Judge Gene Franchini of Albuquerque, New Mexico, resigned from the bench rather

than send a man to prison under just such a law.

Ricardo Aguilar, an honorably discharged Vietnam veteran who had a job as a night watchman at a warehouse, was convicted by a jury of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and New Mexico's law required a one-year prison term. The facts were undisputed. On his way home from work, Aguilar was agitated by a driver behind him who was blowing his horn and following too closely. Aguilar jumped out of his car and leveled his watchman's revolver at the other driver. No shots were fired, and there was no physical contact between the two. Aguilar is a first offender.

The jury recommended leniency and asked that Aguilar not be given an active sentence. Judge Franchini complied and suspended his one-year term. But that didn't satisfy the district attorney, who appealed the sentence to the state supreme court. The high court upheld the appeal, saying the judge had no choice in this matter; the prison term was mandatory.

The conscience-stricken Franchini resigned, explaining that sending Aguilar to the hellish New Mexico State Penitentiary, scene of a bloody riot in 1980, would be an act of "insanity and injustice."

It was a bright moment for American justice. Unfortunately for Ricardo Aguilar, his sentencing was held over for Judge Franchini's successor.



The Field Audit

GREENVILLE, NC — I found out a long time ago that I am incapable of filling out income tax forms; in fact, there has always been something in my nature that rebelled when confronted with forms.

"Subtract line 10b from line 8c. (Attach Schedule B if indicated.)"

Indicated by whom? By what?

"Did you elect to claim amortization (under section 191) or depreciation (under section 167a) for a rehabilitated structure?"

This one was simple; I answered "yes." But how was I going to complete the remainder of the form? I swore and decided to take a common-sense approach: to ignore the rules and regulations and use my own judgment. I made a list of what I thought were logical deductions, stated my income, attached the form with one blank filled out and mailed it to the Internal Revenue Service, along with a check for \$36.27.

It wasn't long before we got the ominous notice that the IRS was going to do a field audit on us.

I wrote back that our fields were planted and doing fine and that they were welcome to audit them if in doing so they were careful not to damage the crops.

The IRS seemed upset by my letter. I got a call from a Mr. Jones; he explained carefully in kindergarten language that field audit did not mean they were going to examine our fields; it meant they were coming to our home and I was to have all papers ready.

Mr. Jones arrived, briefcase in one hand and adding machine in the other. Our dog Bandit bared his teeth and growled.

"Now," Jones said briskly, "if you will just get me all your papers and bank statements, I think I can clear this up in a few minutes."

I doubt that, I thought, but I brought in three large grocery bags and

dumped the contents on the kitchen table. "I'm pretty sure this is all," I said brightly.

"Where is your husband? I'd like to talk to him about this mess."

"Oh, he's gone somewhere. Anyway, he doesn't know anything about it. He just manages the business; I do all the bookkeeping. I do real good with figures; I went through the seventh grade," I announced with pride.

He gave me a sour look. "Is this the way you always keep books?"

My voice trembled again. "I just can't seem to keep some things



straight," I apologized. You little pipsqueak, I thought.

He caught himself and smiled reassuringly. "That's all right, Ma'am. I'll just sort through the papers." He sighed and began. By five o'clock he had separated bills and receipts from wedding invitations, recipes and the like.

"I'll be back tomorrow," he said. "It's taking longer than I thought."

He was back early the next morning, and soon the clacking of his adding machine drowned out my favorite TV program. "It says here you lost money on your cows last year. What happened?"

"Some of them died," I answered.

He pounced on my statement. "Can you prove that?"

"Yes, I can." I called him to the window. "You just drive down to the back of the field and take the first woodspath. You'll see the skeletons."

He gave me a long look.

After a time he spoke again. "You claimed a deduction for buying a restraining yoke. Just what is a restraining yoke?"

I looked away. "Well, it's a doo-hickey that you put a cow's head in to hold her so that..." I looked at him imploringly.

He was consumed with curiosity now. "I have to know."

All right, you nincompoop, I thought. "So that she can be bred without a bull," I said rapidly, covering my face with my hands.

He reddened and cleared his throat. "Yes," he mumbled, and bent over his papers. The embarrassed silence was broken only by the clacking of his adding machine.

I snickered inwardly. I'll bet you don't ask me any more questions, I thought. I was right.

He worked a while longer; he looked puzzled. "I don't know how you did it, but you got it about right," he said. "Tell me, how did you manage to check more out of the bank than you put in?"

"Well, I guess you'll have to take that up with the bank. I don't understand banking any better than I understand income tax returns."

He stood up, gathering his papers and paraphernalia. Bandit showed his teeth and stood up, too. Jones left hastily. He started to get in his car, then hesitated and looked back toward the house. I waved and smiled and turned Bandit out. Jones sailed into the car and slammed the door. Bandit bit his tires all the way to the road. □

— IDA WOOTEN TRIPP
freelance
Greenville, NC

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



PHILIP SIMMONS

CHARLESTON BLACKSMITH

by John Michael Vlach

Most boys become apprentice on account of the action goes on around the blacksmith shop like beatin' on the red hot iron, the sparks flyin' and the kids like that. I stand at the door and watch the sparks. I said I would like to be a blacksmith some day.

— Philip Simmons

In 1925, when Philip Simmons made his decision to take up blacksmithing, there was no shortage of available role models in Charleston, South Carolina. The waterfront district was thick with craftsmen, and included several blacksmith and wheelwright shops. Within one five-block area, four Afro-American ironworkers plied their trade. The tradition of blacks in skilled trades in Charleston goes back to before the 1740s, when slaves regularly hired themselves out as craftsmen. The profits they earned were split with their owners, and some slaves eventually found the means to buy freedom for themselves and their families. The pattern of white patronage of black skill was so entrenched that even after Denmark Vesey's abortive revolution in 1822, which caused Charlestonians to regard all blacks with great fear and suspicion, black craftsmen were still able to earn a respectable living.

Just as it was normal for a boy raised on a farm to do farm chores, so too was it natural for Philip to go into blacksmithing. Although born on Daniel Island and raised by his grandparents, he spent most of the school year across the river in Charleston with his parents; he finally moved to the city permanently at age 13. By then he had spent years walking among some of the most elaborate and well-executed examples of the blacksmith's art. His fascination with wrought-iron design developed further in art class in school. When he finally decided to become an ironworker, he turned to a neighbor who worked just two blocks away. At age 70, Peter Simmons — the Old Man, as Philip called him — took on another apprentice, his last. But like many boys first attracted to the "action of the shop," Philip's commitment was not immediate:

You know how a boy is. Thirteen years old boy then, they full of pep and that particular time I wasn't too serious then. Go on the baseball diamond, play ball a while and come back over in the shop. Go cross the street and go down to the shoemaker's shop and talk to the man repairing shoes. Go down to the foot of the wharf and talk to the people who bring boats in with vegetable and shrimp and fish, seafood. And that thirteenth year is kind of a year of action for me.

After the thirteenth year, then I got kind of serious in the blacksmith shop. You know, six, seven, eight months after that, settle down.

Philip's explanation for his success is simple: he stayed, therefore he learned. Disguised in this equation is his attraction to the craft, his appreciation of the drudgery and long hours of physical and mental labor required, his own skill and the careful direction and strict discipline given by his teacher, who had himself learned the trade from a stern

I build a gate. I build it to last 200 years. If it looks good, you feel good. I build a gate and I just be thinking about 200 years. If you don't you're not an honest craftsman.

teacher, his father Guy Simmons. According to the stories told Philip, Peter's "daddy used to turn the back of the hammer and hit him on the head or shoulder. . . . He [Peter] didn't hit me on the back of the hand, but his daddy done it to him."

Philip describes his four-year apprenticeship as a long training experience:

I was going and clean the shop up and go on errands for him, you know. Go out and get things and finally I would stop and spend hours in there cleaning and sweeping the shop. . . . He could use a boy. Hold the horse while he puttin' the shoe on. Turn the forge. He had hand forge then. We call it bellow, bellows. Turn it with hand. . . . He'd give me a few pennies, maybe a quarter. After knowing my way around, where the broom is to clean the shop and some of the tools, he got interest in me. He hire me at a dollar and a half a week. When I start getting four dollars a week, I was there three or four years. . . . [By] that time I'd know my way around pretty good. I could straighten iron, heat 'em and bend 'em myself. The Old Man'd step out the door and say, "Bend it, it's in the fire, hot, turn it." That's when I got eager to learn the

trade, when I could do things on my own. So I would get me a little practice. So there it is. As he would get confidence, then he would launch out the bigger things or more particular thing. When I make a mistake, he would stop everything. Some people will tell you you're wrong and keep going working. He stop everything and explain it to you.

Because Peter Simmons worked in all branches of smithery, he handled a wide range of jobs for an equally broad range of customers, from city dwellers to Sea Islanders, repairing wagons for urbanites and plows for farmers, shoeing horses and making anchors, rudders, hooks and other ironwork for the ships along the nearby wharf. In learning to be a blacksmith, Philip also became familiar with the full range of business activity in the Charleston area. At age 19, he had to assume full responsibility for the shop because Peter "took sick and went into the hospital" for two months. Peter returned to find Philip a trained and tested blacksmith. For four more years, Peter maintained control of the shop, but with a full partner; he was still the boss, or as Philip notes, "he called the ball and strike." But in the early 1930s, Peter moved across the river to the town of Mt. Pleasant, where he continued to run a small blacksmith shop. Philip Simmons, 23, embarked on his career as a master craftsman with his own shop.

During this period, there was a marked decline in the number of ironworkers in Charleston and elsewhere. Most blacksmiths closed their shops down and sought other occupations. Some retired; others moved north. Philip received his first inkling of the precarious position of the old-timey trade while still an apprentice. "I feel kind of skeptical," he recalls, "after people coming around talking about the wagons are going out. No wagon. You know what that mean. No horse. No wheels to repair or build. Then what I goin' do?"

But his fears were calmed by Peter's advice: "The Old Man say, 'Boy, don't worry.' He say, 'There'll always be work here for a blacksmith. Don't worry about it.'" Sure enough, the Old Man was right. The first trucks were essentially set on a wagon frame and needed the same body work and refinements that Peter and Philip had done for dozens of wagons. "Same principle, same identical thing," says Philip. "You know the blacksmith trade give you so many idea about other trade in iron now, like the ornamental ironworking or the angle smith or the automobile shop, the automobile builder, and building truck bodies. You see the blacksmith shop is the father of all those trades."

Philip's own entry into the decorative field of ironwork was gradual:

And after the horse-buggy wheels go, something come to me. Say, "You a blacksmith, you can bend those iron just like most pattern. You could do a better job. You could make it look like the old originals cause you got your forge." When I got on the forge and people come in, "Mr. Simmons, I got a broken place in my gate. Could you repair it?" I go there and repair it. Didn't have no electric drill. You take the hand drill and rivet. Had [to] rivet them scrolls in. It was hard riveting them. And finally I work and I keep my pride, do my work with pride. Finally I start with one piece, repairing gate. Then start making the parts to put in 'em, like the man got down to the Sword Gate. Finally, I start making the whole gate. I said, "I got the forge and I turn 'em out like the old original." Finally people going for that stuff. "Go ahead and make it like that. That's what we want."

He [Peter Simmons] didn't do too much ornamental work, but after I took over then I went



Philip Simmons's work at 45 Meeting Street is rich with his decorative flair. Pictured are lower and upper window grills (above left and above) and the porch landing (below left).

The gate at 2 Stolls Alley (near right) predates Philip's acquisition of an electric welder, and the tiny lumps of flattened metal visible at every attachment of a decorative element are the marks of the old-fashioned style of the last century.

The gate at 56 Spring Street (far right) is in a working-class neighborhood of plain frame houses owned and rented almost exclusively by blacks. Philip has done little fancy work there because most of the residents cannot afford it. But since the mid-1960s he has done some gates in special where a certain individual's desires have overwhelmed his business sense. This one – the owner saved for years to get the \$200 Philip charged her – he did as much to satisfy himself as his client.



into it forcibly. Well, I found myself into it all the way until today.

There's a big demand for iron gates, big demand now. There's always gonna be for that type of work: iron gates, window grills, porch railings, and columns. As long as they gonna build a house, they gonna put iron on it in Charleston. 'Specially in Charleston.

Philip Simmons estimates that in the 40 years since he first took a decorative commission, he has turned out more than 200 gates. He has also made balconies, stair rails, window grills and fences. The pages here feature photo-

I've never made anything I didn't like. I take a long time on the drawing, and when the customer likes it I already liked it first. I'm lucky his choice is mine too.

graphs of some of his typical works, along with his comments and general descriptions.

Because the right balance between openness and closedness only emerges from the process of design and fabrication, Philip's creation of decorative wrought-iron works is essentially an example of experimental composition. He has the outline of his work which he then fills with ornament. The "move to fill in" begins with an almost tedious free-hand drawing, which after years of experience closely follows the scale of his measurements — usually one inch

represents one foot. Scrolls and leaves are sketched out in pencil, evaluated, erased and redrawn — often in the same place. This stage of design may last a few hours or a few days, depending upon the complexity of the commission and the urgency of the job.

When Philip Simmons finishes a gate he has satisfied himself, his client and Charleston's sense of history. Most contemporary artists sense little social restraint upon their works, but in the creation of ornamental ironwork in Charleston the direct influences of the community are inescapable. It is important to remember, however, that the decision to repeat the old, the commonplace, the typical, the usual, can be as significant as an innovative choice. Tradition is kept alive by a series of deliberate, rational decisions. It does not survive without talented, committed performers. Philip's own creative process involves improvisation within the context of a community inspired by its history. Clients come to his shop with full confidence that whatever he makes will not only be of high quality, but appropriate for Charleston.

I asked them, I say, "You got it in mind of anything you want?" "No, I want you to design it yourself. And just what you make, I'll know I'll like it." I go ahead.

Guy said, "Here, this is what I want, Mr. Simmons. I got a staircase. It's inside, this is not outside. I want spokes but I don't want it all spokes. Want two sets of decoration. Suppose you put one here, Mr. Simmons, and one up here. Then you can go ahead with your spokes. Leave that opening in there. Now put something fancy on there. What could you put in there for me?" I say, "O.K., let me think, think of something." All my ideas gone.

But what I would do was put this on paper, then I'll take it outside and I'll put several [de-



signs] in there. I go 'head to my work and don't just try to bump my head to tell him what I can do. Don't think about [it], just go ahead. I come in the evenin', I'll lay down in the bed. Visualize it. Then [at first] things divided in your mind. Then you don't see too many [options]. But I come up with something. . . . I had to stop and think. Have to wait. I have to clear up, what you call it, the air traffic. When the plane come in and can't land and he say, "Fly around." Then he'll tell the passenger on the plane, "We're waitin' till the air traffic clear." Well, you have to wait till that traffic clear up on my mind. . . .

No, I don't dream about it, but I have a vision. I have a tremendous vision. Every so often it comes over me. I never dream about it. I get a tremendous vision every so often. I'll visualize something. I never forget about it. I see it finished completely in my mind.

When Philip speaks of receiving "visions," they are more than individual inspirations. His use of a supernatural image is in fact a perpetuation of a metaphor in widespread use in American and Afro-American culture. West African mask carvers often claim to dream the mask before they sculpt it. Among the Gola of Liberia, for example, it is believed that an artist's spiritual guardian or *jina* provides him with the genius (*neme*) to create a good mask or statue. The Gola people often characterize their carvers as dreamers. The manner in which Philip receives inspiration, his conceptual process, allows us to see his works as simultaneously part of Charleston's ironworking tradition and set within the long history of Afro-American art.

Today, as he teaches the processes of forge welding, upsetting, punching, riveting and other handwork aspects of blacksmithing to his apprentices, Philip Simmons recreates

the phases of his own training, reaffirms his ties to the community and renews for another generation the traditions of a venerable craft. His influence on his apprentices can even be seen in the terms they use and their methods of "visualizing something." For example, Silas Sessions, who began as a helper with Philip at age 12 and who is now a full partner in the shop, talks about his creative process:

Normally customer want a gate – we draws three or four, five different kinds of gates and let him look through and pick the kind he wants. Whatever one he choose, that's the one we have to make him. You know when I be home, I go to bed at nine o'clock. I probably wake up about 12, cannot go back to sleep so I get some paper and pencil and I start drawing and pretty soon I go to sleep. I may not finish my drawing that night, but maybe the next night I finish the drawing.

Philip's most recent apprentice – his last, he says – began at age 29 after studying art in high school and working at many jobs, including as a welder in the shipyard. After 13 months as an apprentice, Willie Williams says he can "see the reward":

When I first came into the trade or the art I was willing to do it for free. You know, come around after work and do it for free. This is how bad I wanted the art because I noticed this was something entirely different from the line of work that I been doin'. It was a chance to express my inner self. Like I said, it's good to know how to read a ruler or do mathematics or weld steel together or burn steel, but it's another thing to design – stuff like that, create your own things. This is what I



If I'm limited to length or height or depth then I'll have to find my center. The center's important in some of my work. Sometime you cannot get a center. So you have to use three-thirds of your iron instead of one-half.

Split (the middle third) and put your center in there. Sometime it's not balanced out. So you have to divide it into three parts instead of one, in order to get the center. Sometime cannot just find one center. I'll have to get two.

enjoy. Just being able to come from my mind and put it into reality. This was the chance in a lifetime and each [time] that I'm around I feel that I'm coming closer and closer to harvest.

One of the main things is you take iron or metal. It's the hardest thing in the universe. But once you heat it, it becomes one of the softest things in the universe. Then you can shape it. It's just like being the god over a piece of iron or something. Even though I know I'm not God, it's just being able to take something from nothing and turn it into something beautiful. Create something from nothing which I think is remarkable. Pick up an old piece of metal, old rusty metal just laying around. And throw it in the heat, bang it a few times, and here you've got a chisel. Something that you can go out and make money with. This is what I think is remarkable about the trade: making things or making the iron bend to your will.

I consider this my only profession even though I have a part-time job at the hospital. One day, hopefully, I can give all other work up and just apply myself to just this one thing. I feel somewhat of an artist. I feel I belong to more than a blacksmith. Just a thing that I want to do.

In a chain running from a distant ancestor to Guy Simmons to Peter to Philip to his apprentices, the links are joined; the tradition of Afro-American work is preserved and revitalized. "Most think blacksmithing is a dying art, but it isn't," says Philip. "I feel confidence now and I know pretty good about iron, but I still learning, after 50 years. Fifty years ago and today — to me it's no different. I'm still heating and bending iron." □

John Vlach directs the folklore program at George Washington University and is the author of The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts. His superb book of photography and description of Philip Simmons' work, Charleston Blacksmith, was published in 1981 by the University of Georgia Press.

The Star and Fish Gate (far left) is a demonstration of blacksmithing talents built by Philip Simmons and his co-workers Silas Sessions and Ronnie Pringle at the 1976 Festival of American Folklife in Washington, by invitation of the Smithsonian Institution.

The gate at the corner of Ashe and Spring Streets (near left) is an example of work Philip has done for "poor folks," people who just need a simple walkway gate to keep out stray dogs.

Philip with his "last apprentice," Willie Williams (below).

The gate at 2 St. Michael's Alley (right) is an example of Philip's sculptural ability, with its egret set in an oval frame.





The twentieth anniversary of the Albany and Southwest Georgia Movement brought more than 300 people together again in Albany for four days in August of 1981. We came from as far away as New York, Michigan, California and as close by as Newton, Sylvester and Dawson. We came to remember the suffering, the struggling together, the meetings that lasted long into the night, to remember marching and being in jail. We came to sing songs and rekindle the spirit of the Albany Movement. We came to celebrate an important segment of history and to talk about what it

meant and what has happened in the 20 years since and to discuss where we are headed now.

There were workshops on voting rights, family life, black literature, civil disobedience, legal rights and the church. There were sessions with black officeholders whose elections came about because of the continuing work of the Movement. There were emotional reunions of people who had not seen each other for years. And there was singing. Great day, was there singing! We joined with the early creators of the "Freedom Songs" — Bertha Gober, Bernice Reagon, Rutha

Harris, Charles Sherrod — and raised the roofs of Shiloh, Mount Zion and Union Grove Baptist Churches, where the Albany Movement used to meet to plan and build spirit for the protest marches of 1961 and 1962.

And we told the story of the Movement, in meetings and workshops, and on tape, so that the history could be preserved. We revisited the landmarks of the struggle — the city swimming pool that was sold to the man who is now Albany's mayor to avoid desegregation; the bus station where the first sit-ins occurred; a church that was burned to the ground

Twenty Years and Still Marching

by Joe Pfister

by white night-riders and rebuilt through the efforts of Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and sympathetic people across the country.

And we marched. On the last day of our celebration, some 300 people gathered in a driving rain in front of Shiloh Baptist Church as they had 20 years before and retraced the steps of the early marches. This time no one was arrested, and we held a rally calling for renewed dedication to the ideals of the Movement.

The Albany Movement changed people's lives. In August of 1961, Charles Sherrod, then a recent graduate of Virginia Union University and a leader of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), went to Terrell County, Georgia, to start a voter registration project. The U.S. Justice Department had filed an injunction to stop county officials from segregating the voting and registering process. It was the first such federal action in Georgia. But the climate of fear and repression in "Terrible Terrell" was such that Sherrod decided to move his organizing work to Albany, then a city of 56,000, 40 percent of whom were black. It was the geographic, economic and social center of all of Southwest Georgia.

Cordell Reagon and Charles Jones of SNCC joined Sherrod in Albany and together with local black leaders they laid the groundwork for a mass movement that would capture the imagination of the nation.

Photographs by Joe Pfister

Later that year, in a report to SNCC, Sherrod said: "When we first came to Albany, the people were afraid, really afraid. Sometimes we'd walk down the streets and the little kids would call us 'Freedom Riders' and the people walking in the same direction would go across the street from us, because they were afraid; they didn't want to be connected with us anyway. . . . Many of the ministers were afraid that their churches would be bombed, that their homes would be stoned. There was fear in the air, and if we were to progress we knew that we must cut through that fear. We thought and we thought . . . and the students were the answer. We drew young people from the colleges, trade schools, high schools, and from the street. They were searching for a meaning in life."

They began holding meetings with the young people in church basements, homes or wherever people would let them meet. They talked about their problems, how they felt, what it meant to be black, how they were denied the rights of citizenship and even the basic human dignities. The SNCC workers talked about non-violent action, possibilities of protests and organizing drives. "Every night," says Sherrod, "we grew larger and larger." They trained themselves in nonviolent tactics as they prepared to challenge segregation in Albany that fall.

On November 22 the protests began. Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall, students at Albany State College, were arrested at the Trailways bus terminal trying to buy tickets on

the "white side" of the ticket counter. They had instructions to remain in jail; others from the NAACP Youth Council and off the street followed, and the number in jail grew. Members of the Criterion Club, NAACP, Baptist Ministerial Alliance, Inter-Denominational Alliance, Masons and other community groups formed a coalition, and that day—November 22—the Albany Movement was born.

Soon a mass meeting was held at Shiloh and Mount Zion Baptist Churches, which were across the street from each other. Sherrod says, "The church was packed before eight o'clock. People were everywhere, in the aisles, sitting and standing in the choir loft, hanging over the railing of the balcony, sitting in trees outside the windows. . . . When the last speaker among the students, Bertha Gober, had finished, there was nothing left to say. Tears filled the eyes of hard, grown men who had seen with their own eyes merciless atrocities committed. . . . Bertha told of spending Thanksgiving in jail . . . and when we rose to sing 'We Shall Overcome!' nobody imagined what kept the church on four corners."

There were more protest marches, and literally thousands of people went to jail, over 750 at one time. Albany's jail couldn't hold them all, and had to send people away; the jails of nearby counties—Baker, Lee, Terrell, Worth and Mitchell—filled to capacity and beyond. For 10 weeks the Albany crisis made the headlines of every major newspaper and wire service in the country.

The mass activity and energy in

Albany spawned smaller movements and organizations in the surrounding rural counties as people, hearing the news of Albany, came together with the help of SNCC workers to confront their own particular problems. Groups sprang up in Worth, Terrell, Sumter, Crisp, Lee, Baker, Mitchell — virtually all the surrounding counties. Voter registration drives began in earnest, and the Southwest Georgia Project of SNCC expanded its activities to a 20-county area encompassing the Second Congressional District.

The Albany Movement grew famous for its singing. The struggle to bring together people of varying background and to break through the barriers of fear could not have been won without the spiritual uplift supplied by the music of the Movement. Folks sang the old spirituals and gospel hymns and made up freedom songs as they marched downtown to where they knew Chief of Police Laurie Pritchett would be waiting to arrest them and haul them off to jail. Their voices filled the churches and the streets with a spiritual power unsurpassed in the history of the Movement.

Anne Braden, writing in 1965, described another way that Albany was a boost to the Southern Freedom Movement: "Southern Negro leaders said the Albany Movement was an advance over the Montgomery movement of six years before because, whereas Montgomery had been a mass withdrawal (in that Negroes stayed off

the buses), Albany was an aggressive movement in which Negroes used mass marches, demonstrations, etc., to take the offensive against segregation. Furthermore, whereas Montgomery had focused on a single identity, Albany was an assault on the total pattern of segregation."

One more significant development in Albany was that people came together from all strata of black society. The entire community was involved. The marches and demonstrations cut across class lines in a way that did not happen in everyday life. Ministers and maids marched together. Doctors and deacons went to jail. Teachers and taxi drivers, lawyers and laborers, nurses, students and people who were just hanging out in the streets — they all moved together. And for a time their movement broke through the fear that white society had held over them for so long. Together they held the attention of the nation and of Third World people who had struggles of their own.

Addressing the twentieth-anniversary celebration, Vincent Harding listed dozens of these people who had come together and asked us all to remember them and hold them dear. And he said: "What I'd like to make sure that we understand is that the struggle that is known as the Albany Movement was a part of something much, much larger than any of us. One of the fantastic things about the Albany Movement was that we here in what was supposed to be this little

town, that we here were part of a world-wide movement of people transforming their lives and transforming this world. That we were a part of something far, far greater than anyone ever dreamed, far greater than Chief Pritchett or Mayor Kelly ever knew, that we were part of the non-white people of the globe standing up as never before saying, 'We shall not continue to bow down to the world of the white West.'"

So the significance of the Albany Movement was not that it failed to desegregate public facilities in Albany. Nor was it that Martin Luther King had been asked in to help publicize the fact that hundreds of people were going to jail at the risk of losing their jobs and livelihoods. Nor was it that Chief Pritchett arrested every man, woman and child who disagreed with him and ran the town, as Howard Zinn once noted, "with the quiet efficiency of a police state." Rather the significance was that in Albany people showed the world that it was possible to break through the bonds of class differences and band together to take direct action on a massive scale, and in so doing they discovered the power within themselves to say "no" to oppression and began to determine their own lives.

Joe Pfister, now on the staff of the Institute for Southern Studies, was a field worker for the Southwest Georgia Project from 1966 to 1976.



Reverend Samuel Wells

Reverend Samuel Wells was born in Lee County, Georgia, in 1916 and has lived mostly in Albany since 1932. He was one of the early Albany Movement leaders and has remained active over the past 20 years. He has been on the staff of SCLC and the Southern Rural Advancement Fund. He now lives with his wife in Atlanta, where he worked on Andrew Young's successful campaign for mayor. He occupies his time doing maintenance work in an apartment complex, where he "fools with folks' washing machines." He still pastors Blue Spring Baptist Church in Southwest Georgia near Warwick.

One of the important things to come out of the Albany Movement celebration was an attempt to tape record the story of each participant. What follows are excerpts from Reverend Wells's taped story along with excerpts from a workshop on civil disobedience which he led.

I just don't see how blacks made it. I was inducted into the Army on August 22 in 1942, and shipped from Fort Benning to Greenville to Fort Dix, New Jersey. After being away from the South for 12 months, I came back home on furlough and the bus stopped at Dawson, Georgia. I went into a music store in my uniform, fully dressed as a soldier, and a white lady walked up to me and said, "Boy, what do you want?" It choked me so bad, I could not answer the woman. I politely, without parting my lips, turned and walked out of the store.

Life was almost unbearable. The jobs that we had to do were the poorest jobs with the worst pay and the longest hours and no benefits, no unions, no protection. We were at the mercy of cruel bosses in the community. This was a rough and tough life to live in Albany, Georgia.

I've always kept a job. I worked at the Cutty-Heap Packing Company for 13 years and I stayed in the Army for four years and six months, and I had 13 years seniority in government service at the Marine base when they saw fit to fire me in 1963. In 1963,



Albany Movement Celebration tour bus stops at Shady Grove Baptist Church, where the Lee County Movement used to meet. The church was burned to the ground in 1963, and rebuilt with funds raised in response to a call by Martin Luther King and Jackie Robinson.

the beginning of the end of my career with the civil service started when I was in Jackson, Mississippi, to a NAACP convention. I got back about an hour and 30 minutes late. I drove into the city and went straight to the job without any sleep or anything — I went straight to the job to work. They nagged, and I did not see fit to lie about where I had been. I didn't feel like I had to hide the fact that I had been to a meeting of the NAACP, but my supervisor nagged me and stayed on me day and night until he got me fired in 1963.

In 1962, we took part in a boycott and demonstration against a merchant in the city by the name of Smith. He had a grocery store in the black

Rev. Samuel Wells addresses the marchers at Albany-Dougherty County government building.



neighborhood, and he got his money and his livelihood from black people. We had asked him to make some jobs available to some black cashiers and to upgrade employment in his store, and we were picketing him because of that. During that particular period, a group of white commissioners beat a man half to death and threw him in the yard. They carried him to the hospital, and the hospital refused to wait on him, carried him back home and threw him in the yard. The man lived and was suing them for what had happened to him. And in this particular court case, this white merchant Smith was a juror. They twisted our efforts in boycotting and picketing the Smith grocery into being caused by his decision on the government jury. And there is a penalty for anyone who harms any federal juror because of his decision. The leaders of the bar of this city and state called Washington, DC, and FBI men about 30 or 40 strong came swarming down over town like a hive of bees the very next day.

We had been calling on Washington night and day. I personally had taken two trips to Washington with a delegation to ask Washington to do something about our right to express ourselves. Whether it was in picketing or protesting or any other legal way under the constitution, we had a right to protest peacefully. And the assistant attorney general in Washington, John Doar, gave us an audience one evening. He said that if it was a voting

right he could do something about it because the voting rights program is spelled out in detail. But picketing and protesting were not spelled out very clear, and there was nothing he could do. Now this is Washington, DC, telling its black citizens under the Constitution of the United States that they can't protect my rights. I asked John Doar what is meant by the "guaranteed rights of the citizens of the United States," and he mumbled something without even answering my question.

Yet when the young blacks became impatient and began to throw rocks and bricks in the street, they found a way to charge me with insurrection. They found a way to arrest me because of the violence, which I had nothing to do with. As they rocked the city and as they bricked the city and as they burned the city, I went across town, stretched out on the lawn out in the yard and rested in peace. I didn't feel like going out there trying to stop those young people who were throwing rocks or breaking the law since the government should have protected me in rightfully protesting the grievances I had. So I did not go out and try to stop it. And I won't try to stop them the next time. All my energy is put in effecting prevention. If the white power structure hears us, they won't have the riots, and there won't have to be anybody

At the Anniversary Awards Banquet, Charles Sherrod presents a "Freedom Award" to "Mama Dollie" – Mrs. Annie Lou Raines – who is also celebrating her ninety-second birthday. The soul of the Lee County Movement, Mama Dollie sat up on her front porch many a night in the early '60s with a shotgun across her lap so that nothing would happen to "her children," the SNCC workers who stayed in her home. Nothing ever did.



Charles Sherrod, Rutha Harris and Bernice Reagon join with Bertha Gober (left) in leading freedom songs at Shiloh Baptist Church. Gober was one of the first students arrested in Albany in 1961, and the songs "Oh Pritchett, O Kelly" and "Never Turn Back," which became the SNCC theme song, establish her as an important songwriter of the Movement.

out there to protest and to stop the people from burning-baby-burn.

Some people have trouble with ideas that are strange, that even give

the white power structure a chance to criticize us. But I don't have any regard for the criticism that comes from the man who puts me in the lake to drown and who is going to criticize me for reaching for a stick in an effort to save my life. He's going to be the one throwing me in the lake. So I count as okay anything that I can do to bring to the attention of the people in power that I'm being mistreated. That is my philosophy.

I don't care if you pee in the street. The rule is that you shouldn't pee in the street. But the first priority is that I'm hurting. Come see about me! If a little pee on the street will get him to look, I'll pee. So this is my philosophy, this is civil disobedience.

If you believe that the Bible is a dead weight on civil rights, you have misinterpreted the Bible. You have interpreted the Bible as the system interprets the Constitution of the United States. They can mess with that Constitution, yes sir! I was in New York when a black boy got shot to death because he stole a loaf of bread. He stole a loaf of bread and they shot him down like a dog. The system interprets the law in that

fashion.

Some of my black ministers make me sick. They interpret the Bible and they preach it just like the system gives it to them: "It ain't no sin in the world but getting in bed with a woman; that's a sin. You drink a little liquor, that's a sin. If you dance and hang around with the boys, that's a sin. That's the only sin." But that's misinterpreting the Bible. To cut out the food stamps is more immoral than getting in bed with a woman. So I don't care nothing about no rule.

Now in Albany, I was one of those that lived from one pay period to another. I was working in civil service for the government. Thirteen years seniority . . . good nigger . . . plenty of sick leave. I never lay off the job. But I heard voices. And the first time Albany State went to jail, I went right there with them. I told my boss, I wanted to get off. Got off the job to go to jail. All I'm saying is that you got to be willing to pay the price. If you think you can figure out how you're coming out, you're in trouble. You're always going to be a good nigger cause you got to be a good nigger for the system to hand you a few crumbs every now and then.

I have heard an automobile driving up on a child, and a woman picking up the automobile off the child. You can't sit back in no conference room and figure out how no woman is going to pick up no automobile. You can plan, but you can't figure out. The black leadership in this town met in a meeting when things were beginning to surface — Dr. Hamilton, A.C. Searls, C.W. King, Marion King, Dr. Anderson, Marion Page — they came together and started talking. If there was jail, they asked, what about bail. Who was going to pay the bond if there was marching. Here they are wondering. We didn't have nothing, but finally we had to go. Because in civil disobedience, you have to be ready to pay the price. And the bond money did come! It came from the NAACP, private concerns, white America, Jewish America, all in sympathy with the Albany story as it was told. It struck a nerve and they went in their pocketbooks. But we didn't figure it was going to happen. We didn't sit back and say I'm going to start demonstrations because I got it figured out how I'm coming out. You have to be willing to pay the price.

Annette Jones White

Annette Jones White grew up in Albany and was a student at Albany State College when the Movement began. She now lives in East Point, Georgia, with her husband and two daughters, and works for Spelman College in a Title XX day care center and is in the graduate education program of Georgia State College. She is a member of the NAACP.

I was born in a particular time in the United States in Albany, Georgia, and that to me set the stage for my formative years, which were filled with incidents designed to humiliate me. That means, "Nigger, you stay in your place." But even as a child, I didn't

seem to fit in the place that was set aside for me. It pinched and cramped, and every now and then I would break out and try to create my own space by doing things like tasting the water from the white water fountain in Kress's department store.

Then one day the Ku Klux Klan had a meeting in Albany and they drove from the airport. I lived on their route. They were in black limousines, and on the hood of each car sat two Klansmen in full regalia. And they drove through our neighborhood honking and yelling threats. I'd never seen anything like it before. You couldn't see their eyes, you couldn't see their mouths, you just saw black holes. And I felt the tension that hung in my house, in my space. And I knew my father was worried, and that worried me because at that time I didn't think that anything ever worried my father.

Annette Jones White demonstrates the art of caning a wicker chair as part of a cultural heritage show held during the anniversary celebration.



I would be hard put to name in particular one thing that brought about my active involvement in the Movement. It could have been the Klan incident; it could have been the time I was run away from the water fountain. Or it could have been when I was in the fifth grade, and all the school children were told to bring a nickel to help buy a buffalo for the zoo. So I brought the money and then the teachers took us to the zoo. There was a white class there also, and they looked at us and we looked at them because we didn't see each other much. They walked in front and we walked behind. And we never passed them. I don't know if it was designed that way or if it just happened. Their teacher bought peanuts and gave them to them. Our teacher bought peanuts and gave them to us. They fed their peanuts to the monkeys and we ate ours. They laughed at us. But who would give food to the monkeys? Peanuts were to be eaten by children.

Or perhaps it was in 1958, when having never heard of the sit-ins, I suggested to Yvonne Taylor and Calilla Bailey that we sit on the benches at the Arctic Bear with our hamburgers. And Camilla said, "Oh, you know we can't do that." I said, "No, I don't." But we knew that this was one of the invisible signs that nobody mentioned. They didn't have a sign telling you to go to your relegated space and eat in your car. But this day we sat there and we ate and nothing happened until a black car circled the block several times. And then it drove up to the Arctic bear and the driver talked to the manager, and two minutes later he came out and told us he was sorry but we would have to leave.

Now when I was at Albany State College a lot of things happened to us. White youths would drive through the campus and throw eggs and bags of urine at us. One out-of-state student was hit in the leg by a car. She got the license number, but officials at Albany State refused to press charges, and nothing was done.

We also met with resistance when we tried to get simple things like locks for the dormitories or when we tried to straighten out a situation where if you bought your milk ticket but missed breakfast, at lunch or dinner you couldn't get the milk you had paid for. We felt if you were a student in a college, you deserved protection and a decent meal. So, the things we



Bernice Johnson Reagon (left) and Rutha Mae Harris let their little lights shine at a rally on the courthouse steps. With Charles Neblitt and Cordell Reagon they were the original SNCC Freedom Singers that toured the nation to add spirit to the Movement and help raise funds for SNCC projects. Harris now teaches school in Albany and leads her church choir. Reagon is special project director of the Afro-American Life and Culture program of the Smithsonian Institution. During the Albany Movement she was one of 49 students suspended from Albany State College for going to jail to protest segregation. From singing in jail she has gone on to form Sweet Honey in the Rock, a group that is spreading the singing spirit of the '60s Movement and incorporating themes from the Afro-American and women's movements of today.

were trying to get for students were things we should already have had.

So, now this is the kind of climate there was at Albany State College when Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagon arrived. In the meantime, the NAACP Youth Council was active. We were also discussing the things that were going on in the rest of Georgia and around us. So that when they came in, they got with the leaders of the student government and the presidents of the sororities and fraternities. And they talked. And we were able to tell them our problems on campus as we discussed what was going on in the world around us.

We started out with small meetings. One in particular was at Bethel AME Church in the basement. Everyone there, Sherrod and Cordell, a small group of Albany State students and a few ministers, knew that there was one person who was there for another

reason. That was proven true when each of the students who went to the meeting were called in and given a little talk by Dean Minor and Reverend Brown. I was told I had been seen on campus talking to these strange people, and that I was headed in the wrong direction, that I was endangering the lives of my fellow students, that some of them could get killed. I was told that, if I did not tell them what went on at the meeting, I would not be crowned Miss Albany State.

I did not tell them, but I was crowned, and a few weeks after my coronation the students from the NAACP Youth Council, Evelyn Tony, Eddie Wilson and Julian Carswell, were arrested trying to purchase tickets on the so-called white side [of the bus terminal]. And then they went to jail and were released. Later that day two other students from Albany State College, Bertha Gober and Blanton



Charles Sherrod addresses the rally in Albany. He is currently one of three blacks serving on the Albany City Council and is considering running for Congress. Sherrod's indomitable spirit and endless supply of creative energy have been a guiding force in shaping the Movement.

Hall, also went down to purchase tickets. They were arrested, but elected to remain in jail.

When the day for their trials rolled around, the students of Albany State College marched en masse to that trial. We went to the city hall, and we weren't arrested. They sent fire engines out to frighten us, but we weren't afraid of fire engines. So we sang and made our witness. All of us couldn't get in the courthouse, so we went back across the river after Chief of Police Pritchett asked us to disperse, and we came to Union Baptist Church and discussed what future actions we should take. Then we marched back down to the campus and had a small demonstration in the library and in some of the classrooms trying to get the students involved who might not be.

In December, after the Albany Movement was formed as an official organization, some students came by train to Albany. Prior to that, Bertha and Blanton had been released from jail, and they went down to welcome the new group. Chief Pritchett arrested them all for trying to use the white waiting room and locked them up. This time we couldn't get the Albany State students to turn out for the trials. We felt bad about it; we felt

like we were alone. They had been told not to talk with me, and they would see a school official and just walk away. We couldn't congregate in groups of more than three on campus, but we marched again anyway.

This time I was arrested with the rest of the group. I was told to go in the alley [Freedom Alley], and I went in the alley and looked around and I saw all these people. I said, my goodness, there is no way in the world they can get all these people in this jail, so I started to cut in line because I wanted to go. So I was booked early in the morning.

When I came in they cheered and said, "It's Miss Albany State." The officers heard that, so they called Albany State College and told them that they had Miss Albany State in jail. And I was put in a cell with 24 other people. The last one to come in had to be lifted up over heads, and she stood on the commode. That was the only space there was. The men were on the floor. They were really packed in. I heard a voice calling and I couldn't see anyone. It was Cordell Reagon. He was on the floor underneath a bunk.

The oldest person was 72. She was in my cell and I gave her my coat because we had no mattress, just the steel bunks. There was no privacy. Directly in front of our commode was the officers' shoe shine, and they kept shining shoes.

At 5:00 the next morning, 40 women were taken out of the jail and put on a city bus. And they didn't tell us where we were going until we got on the bus and they said they were going to take us to this jail in Newton. And we knew nobody would know where we were so we saw a fellow on the street and we rolled down the window and told him to tell Attorney [C.B.] King we were going to Newton. So we went there, and they were waiting for us. There were all these men saying we were Freedom Riders. Of course we weren't, but one thing about the cells in Newton, they were cleaner.

They gave us grits and grease for breakfast and blackeyed peas and cornbread and water. They put it in a box and kicked it in and said we could eat it if we wanted. But we didn't eat it.

After I got out of jail, I had a hearing with the college. My adviser could not be present, nor could I

have legal counsel. And it was tape-recorded. I was told that I had done something very bad. It was not that I was working for civil rights that they objected to, it was the fact that I had been arrested. Two faculty members had also been arrested, and one of the football players, I believe, had been arrested for a crime. They were still there, but nothing I said mattered because I received a letter saying I had been suspended from school. Forty-nine students were suspended. More than that went to jail, but some were locked in the National Guard Armory, and they got out through the bathroom window, went home and got provisions and came back. And some gave middle names as last names so that they were not ever officially on the books. So those students were not hounded.

After I got out of jail I went to Dorchester [South Carolina] and studied how to conduct citizenship schools so I could come back and try to help people who couldn't read and write to pass whatever test they had to register to vote. You can't measure success in quantity, but one day I was walking down the street. I met an old lady — I didn't remember her — but she started yelling. She said, "I've done it, I've done it. I done redished." She was one of the ladies I had worked with and I felt very good about that.

I continued to work with the Movement at SNCC's office trying to desegregate the library and the lunch counter at the bus station. At the SNCC office I typed newsletters and was on the program committee of the Albany newsletter. I tried to sing songs with Bernice and Rutha at the meetings, and I made speeches and worked on voter registration with SNCC and SCLC. Spelman College offered a scholarship to Bernice and me, and I went to Spelman. But every chance we got we came back to Albany to work with the Movement, and I worked between semesters. And when all the students came from the Northern cities to help us, I was cooking for some every morning and then going out to work on voter registration.

I think it was Alice Walker who said that she worked in the Civil Rights Movement and she never wanted it to be the only thing that she did. Well, neither do I. But if by some chance it is, then I don't think I have anything to apologize for. □



Photo by Pat Bryant

Harder times than these

L.C. Dorsey

In October, 1981, the Campaign for Human Development – a Catholic agency supporting poor people’s organizations across the country – sponsored a three-day conference in Atlanta for its Southern projects. On the opening night, more than 200 community leaders, organizers and church activists marveled as four veterans of Southern struggles told their inspiring stories and shared the wisdom drawn from decades of grass-roots movement experience.

L.C. Dorsey’s recollections, presented below, focused on her early years growing up in Mississippi, since the evening’s topic was “We’ve Known Harder Times Than These.” By the end of her talk, however, she suggested that the harder times may be ahead of us. In a subsequent interview, she elaborated on the strengths and weaknesses that will shape our future together, and we added those remarks

to the body of her story.

A civil-rights activist, mother of six children, holder of a masters degree in social work, and now director of programs for the Delta Ministry and associate director of the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons, L.C. Dorsey has much to share about our past and future. Her account of changes the Movement brought to her home state, Freedom Came to Mississippi, was published in 1978 by the Field Foundation.

I was born some 42 years ago in the Mississippi Delta on a plantation. The plantation was in Washington County and called Tribette. I was the eleventh of 13 children; only seven of us survived the first year of life. The reason for that, of course, is poverty.

My mother was a native of Alabama, who moved early to Mississippi,

She only finished the third grade, but could read and write fairly well. My father couldn’t read and write at all. The Xs on pieces of paper, and quite often not even Xs on pieces of paper, were the way that we were committed to bondage.

Plantation workers very seldom lived on the same plantation all of their lives, and by the time I was grown I had lived on four. The owners of the plantation I was born on, the Walkers, were considered good boss people. They were considered good boss people because they didn’t employ Klan tactics to control people. They didn’t come to your house in the middle of the night to beat you up or kill you. They had a school for the “colored” people. They had houses that would leak, but you were allowed to patch them up. You were allowed some time off in the summer to cut wood for the wintertime. If you were really sick and not just pretending, Mr. Walker would allow you to see the plantation doctor.

Now, growing up I never knew we were poor. One of the things that poverty does is isolate you. I thought all black people lived as we did, all over the country and all over the world, because our world was that plantation. We were one of the few families who didn’t have any folks in Chicago. They never got out of Mississippi.

I didn’t really understand racism. My earliest memories are of fear and it was only after I was grown that I understood the relationship between racism and fear. Two kinds of fear, I might add: the one that we carried around that dictated we could survive if we understood our places and stayed in those places; and another kind, a nameless, senseless kind that poor whites and well-to-do whites had of us.

I remember fear being very much a part of the plantation life. If a person mysteriously disappeared, who I later learned had been killed or lynched, the fear was so great that even at night with everybody at home in their own houses, nobody talked about this occurrence or this incident out loud. They would whisper. Fear so great until people walked around with their heads hanging down so they would not have the appearance of being uppity. Fear so great that people didn’t look white folk in the eye because that was a no-no. Fear so great that all the black men I knew, when in the presence of white ladies,

removed their hats and stepped off to the side so as not to brush against them accidentally. Fear so great that you call a little boy that you had raised "Mister," and little girls "Miss," because not to do so was an impudent, arrogant act that could get you in trouble.

We didn't know poverty or understand poverty as you understand poverty and as I grew to understand it later. It is a relative term really. We had enough to eat, and it didn't really matter that the three meals you had might be fatback and corn bread, not even biscuits sometimes, but cornmeal that we grew and ground ourselves. But, if you had those three meals, you don't understand what people are talking about by growing up hungry. You ate the fatback and in the summertime if you were fortunate and lived on a good plantation like we did, you had a little garden spot so you had the vegetables. In the wintertime you had wild greens and rabbits and squirrels and fish from the lake. My father was a proficient hunter and fisherman. We had a good relationship, and we would go hunting and fishing together. We have eaten everything from turtles and birds to possums. I never liked possums — they said they ate out of the graveyard — but folks ate them. So, we never understood poverty and hunger in the sense that you hear talked about.

My father, who had never known education, was sure that all the problems he suffered and the things that he was not able to give his family were the result of not being educated. And, in a time when it was mandatory that all members of a household who were old enough to chop or pick cotton be in the field by order of the plantation owner, my younger sister and brother and myself went to the school. My father carried his gun to the field wrapped in a cotton sack and laid it under the cotton to enforce that decision. And when men drove by and said, "Will, where are your children?" he said, "They are in school." I didn't understand when I was young the courage it must have taken for him to say that and to back it up. I understand now that was why we had to move so frequently, why we couldn't stay on the plantation until we grew up. And that was a big dream: to grow up on the same plantation and not to be the new kid on the plantation or the new kid in the little

one-room school.

I decided that part of my father's reasoning was correct when I was 13 years old, that the reason black people on plantations were so poor was because they didn't have the education to keep records. They really didn't keep account of how much they owed a man, how much the cotton sold for and how much they should get for their part. So I decided when we moved to a new plantation that we were going to do something different this year with the crop. I would keep records because my father had been sending me to school so I could help us do better. He bought me a blue composition book, and with my little learning I got in these country schools, one-room church places, I learned how to set out a set of book-keeping records. I put down all the little things that we got, and Daddy cooperated by telling me. Beginning in March, you get a "furnish," a little amount of money from the owner of the plantation and you get that for six months. That is to help you with food and stuff until the cotton crop comes in and you start to harvest. Well, I put down all the things that we got that whole year. All the money we had to borrow before the furnish started in March, all the money that we had to pay to the previous plantation owner so we could move off his place, so you never get out of debt. We had a radio by this time and every day at 12:00 the radio would broadcast what cotton was selling for. With my arithmetic, we would figure up how much we owed.

We knew we had to give the man half of all the bales we picked. Cotton sold for a good price that year — 40 cents a pound. We added up all the extra pounds; bales are generally figured at 500 pounds a bale, but there were some bales that weighed 600 pounds. All this extra money the white man usually just takes. We figured up plantation expenses because that is the catch-all — when you paid everything else and there was nothing else they could legitimately add to your debt, they added plantation expenses. When all this division and multiplication and subtraction was over, by my set of books our share should have been \$4,000, and we should have at least gotten \$1,000. I did know there was no fairness in this system.

Well, settling day finally came and

my father had to go up to the house for the settlement. This is in December. I went off to school, but all day long I was anxious to know what was happening at this house when my father pulled out his set of figures and gave them to the man and said, "Now listen, you have to deal with me honestly because here is what I owe you, here is what the cotton sold for, here is my part." I don't know what really happened at the house that day. I don't even know if my father brought out this composition book with all my figures neatly entered. But what we cleared out of that crop — and this is the first time we had ever cleared any money — was not the \$1,000 that I thought we would clear, but \$200, which was just a token. It wasn't what we were due, but it had a lot to do with "coming of age" in the sense of how little control black people have over their lives.

When I got home and found out what the settlement had really been, there was another coming of age — people were locked into this system, and the fear and lack of control made them take that. There was no protest. There was no saying I'm not going to take that. There was nobody else you could appeal to. *Nobody else*. That did something for my whole life from that point on. Maybe if I was white I would have become a Klansman. But what it made me was a very angry person who spent the next 20 years using that anger against unfair systems.

I said 20 years because I'm still dealing with stuff, but it is no longer from a base of anger. A long time ago anger got to be a burden — it grows and feeds on itself and it gets to a point where it is almost uncontrollable. And then it becomes very, very destructive. I think you have to have it so it molds you into something that is a lot more manageable.

You see, I never thought all those years that it was fair for things to happen like this, but I could never find a way to deal with it. When I was 11 years old, a little girl — my classmate — was slapped by a white lady in the 10-cent store for not saying "Yes, ma'am." I knew that wasn't fair. But I didn't know how you deal with it. I told my mother how I would have dealt with it: I would have hit her

back, but I know that would have brought a lot of pain to the family.

So I started the cycle that my parents had been in, dropping out of school when I was 17 and getting married to a man on a plantation. We started having babies that we could not afford, and we kept on until we had six — four girls and two boys. You have the same cycle of poverty continuing. We were getting

wanted to register, how to go register. They would come to my folks' house and they would talk and I would listen and I soaked it all in.

When the Movement started moving closer, we would get together on the ends of the cotton rows in the morning and we would whisper about it. If we heard something we'd pass it on to everybody else. We were a people who were sitting, waiting for the

color of law to abuse and oppress people in the black community and in the poor communities. And we've been able for the first time to really deal with white people on a human basis. You know what poverty and racism do to us; it also dehumanizes you white folks because we don't see white folks as people, we don't see them as folks that you can sit down with. Until this day I haven't gotten to the point where we can sit down in Church with whites because I find myself looking at them and wondering if they are Klan or this or that. It cripples all of us.

As black and white together, we have seen harder times. Much of my life has been so apart from white folks in terms of understanding how they perceive hard times and how they deal with them. But, as black people, I don't know that we have seen any harder times than we see now. Let me tell you why. We have more property — no, we don't, we have more houses that we own with FHA mortgage companies — we have more color television sets, we drink more cognac, we have more Brooks Brothers suits and more things, so that if you look on an acquisition basis, maybe we have had harder times. But we have less love.

On those plantations, when times were really tough, there was a sense of oneness. Oneness and the fact that even in our oppression we were brothers and sisters, with love for each other and concern for each other, and if in fact I had no cornmeal in my house I didn't have to worry, because down the street there was meal and a house for me and my kids.

I have had no experience worse than — I've only had it once and I hope none of you ever had it — the experience of having your kids cry themselves to sleep because there was no food in the house. That is a miserable thing that I never intend to go through again. I would rob a bank, break into a store or anything because I am never going through that again. I had that experience from being in a new community in an isolated place and being a part of all the foolishness of protecting black men's dignity and not letting people know that you are hungry because the man is out someplace. I've lived with that nonsense and I am not going through that again.

If I had said anything to anybody when those kids were hungry, nobody

*All we have now, and all we ever had,
is each other. . . . There is nothing
new about today except us!*

the exact same set of experiences that my father had gone through, with a different plantation owner and a different plantation, but the same system being in place. And we probably would have been there until now, with my children on somebody's plantation doing something, except for the Civil Rights Movement and except for chemicals and except for the mechanization of picking cotton, all three of which worked independently to put us off that plantation.

We began to hear about the Movement on the radio and in black newspapers. Let me tell you about my father. My father would walk 10 miles into town to the black barbershop that sold black newspapers — the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* — and he would bring those newspapers home on Saturday evening and my momma would spend the weekend reading that paper to all of us. You began to hear a little bit about that struggle from those papers. The radio stations didn't broadcast a lot about that. We didn't have televisions, and the local paper wasn't carrying that stuff. People used to come out to our house at night from the NAACP — whatever they say about it now, in the old days it had some courageous warriors. They drove down the turn road with their lights out so that the white folks wouldn't know that they were coming. They would get the word on the grapevine about what movement was going on where, what progress was being made, how many folks were being registered and if you

Movement to come and help us with all these things that we were struggling against all of our lives, that we couldn't ever get a handle on, that we couldn't ever figure out how to deal with. We felt the Movement would offer a way out.

Let me tell you, when it got to Mississippi, where I was living then, having been forced off a plantation because the machines could do it better, I was waiting for it. When the word went around through town that the Freedom Riders were here, we said, "Where?" When we found out where they were, we were there. The fear that our folk had known, the fear that kept a lot of people quiet when abuses were being made not only to them but to their families, sort of fell by the wayside because there was this unified group of people, black and white, who had come into town to say we are here to work with you against this system of oppression and hatred. We got involved in that and just kept going from that point through the economic movement with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, where you had to realize that the right to vote, the right to go into any cafe or restaurant or hotel was really kind of empty without a job for all of us who were moved off those plantations, without the money to eat.

From then on we've worked on other human-rights struggles — the Vietnam War, the oppression by the Klan, more sophisticated, much more organized, the police brutality where you have your policemen using the

in the black community would have suffered them to go hungry. I've left my little kids at home to go to the field to chop cotton and not even worried about it, because I knew black neighbors who were too old to go to the fields anymore were taking care of them. They took care of the whole community. It was more like what I have seen in some of the other countries I have traveled in where our problems were community problems, our strengths were community strengths, and when we went off to school or when we went off to get a skill, it was a skill that was an investment in the total community. So that when you learned how to write, you wrote letters for everybody on the plantation. You didn't charge anybody for writing those letters and reading the letters they got back, and you kept their business in those letters. You didn't tell nobody what was happening.

As I move across the country now, I don't see that unity in the black community. It worries me that these are the hardest times we have ever seen. It worries me that these are the times when we might not survive as a group. The strong always survive so a few individuals will survive, but at what cost? I worry that this man who we've got in the White House now, who's got the greatest script he has ever had in his whole life, that he is going to do things to us that further divide us. I worry about the impact that the media has on defining issues for us, on shaping our perception.

I worry that we look at the ills of this society and we do not address the causes. We look at crime that makes us all fearful, and we decide that because people are stealing and shooting and killing that it is all right to fill up the prisons predominantly with black people although we represent only 11 percent of the total population, that it's okay if 48 percent of the people on death row are black. I'm talking to black folks now. We have decided that these kinds of inequities in a society are all right. We have decided to become aligned with those who we have called oppressor and have failed to deal honestly with what threatens our survival.

We have become fragmented and changed our personal values away from our commitment to the community. Most churches are no longer a

part of the community or concerned about the community as a whole. The family, even the family, has changed. We no longer set forth the values of where we want our children to go. Nor do we make sure they get there. There is a falling away of that sense of togetherness, of belonging, of having meaning and purpose, of having your life be a part of a group of people who depend on you, who seek love and comfort from you. It's not enough to say we're too busy, because if we don't pay attention to our family and our community, we can't build anything.

With some creative energy, we can make the meal, clean up the house and still listen to our children. It may mean we have to involve them in that process of making the meal and talk to them while we're doing the housework, but that's what we have always had to do. I don't want to come off sounding like the Moral Majority, but we have to also let our children know they are important by being an authority figure in their lives. One of the things that has happened in our desire to be good parents is that we have abandoned some basic tried-and-true principles, and we've been very uncertain about what we should be doing. We have gone through a period as parents — and particularly mothers — of being told by experts about how bad our influence on children is, and that has made many of us very timid about asserting our authority or relying on our experiences in rearing our children. As a result of our uncertainty and our failure to give guidance and discipline, we have children relying on their own, taking wild directions from their peers, and winding up seeking someone that can give them direction, discipline and the love they never had.

The churches have failed to give that direction, too. People throng to churches every Sunday morning because there is an absolute emptiness in their lives that they recognize and they're going to the place where they think it can be filled. Pastors who know how to put away the mystique of saints walking across hell on spider webs and who can reduce the born-again experience to the Here and Now, they could be a powerful force in bringing families together, making the church a meaningful forum for people to deal with issues in the community, and filling the void that is causing people to search in the church in the first place.

We have lost so many of these basic things that kept us together on the slave ship, that kept us together after we were over here, the whole business of getting back to our country and determining our culture, determining our future, the whole nation vision that we shared that kept us through all these hard times. We survived slavery and the Klan and the plantation system because we all had a unified vision and if we stuck together we could make it. Somehow, somebody decided in the '60s, after the Movement, that the best way to deal with us was to get a few individuals and say you are better than the rest. You deserve this and you deserve that. And you'll get it if you forget about the rest of those people. Because of that attitude, because of the absence of the strong family structure, because of the failure of the Church to take its rightful place and tell us about living here instead of heaven, I am not sure that we are going to survive these hard times as a people.

We will not survive if we depend on Washington to solve our problem, or if we talk ourselves into thinking we are helpless to do anything about the powers around us. At some point, we must recognize that all we have now and all we ever had was each other. The cutbacks or new legalized powers of the FBI and CIA are nothing new; there was a long period of our history when we had *no* social programs, when the KKK and FBI were oppressing people openly. There is nothing new about today except *us*.

Before, when we had nothing, we were more prepared to struggle. Now, we let ourselves think that if we don't speak up, if we don't take the risk, then maybe we can hold onto what little we've been able to get through our new alliances with the power structure — whether that's being able to attend a meeting with the governor or hold a job that somebody else gave us. We'd like to forget about our part in the community's struggle, to just hope that somehow other folks will get by without us. But the key to anything we had or will ever have lies in our ability to accept the reality that to keep together, to get by, to hold onto what is ours and what we've won, to survive, to have meaning in our lives, will always require that we continue to struggle together, with creativity and with commitment to build our community and move forward as a people. □



Photo by Michael S. Clark

Who Owns Appalachia?



he people of Appalachia know they are poor, and for a long time a lot of them have thought they knew why: they don't own their land, they don't control its use, and they don't share in the wealth it produces.

Now, thanks to a massive study of land ownership conducted by the residents of six Appalachian states over the past three years, they have the evidence to prove they've been right. What's more, they're using the evidence in activities all over the Southern mountains to change the system that keeps people poor in this very rich region.

This special section of *Southern Exposure* is devoted to the land survey and the new activism rippling along in its wake. The study — titled *Land Ownership Patterns and Their Impacts on Appalachian Communities* — is the work of the Land Ownership Task Force of the Appalachian Alliance, a coalition of community groups, individual residents and scholars, and it runs to seven volumes occupying a good seven inches of shelf space.

Though certainly not the first look at land ownership in Appalachia, this one is the first to consider the whole region in a systematic manner. The researchers — about 100 local residents — collected data on the ownership and taxation of surface and mineral rights of 55,000 parcels of rural land in 80 counties, some 20 million acres in all, in Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Included were all parcels of 250 acres or more owned by local individuals and all parcels of 20 acres or more owned by nonresidents or corporations, government agencies or nonprofit groups like churches.

The findings are stark. Ownership of land and minerals in rural Appalachia is highly concentrated, with one percent of the local population, along with corporations, government agencies and absentee holders, owning 53 percent of the land surface. Of the land included in the survey, nearly

three-fourths of the surface acres and four-fifths of the minerals are absentee-owned. Large corporations dominate the picture in much of the region. Forty percent of the land and 70 percent of the mineral rights are held by corporations — mostly coal and other energy companies, but timber companies are also present in force. The result is that little land is owned by or available to local people. Less than half the land in the 80 counties surveyed is owned by individuals, and less than half of that is owned by *local* individuals.

These facts color all aspects of life in the mountains, and this study concentrates its attention on the connection between who owns the land and such longstanding problems as the inadequacy of local tax revenues and public services, the lack of economic development, the loss of agricultural lands, the lack of sufficient housing and the patterns of energy development and land use.

The Center for Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, administered the study for the Appalachian Alliance. Research was coordinated regionally at the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, and locally by teams of citizens in each state.

The facts and connections are all the more important to the people who did the research because these problems are their own. This was community-based research on a grand scale, and John Gaventa and Bill Horton, who shared the task of coordinating it, here describe how it was done. A summary of the findings begins on page 40, and reports from places where people are working for change begin on page 49. A description of the poets featured in this section appears on page 45.

Digging the Facts

by John Gaventa and Bill Horton



hat is research?

Research is digging facts. Digging facts is as hard a job as mining coal. It means blowing them out from underground, cutting them, picking them, shoveling them, loading them, pushing them to the surface, weighing them, and then turning them on to the public for fuel — for light and heat. Facts make a fire which cannot be put out.

To get coal requires miners.

To get facts requires miners, too: fact miners.

— John Brophy, *Pennsylvania miner,*

an advocate of public ownership of resources, 1921

The patterns of knowledge in the Appalachian region are much like the patterns of land ownership. Control of the facts is highly concentrated in the hands of a few government agencies, land speculators and corporations — absentee interests that are affected financially but not otherwise by what they find and how they use it. The vast majority of people normally get little benefit from the “knowledge industry,” but the Appalachian Land Ownership Study was meant to be different.

In the last decade, community groups in the region have tried to battle the numerous ill effects of land ownership patterns, yet there was no movement to deal with the patterns themselves and only limited documentation of the extent to which local problems might be regional or national in scope. People came a step closer to a region-wide effort in 1977, when major floods, worsened by the after-

effects of strip mining, left thousands homeless. Relief trailers stood empty for lack of land to put them on, yet the government refused to seize corporate land for this purpose. In response to a call from citizens of hard-hit Mingo County, West Virginia, groups from around the region gathered together and formed a coalition, the Appalachian Alliance. They put questions of land ownership high on their agenda for study and action.

Serious obstacles lay ahead. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the multimillion-dollar government agency concerned with Appalachian development, had never in its 12-year history bothered to look at land in its research or its policies. In fact, its strategies actually encouraged the movement of people into towns, leaving still more land free for corporate exploitation. Whenever the Alliance or anyone else confronted the policy makers on this issue, they were

told that land-related problems were neither extensive nor severe. Without comprehensive information to back up their argument, community groups were unable to challenge effectively the failures in public policy. The Alliance established a task force — the Task Force on Land — to work on land and taxation issues; it later was joined by a group of scholars from the Appalachian Studies Conference, who shared its interests.

In August, 1978, Task Force members learned that the ARC did plan a study on land. But, in a meeting with ARC representatives, they soon found that the Commission intended to look primarily at “settlement patterns” of people on the land, ignoring the more basic question of how ownership affected their lives. The meeting prompted the Task Force to decide to do its own land study and challenge the ARC’s research priorities. Gathering the information needed by local



Photo by Michael S. Clark

activist groups was always up front, but, from the beginning, there were other equally important goals. Members of the Task Force would demonstrate that citizens could do their own research, geared to their own local needs, without relying on professional consulting firms whose research was based on the needs and interests of government agencies. They would train local citizens and groups to get the information they need by helping them actually do it, and then help them build a network concerned with land-related issues. Finally, they would use the results of the research to begin educating and mobilizing a broader body of local people to take constructive action in their own communities and at state and regional levels.

This project would obviously cost money, but funding was not on Alliance members' minds when they met with the ARC Research Committee later in August, 1978. They were there

to question the "land settlement" project and push the Commission toward making the fundamental land *ownership* questions its top research priority.

Citizens' groups had confronted the ARC in the past about the *outcome* of its research — the pro-development strategies, legitimated by the research data, always compatible with the regional establishment. But they had never challenged the research process itself. So their questioning came as something of a surprise. The allocation of millions of dollars a year in research funds was an informal backroom affair among compatible technocrats, high-priced consulting firms and politicians, conducted outside the glare of public scrutiny. Broad political questions about who controlled the creation of "legitimate" knowledge about Appalachia had not been raised directly.

At the close of two days of meetings, it was Alliance members' turn to

be surprised. The Research Committee not only agreed in writing to make land ownership research a priority, but also asked the Alliance to submit its own proposal for the study.

After much internal discussion, the Alliance proposed a decentralized, participatory research plan. In each of the six states, a task force of citizens would decide which counties to study, what approaches to take, which issues to concentrate on. Each state's task force would choose its own coordinator. Funds would be divided equally among the states, except for some money for regional administration and computer analysis. There would also be a regional task force with representatives from each state, its own coordinator, a small research staff and the job of synthesizing local research into a regional analysis.

Surprisingly, the ARC accepted the proposal in January, 1979, and it wasn't long before the Alliance was

recruiting and training field workers. Recruitment was not difficult. The project had already gathered widespread interest among people concerned with community change in the region, and some 60 people joined in to help. By the end of the project, the number had swelled to nearly 100. Many were members of existing groups or individuals interested in land issues. Others were students recruited from Appalachian Studies programs in local colleges, and several were college professors who wanted to apply their knowledge and skills to local problems. Some worked for salaries; others chose to volunteer their time, thus stretching the funds further in their states.

Because most of these field workers had never done any formal research, training was crucial. Before beginning

the project, all participants came to the Highlander Center for a three-day workshop; there were periodic follow-up sessions in each state. Concrete skills like where to find data, how to fill in coding forms and how to conduct interviews were taught, but the sessions were also geared toward the study's other goals of educating local leaders and linking local groups into a broader network to work together after the research stage.

By September, 1979, much of the field work was done, and the workers who had only four months before come for training returned to Highlander to report on their findings. It was soon clear that tremendous amounts of information had been uncovered. And, as they shared findings with one another, the researchers made connections between a wide

range of community problems, began to see regional patterns and saw themselves as people facing common issues.

The tasks of analyzing, compiling and writing up the findings still remained, and the sheer volume of data was enormous. Tensions soon developed between the impulse to start using the data to organize local campaigns and the need to produce the formal reports — the regional overview, six state studies, the analytical case studies, the county-by-county statistics, not to mention more popular materials like pamphlets, films and newspaper articles. The writing was to take another year and a half, and one state coordinator complained, "As we got more and more bogged down in writing, we were losing some of the context, some of the overall

THE DAY THE X-MAN CAME

I lived in my house
for 33 years
Before the flood came,
before the land let loose its
tears.
I thought that if you worked
hard 33 years, well
Then just 12 more
and you could sit and rest
a spell.
Why,
I remember one corner of
the house
was leanen and fallen in
33 years ago.
When my old man came
haulen in
wood and blocks and we
set in
To builden year by year,
builden what we never had
before.
It was slow, hard to see
any end to the builden
and hammerin,
but
We saved that corner, built
it back —
laid away and saved and
raised five more
to lay away and save.

All our lives
We ain't never missed a day
of payen some way,
Doing the best we can,
But I'm 52 and
He's 62
And it's way too late for them
E-Z credit plans
Carpet, couch, the family
tree,
Baby shoes and Bible too
Went floaten on down to
Kermit and Crum
Floaten away to Kingdom
Come.
And I know they
Ain't no amount of misery
Gonna bring them sweet
things
Back to me
And I know it, I know it, I
know it
But I still can't see
Why we gotta pay
Them Judas strippers to
haul us away.
How on earth can we
stand

Selling our land
On the installment plan?
And all them politicians that
never do
nothing but pat me on the
back
and tell a lie or two.
Later or sooner, it's all
overdue
them flood's garnisheed
me
they'll garnishee you.
Well, it took all of them years,
All 33,
Floods and floods and barrels
of tears
To bring me to this day
And I sit and I cry and I wail
and I moan.
But no amount of hurt and
pain's
Gonna float me back my
home.
So I just sit and wait
for the X-man to come
burn my builden down
Not much else to say
33 years
washed away
— Jim Webb



Land researchers meet at Highlander, July, 1981.

Photo by Michael S. Clark

thing, and the support actions we could get out of it.”

The formal report has had its own impact and uses. Released on April 3, 1981, it sent a wave of publicity cresting through the region. Dozens of local papers ran articles on who owned their counties, and bigger papers like the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and *Charleston Gazette* ran series summarizing the overall findings.

The final release of the report brought another round of negotiations with the ARC. Though the Commission had approved the methodology, it balked when it saw the findings. The 20 county case studies, where hard statistical data gave way to analysis and interpretations of what the data really meant, were particular sore spots. At the same time, the ARC itself was in trouble; threatened with abolition by the Reagan administration, it was lobbying hard in Congress to stay alive. ARC officials openly admitted that release of a controversial report wouldn't help their case.

On the other hand, they did not want to be seen as suppressing the research, or to face the anger of citizens all over Appalachia who had worked so hard on it. So they finally agreed to release the report, though not without taking several steps to distance themselves from it. They refused to release the case studies, arguing they weren't objective. Despite

a prior agreement, they refused to make any announcement to the press. They refused to meet the full demand for copies of the study, saying they had no money to print it. And, despite this shortage of money, they hired a blue-ribbon panel of outside academics and consultants to do an experts' study of the citizens' study. (That panel has yet to release its findings.)

But the Alliance Task Force was ready with its own strategy for getting the material out. It followed the original agreement that, although the ARC could accept or reject the findings, the Alliance had the right to use the work as it wished after a certain date. The Task Force also had its own press releases and distribution system. Within weeks, it had sold hundreds of copies.

After all is said and done, the people involved have concluded that the way they did the study is fully as important as their findings. They met again at Highlander in July, 1981, to evaluate their work and talk about the process. Said one, “I think this study was important because we learned more than ever about what ‘participatory research’ really is, as something that involves people and overcomes the dichotomy . . . between research and social action and between the academic and the community. I think that's a process we could apply

to a lot of different kinds of issues.”

A couple of others felt the split between academics and activists, but, said one person, “This whole project transcended that whole tension.” Another said, “I think that the different elements that went into making up the study were really very valuable. . . . I look back on a couple of those early meetings where we had some real differences, where even the goals we were setting seemed very different. One was a kind of research mechanism and the other was a kind of social action group, but somehow despite those differences a lot happened with the study that wouldn't have happened otherwise.”

Another person spoke of the study's importance to local organizing, saying, “This has been very helpful in arguing for community-based thinking, planning, whatever you want to call it — about what our county or area will look like 15 or 20 years down the road. I think people now see they have a means of controlling what happens in their area.”

The participants also value the training and education they got out of it. They say they've learned that research itself is a way of educating people and of empowering them for further action. Said one, “I saw kind of a deeper change there that I would identify as development of local leadership. . . . There were a lot of people involved in a lot of different issues, but the study kind of turned the lights on for a lot of local folks, showing them that there really in a sense was one problem, with just several different aspects of that problem. It got people talking together and that has continued on a regular basis. I think the study helped focus that.”

Other people remarked upon the network-building that occurred. “A group of people who maybe were not connected together as an organization to begin with were brought together because of this study. It gave them a fresh start,” said one. And another mentioned the dispelling of an earlier feeling of isolation: “The connection with the group is very important to me. . . . This gave me an out, some kind of connection, some kind of feeling that what I was doing was important.”

Overcoming the distance between research and action had been a goal, and there was much talk about how

well they had managed to begin that task. For example: "In Kentucky, I think the study has had some impact. People are starting to talk about this. For a long time in Kentucky the coal industry has always dominated the political spectrum. Even now we are only beginning to cut into that a little, if any, but the coal companies and the coal industry are on the defensive a little bit. It's the first time the politicians have started talking publicly about taxing the coal industry and making the coal industry pay for some of the wealth that they've taken from the mountains."

And again: "A lot of what we were doing in Lincoln County was going on well before the land study. But I think it adds a little clout to the 'I told you so' behind some of it. Local people there get lots of different people and volunteer groups coming around and they don't hear anything after it. They did their little thing, and once again they got used in a survey. And I think this is a chance where local people have done their part and because of all the good press work that has been going on, they are not only seeing it in the county paper and the larger papers, but now on TV, where their input has produced something solid. I think now they can say — a lot of them — 'This time we made a statement to some people that said they were going to do some good and produce results, and we got it!'"

If the process of the land study has to some degree been a model for citizen-based research, there were still shortcomings — and lessons to be learned from them. Several emerged clearly from the self-evaluation. Worthy of much discussion is the question of government support for this kind of research. On the one hand, the ARC provided money and a measure of legitimacy and served, to some extent, as a unifying antagonist. On the other hand, the Task Force was constantly juggling the demands of a government contract — timetables, methods, bureaucratic requirements — with its own concern for using the data for community change and the empowerment of individuals and groups. While the demands were difficult to balance, the process was probably the stronger for it. As one person said, "We played both ends against the middle." He continued, "I think that the different elements that went into

making up the study really were valuable in the final product — all the way from the top-down ARC involvement to the bottom-up grassroots involvement of people who participated in the local cases, students, the involvement of Highlander, the involvement of the Alliance. All those elements together helped make the study something that it wouldn't have been otherwise."

At the same time, the very diversity of the participants raised the question of who was served by the research process. In some areas, the local task forces were well-grounded in the community; in others, the research teams were drawn primarily from colleges. Where the Task Force took the time to recruit people directly affected by land problems, follow-up action occurred more often. Elsewhere, individual researchers learned a great deal, but a new, different base of people had to be pulled together when it came time to organize action. As one state coordinator said: "I wish we had had an opportunity, say six months' lead time, to go out and make some contacts . . . and try to find places where local people were interested in doing the research and following all the way through the study. . . . I think in the long run it would have been a lot easier to put together some kind of a coalition on land and tax issues if we had been able to start from stage one in that way."

Many other participants feel that they didn't do enough to shape a vision of a new future. Said one: "I started making connections with other situations around the country and being 'brainwashed' to look at everything in terms of 'land ownership.' Whammo! That's really it! That made me think about larger questions, about notions of land ownership and property, what it is our culture is saying about owning property; what does that *mean* in the economy of the country as a whole. I was frustrated throughout the editing and talking about this study in the last year that we didn't really seem to get to any of that."

Try as they might, the participants were simply unable to bridge the gap between the need for information and action on specific, immediate problems and the need for a broader analysis and vision. One person tried to think this through: "Part of the problem is that we acted most of the

time without any serious discussion within the Task Force of a theory. What is it we are trying to do with this land study? What we've got is all this documentation about absentee ownership, but how does that move us forward? What does that tell us about change and especially American society? As a result, the change we focused on is taxation. Well, that is good. But that's treating the symptoms, not treating the disease itself. I don't think we ever got at an understanding of what all this means. Part of what we have done is add substance to this colonial theory of the outsider — just get rid of these damn outsiders' ownership and everything will be all right. The problem is much deeper than that."

He drew this response: "I don't think we, as a group, really know how to tie the use of information for winning a specific battle and at the same time create a consciousness about longer-range goals. People trying to win pragmatic battles were frustrated because we were trying to be too general and too broad, and it wasn't useful in the immediate sense. And people who were able to think more broadly were frustrated because we were being too specific and nobody was happy with that. I think that's a tension that undercuts — lies deeper than the study — that we've all got to figure out."

Since the voicing of this frustration, and partly because of it, the Land Task Force has begun to think further about visions of land reform and to plan workshops where these types of discussions can take place.

Of course, research — even of the participatory ilk — does not a movement make. Yet, as this case study shows, a citizen-based research process can be used to gain information for action and to educate community leaders, link communities facing common problems, help local organizations coalesce and serve as a spark for change. In Appalachia, the "fact diggers" involved in the project are now using the information they have acquired to combat land ownership problems. And, in the process of getting the facts they need, they have gained more strength for the battle. □

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Land and Life in the Mountains

... the findings, in brief

The people who did the land study had a pretty good idea of what they were likely to find when they started looking. But the facts are nonetheless devastating, presented in all their stark detail. Several major topics are covered – inadequate taxation of land wealth, economic development woes, loss of agricultural lands, lack of decent housing – and the findings are summarized here.

How to say no to the tax collector

Property taxes are traditionally the main source of money for local governments and thus for services like schools, roads, welfare, health care, sewage treatment and so forth. By all rights, then, Appalachian counties with their vast wealth in land and minerals ought not to be strapped for funds, yet they are. They simply do not tax their land and minerals in anything like an adequate or just way.

Taxes paid on rural lands are low when compared to their rising market values. Overall, the tax per acre in the 80 counties surveyed is only 90 cents, and almost one-fourth of the owners paid less than 25 cents an acre.

In general, large and absentee owners tend to pay less per acre than small local owners. One reason is that absentee owners are often holding their property on speculation or for the value of its minerals and don't

make improvements, while the local owners are more likely to build on the land and thus increase its value.

But there are other factors at work, too. In Tennessee, for example, vast tracts of land owned for mineral development by coal-land holding companies and energy producers have been routinely assessed as "farmland," allowing them the advantage of a 25 percent assessment ratio rather than the 40 percent ratio set for industrial and commercial uses. Kentucky also allows a reduced assessment rate on agricultural land. In practice, eastern Kentucky assessors apply it to any owner of large parcels. The major beneficiaries, of course, are the energy giants and speculators who practice not a bit of agriculture. Since 1968, when the reduction took effect, these large corporate owners have lowered their property taxes by as much as 50 percent.

More seriously underassessed than the land itself are the minerals beneath it. More than three-fourths of the owners of minerals in the 80 counties paid less than 25 cents an acre in property taxes. In the 12 counties of eastern Kentucky – including some of Appalachia's major coal producers – the average tax per acre of minerals is one-fifth of a cent. The total tax on minerals collected by these Kentucky counties is just \$1,500. Though the tax is figured by the acre, the researchers wanted to show just how meager the tax bite is. They calculated that in 22 major coal counties, with

more than a billion tons of coal reserves, the owners paid an average tax of one-fiftieth of a cent for each ton. A ton of coal reserves is currently valued at \$35 to \$40.

Probably the most important service affected by inadequate property taxation is the public schools. The case studies in this survey show time and again that finances are often shortest in the counties with the most resources. In Walker County, Alabama, the largest coal-producing county in that state, the 28 largest holders own more than 65 percent of the mineral wealth yet contribute only \$8,807 in taxes on mineral rights. Of this, \$5,020 goes to education, less than the salary of one teacher. For the last 16 years, the county has been forced to borrow money to open the schools each fall. For the past nine years, the teachers' paychecks have been late.

Martin County is one of Kentucky's largest coal producers yet must go on the state and federal dole for 86 percent of its budget. The largest landowner is Pocahontas-Kentucky, a subsidiary of Norfolk and Western Railroad, which owns one-third of the county's surface and more than half its mineral acreage. The taxes "Poky" pays on its surface land – 35 cents an acre – are barely enough to buy a bus for the county school system, and the \$76 it pays on its mineral rights won't even buy the bus a new tire to replace one worn out on the county's rough coal-haul roads. The unmined coal the company owns is



Photo by Michael S. Clark

officially valued at \$7.6 million. (See the report on Martin County, page 49.)

Several of the counties in this study have a different problem, though. They are the sites of substantial government land holdings — which are exempt from local taxes. When the owner is a state government, the county is out of luck; there simply are no programs to compensate counties for this loss to its tax base. In the case of federal lands, the government makes some payments in lieu of taxes. But the amount is rarely equal to the average tax paid by private owners.

The extreme case is Swain County, North Carolina, where the federal government owns 80 percent of the land — national park and forest, the Cherokee Indian reservation, the Blue Ridge Parkway and so on — and where, despite a relatively high tax rate, the county cannot support its schools or provide basic services. If Washington paid in an amount per acre equal to what private out-of-state owners pay, it would mean an extra \$150,000 a year to Swain County.

Taken together, the failure to tax minerals adequately, the underassessment of surface lands and the revenue loss from concentrated federal holdings have a marked impact on local governments in Appalachia. First, the small owners carry a disproportionate share of the tax burden. Second, counties depend on federal and state funds while large corporate and absentee owners of the region's resources escape relatively tax-free. Third, citizens must do without needed services despite the presence in their counties of great taxable wealth, especially in the form of coal and other natural resources.

At this time of federal budget cutbacks, the generation of new local revenues is urgent. The land study explored various ways of taxing unmined mineral wealth, determining that the alternative that makes the most sense is a tax on the capacity of the land to produce an "income stream" for its owner over a period of time. In simple terms, what would have to be done is: (1) figure the future income to the owner, taking into account the amount of recover-

able minerals, and estimated market price and expenses to be incurred in developing the minerals; and (2) reduce the income to its present worth — that is, determine what a buyer would be willing to pay today for the promise of future income.

Using conservative figures and methods, the researchers have figured the present value of coal reserves to be mined over the next 50 years at \$2.4 billion. If these reserves were taxed at nothing more than present rates, the coal counties in the study would realize \$16.5 million a year in new taxes, or almost \$300,000 per county.

The underdeveloped world

Appalachia is America's Third World. The absolute control the coal companies had over people's lives in the old company towns is no more, but the power of absentee corporate owners to affect the economic future of local communities is still massive. The situation is most severe in the coal

counties, where half the land surface is corporately owned and 72 percent is absentee-owned.

In Logan County, West Virginia, 11 corporations own nearly everything. Roscoe Spence, who edited the weekly paper there for more than 30 years, sums things up: "By controlling land, they controlled the jobs; by controlling jobs, they control the

payroll by controlling the payroll, they once could control where people bought; by controlling where people bought, they could control profit on earnings. It was a stacked-up thing. The effect of it is that people who control the land control everything."

Land ownership patterns also worsen the problems that come with the booms and busts of the coal industry.

Good times bring greater demands for nonexistent housing and for services dependent on already-strained county budgets. In bad times, few non-coal jobs are available, use of the land for survival — even tilling the hillsides — is limited for most people, and moving away is the only real choice for many. In the coal counties surveyed, in fact, there is a strong

How to find the facts

by Bill Horton

Most of the relevant information about land ownership and taxation is available in the county courthouse, and your access to it is, in most cases, protected by state law. Most county officials and their staffs respect this right and will be cooperative. Where they are not, you should be prepared to defend your right to the data.

Among the questions that can be answered through patient and persistent investigation are:

- Who are the largest land and mineral owners in the county?
- Where is their property located?
- What taxes are assessed on that property?
- Where do the owners live — in the county or elsewhere?
- How much of the county's land is tax-exempt?
- If mineral leasing has occurred, where, by and to whom?

Property tax books, the primary source of land ownership information, are compiled yearly and are normally found in the office of the county tax assessor or other county official responsible for sending out tax notices.

Two separate books record tax information on (1) *personal property*, including vehicles, machinery, livestock and, in some cases, leases; and (2) *real property*, including land, minerals and buildings. These books are divided into sections according to voting or magisterial districts within the county. If you don't know the

precise boundaries of those districts, you can usually determine them by looking at an official county map.

Property owners are listed alphabetically within each district, although, in some cases, commercial (corporate) holdings are listed separately at the end of the district. So, if no corporate listings are apparent at first, or if you can't find a particular corporate holding, you should check to see if there is a separate listing. Sometimes publicly owned land and other tax-exempt land is also listed at the end of each district's list.

The real property tax books will show such things as:

- the owner's name
- the owner's address*
- a description of the property
- the number of acres or size of the lot
- the type of minerals present, if any**
- the property's location
- the value of the land, minerals and improvements
- the amount of tax billed to the owner
- the tax map parcel number
- the deed book reference

* In West Virginia, the owner's address is usually not listed in the tax books, but you can find it at the local sheriff's office, which has the job of mailing out the tax bills to property owners.

** If the property is designated as fee or fee simple, it means it includes both the land surface and any minerals. That is, the mineral rights have not been severed from surface ownership.

Most of these items are self-explanatory, but a few call for elaboration:

• *The value* — Every piece of property listed should have either an assessed or an appraised value next to it. "Appraised value" usually refers to a supposed calculation of "true and actual" value or "market" value. In many cases, appraised values are outdated and/or considerably lower than true value. "Assessed value" is usually a fixed percentage of the appraised value, used to determine the amount of tax due. The percentage set for a particular class of property should be uniform throughout the county. If only the assessed value is listed, you can compute the appraised value of a piece of property by knowing the fixed percentage.

• *The actual tax billed* is figured by multiplying the county's tax rate times the assessed value. For example, in a county where the tax rate is \$3 for every \$100 of property value, the tax on a piece of property appraised at \$6,000 would be:

$$(\$6,000 \div \$100) \times \$3 = \$180$$

In comparing taxes charged to different owners, you should remember that there are usually different tax rates for different kinds of property. Commercial property, for example, is often taxed at a higher rate than agricultural property. The tax assessor's staff can probably explain the rates if you ask them.

• *The parcel number* refers to the county tax maps, and you can use it to determine the exact location of a particular piece of land by matching the number to its place on the map. The map is generally found in the assessor's office, but not all counties have them.

• *The deed book reference* usually gives a volume and page number to

connection between corporate ownership and outmigration in the 1960s, a period of coal decline: the greater the degree of corporate ownership of a county, the greater the percentage of the population who left.

Everywhere in Appalachia people tout the wisdom of getting out from under the fortunes of coal. Take Russell County, Virginia, where local

officials have resolved: "The area's leaders should do everything in their power to attract other industry, so that the area's economy is not so strongly tied to coal. The coal industry has a volatile history, and it is important our dependency on coal is reduced."

Yet non-diversification continues as the order of the day. As a Harlan

County woman says, "Mining will be the life of my three sons. If they don't mine, they can't make a living. Either you mine coal or you push a buggy at Cas Walker's [supermarket]."

Government agencies cite any number of reasons for the lack of choices: isolation, topography, a poorly trained work force and so on. This study adds land ownership patterns to the list and

help you find the place in the county deed books where the deed and any leases on the property are listed.

Some counties also include totals or recapitulations at the end of each district list or at the end of the volume itself. These can be useful in comparing the total assessed values and/or taxes paid by type of property, though much depends on how the totals are summarized.

How you tally or summarize the information you find in the property tax books will depend on your purposes. If you are really interested only in large owners, you can use some arbitrary acreage cut-off, as we did in the Appalachian land study. We also designed a coding sheet to record data for later computer analysis, but many local research needs will be simpler. Your research may range anywhere from a single visit to the courthouse to several days of tedious work.

Though we primarily used property tax books in our study, we sometimes had to refer to deed/lease books to clarify ownership questions. Deed/lease books were especially helpful in tracing the history of corporate ownership of particular parcels and the enormous amount of leasing now going on in the region. These books are usually kept in the office of the county clerk or the county recorder. Sometimes deeds and leases are recorded in the same volumes, and sometimes they are listed separately. In either case, the volumes generally have a separate index where the names of all parties to property transactions are listed alphabetically each time a transaction occurs. Deeds are indexed according to both the "grantor" (the individual or company selling the property) and the "grantee" (the individual or company buying it.) Indexes for leases are indexed by "lessor" (the individual or company

leasing out the property) and "lessee" (the individual or company assuming the lease).

The indices will refer you to a volume and page number of the deed/lease books where you can find the wording of actual terms of the deeds or leases. In the case of leases, you can discover: the names of the lessor and lessee, the acreage involved, the length of time involved, the types of minerals, the royalties to be paid and other conditions of the lease. In the case of deeds, you can determine: the buyer and seller, the date of the property transfer, the parcel's location and description, the terms and any special conditions of the transfer and, in many cases, the price paid and total acres of land or minerals involved. Where leases and deeds are recorded in the same volumes, leases are usually appended to the deed and can be found by referring to the property through the grantor/grantee index.

Deed/lease books are important if you want to determine how much leasing is going on in the county, what kind and between what parties, or if you want to determine whether a particular company has leased in the county, how much it's leased and from whom. Suppose there is a rumor that Gulf Oil Corporation has been leasing in your county. You can go to the lessee/lessor index, look up Gulf Oil and determine if and when it has leased there. The index will refer you to the volume and page where you can read the terms of the actual lease.

For additional information on large property owners, particularly corporate owners, you will sometimes need to go beyond what you can find in the courthouse. This is particularly true when you want to find out who really owns a piece of property. The office of the secretary of state, usually in the state capital, records information on

corporations that do business in the state. By letter or a personal visit, you can learn who the incorporators of a company are, where it was incorporated, who is on the board of directors, who the current officers are and some of the history of the company. Reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington by corporations of a certain type and size also reveal valuable information about subsidiaries, assets and ownership. Ask for Forms 10-K and 8-K filed by the company you are researching.

Publications that may prove useful include: the *Keystone Coal Industry Manual*, *Moody's Industrial Manual*, *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives* and *Who Owns Whom* directories. These sources can help with corporate histories, officials and directors of large companies and relationships between subsidiaries and their parent companies.

Familiarity with these resources will allow you and other local people and citizens' groups to reclaim possession of public information too often left to the province of corporate lawyers and leasing agents. It can be knowledge for the people rather than knowledge against the people, as the land study in Appalachia amply demonstrated.

This summary is excerpted from the draft of a manual on how to do land ownership research being prepared by the Land Task Force (available from the Highlander Center, Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820). The discussion on deed/lease books owes much to an excellent work by Laura Batt called Coal Industry Research Guide (Eastern Kentucky Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, January, 1980, also available from Highlander).



Photo by Rick Diehl

suggests that it probably should be at the top. In the words of the manager of the Logan County chamber of commerce, "Logan County needs more industry, but the first thing they ask us when they want to come is if land is available. Then they ask about water and sewage. Of course, all of the answers are no."

In county after county, the researchers heard stories of large landowners holding land for future energy extraction and refusing to sell parcels to local development groups. Lack of available land isn't the only reason new industry is hard to attract. A company deciding where to locate also considers the presence of adequate services like water systems, sewers, transportation, hospitals, good schools. Decades of absentee corporate ownership have failed to produce them in the coalfields.

Development problems are different in counties dominated by recreational uses and tourism. Land is owned in huge chunks by the federal government, as national forests and parks,

and in smaller individual parcels by absentee owners holding the land for speculation or for second-home developments. In these areas, it's not land ownership itself that limits economic freedom, but the low wages and seasonal employment of the tourism and recreation industry. At the same time, local residents face rising prices for land, housing and other goods due to the spending and speculation of the more affluent outsiders.

Disappearing farmland

The Appalachian tradition of small farms is important both economically and culturally, but farming has gone into a dramatic decline. Using the records of the federal agricultural census, the land study documents the loss, in the 80 counties, of a million acres of farmland between 1969 and 1974, the latest year for which figures are available. More than 17,000 farmers (one in four) left the land during this time. If these rates continued through

the late '70s — and there's no reason to think they didn't — the new agricultural census will show that, in a single decade, more than half of Appalachia's farmers stopped farming and better than a third of the farmland has gone out of production.

The decline is, of course, a national phenomenon, and Appalachian farmers have much in common with other small farmers suffering government neglect, financial instability and corporate intrusion. But there are differences. The Appalachian farmer tends to be older, less educated and poorer. The average farm is smaller, and the uneven topography results in the division of cropland into such small and scattered fields that efficient use of machinery is often impossible. And the pressures on farmland from energy development and tourist development pose special problems; corporate control of land does not seem to lead to agribusiness — corporate agricultural production — as it does elsewhere in the country. In fact, the reverse seems to be true: corporate ownership

takes land out of agriculture altogether. In the surveyed counties, the greater the corporate control of land, the lower the percentage of land devoted to agriculture. Similarly, the greater the level of coal production, the fewer farms in a county and the less farm acreage in a county. Most of the major coal counties are in central Appalachia and lost much of their agricultural land long ago. But to say that farming is no longer *predominant* there is not to discount its significance. The small farm plot has provided important security for miners in times of coal busts, for the elderly

The poems in this section are the work of writers gathered together by the Appalachian Poetry Project centered at the University of Kentucky. They are part of a new anthology edited by Bob Henry Baber, George Ella Lyon and Gurney Norman that samples the best work of nearly a hundred of the region's poets. It's called Contemporary Appalachian Poetry; watch for it.

Gail V. Amburgey, born and raised on Buffalo Creek in Logan County, West Virginia, was a member of the Soup Bean Poets, an Appalachian collective. She lives in Delbarton, West Virginia.

Maggie Anderson, a West Virginia native, is the founding editor of Trellis. She lives and teaches in Pennsylvania.

Bob Henry Baber is a West Virginia poet and one of the founders of the Southern Appalachian Writers' Cooperative (SAWC). He is consulting director of the Appalachian Poetry Project.

Lillie D. Chaffin, a native of Kentucky, has published children's books and poetry collections. She lives on Ratliff's Creek in eastern Kentucky.

Jim Stokely is a poet and director of An Appalachian Experience, a children's museum in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Jim Webb, another founder of SAWC, is a poet who lives on a farm in Mingo County, West Virginia.

APPALACHIAN SPRING

(pay water bills here)

In this occupied territory
made war upon,
terrorists set blasts
making mole hills out of mountains —

six-weeks-till-frost
and Jack-in-the-Pulpit
supplanted by *Sericea lespedeza*.

Stripped of recourse the rivers succumb
surrender rags hung from flood
till dogwood bloom —

for every kickback, a kick.

Blood splashes on bark
mark the lines of demarcation —
the backside of glazed gob pile
no buffer of trees can mask
looming ever ready
to bequest its over burdened truth
next rain —

peaks above
falling prey to dozers
driven by kin
against their wills.

— Bob Henry Baber

BLOOD MONEY

This blood rolling down my arm
is from the wounds of a dollar bill
that cut my fingers as I touched it,
The blood runs down my elbows
and drips off into the sand.
Mr. Pittston is kicking dirt over it,
swearing
there are no names written
on that dollar bill.

All this is the result
of thinking too much
about a Law Suit
proving me of
"The Survival Syndrome":
I get money
but none of the dead are resurrected.

— Gail V. Amburgey

and unemployed, and for those working in the lower-paying jobs. As the loss of farmland continues, the last thread of independent economic security for residents of the major coal counties is finally breaking. The average coal county lost almost 30 percent of its farmland between 1969 and '74, double the rate in agricultural counties.

The land left for farming is still threatened by the effects of mining. Unchecked strip mining destroys the surface, fills creeks with silt that encourages flooding, and creates acid runoff that ruins the land it floods. Seventy-five percent of Cranks Creek in Harlan County, Kentucky, has been disturbed by strip mining. The creek is silted up and most of the land below the strip job is ruined. Becky Simpson, who lives on Cranks Creek, says, "Folks can't farm anymore because the clay mud has washed over the soil; the land no longer absorbs water."

On the fringes of the old coalfields, there are counties where agriculture is the traditional economic base. But minerals of increasing value — such as bauxite and oil and gas — are beginning to be exploited. In those counties, corporate and absentee ownership is coming into conflict with local farmers' use of their land. In Tennessee, several court decisions in the mid-1970s upheld the right of mineral owners to strip-mine land without the consent of the surface owners; but a law requiring consent has since passed through the efforts of a state legislator from one of the affected counties and a citizens' group called Save Our Cumberland Mountains. But it's a battle still to be fought in other states.

Agriculture has also played an important traditional role in the counties now beset by resort development and second-home buyers. Tourism poses a grave threat, chiefly because the price spiral caused by land speculation tempts people to sell off their farmland; rising land prices also act as a barrier to those who would like to farm. One resident of Swain County, North Carolina, tells it all: "There really hasn't been a young person getting into farming lately because of high land prices and outside pressure of people coming in from outside the county and who are willing to pay a high price for it [the land]. This has taken good land out of agricultural use and out of production."



Photo by Earl Dotter

No place to live

Housing in Appalachia is a well-known national disgrace. In 1970, one of every five homes there was substandard, and in Central Appalachia the figure was one out of three. In the average rural county in the land study, 30 percent of the homes lacked some plumbing, 13 percent were overcrowded, and almost 60 percent were built before 1950. Ironically, the worst housing conditions are found amidst the greatest wealth. In the heart of the coalfields, houses are the oldest and most crowded. In the recreation and tourist areas, substandard locally owned dwellings stand side-by-side with modern absentee-owned second homes. Throughout the region, mobile-home parks along the roadbanks and riverbanks are the principal answer for those with no place else to go.

Again, the study shows that tightly held ownership of large parcels means little land for housing, and competi-

tion for that little sends prices soaring beyond the reach of low- and middle-income residents. In general, the study found that the greater the degree of corporate ownership and the greater the degree of absentee ownership of a county, the more crowded its housing stock for local people.

Severed ownership of mineral rights, common all over the coalfields, is also to blame for poor housing in Appalachia. The homeowner who holds only his or her surface rights faces many uncertainties: the company may show up at any time to strip-mine the land, and conflicts can develop over titles. Even worse is the effect on the building of new homes. As a bank officer in Dayton, Tennessee, explained, lack of mineral rights acts as a "cloud" on the title, and title companies will not insure it. Without title insurance, lending institutions — including HUD and the Farmers Home Administration — will not make loans, and neither first nor second mortgages can be obtained. Raymond Weaver of Sale Creek, near Chattanooga, is one victim of this policy. He can

show papers from at least five lenders that turned down his applications to renovate his home; the reason given: that he doesn't own the minerals beneath his 46-acre farm.

It used to be, in the coalfields, that the corporate land holders were also the principal housing providers – in the form of coal camps. When the industry declined in the 1950s and '60s, much of the housing was torn down. Now the industry is booming again and houses are needed for miners, but the housing sites aren't available. In the four southern coal-field counties of West Virginia, for example, new housing is desperately needed, but there were 12,579 fewer housing units in 1970 than in 1950. In these four counties, well over two-thirds of the surface land is owned by corporations.

For many Appalachian people, coal camp life is still the fact of life. Because they have no alternative, they remain dependent on the company landlord, facing the insecurities of short-notice evictions, dilapidated homes and fear of the company's power. Take Logan County, for example, where hundreds of coal company homes were demolished in the '50s and '60s. Now, even though the housing crisis is desperate, the land where the old houses stood lies vacant and the companies refuse to give it up. Along Rum Creek, where the Dingess

Rum Coal Company owns it all, the industry is expanding and the miners need houses. But Dingess Rum persists in tearing down livable houses as tenants die or move out, and residents have heard that the company plans to get rid of everything that remains soon. Richard Cooper, a union mine safety inspector, says that Dingess Rum officials recently forced tenants to sign forms agreeing to vacate their homes within 10 days if asked.

Cooper knows the company well. He grew up on Rum Creek in a company house, and he lives in one now with his wife and three children. It's at least 50 years old and has a gaping hole in the roof and broken water pipes beneath it. But he doesn't do much to fix things up; the rent will go up if he does. The Coopers would like to buy land on Rum Creek for a house, but the company won't sell. "I could go up and offer \$100,000 for this house and they'd laugh in my face, even if I had it in \$100 bills."

The only other option is mobile homes, and in parts of Appalachia the trailer park has replaced the company town. That's what seems to be happening in Logan County, too. As another resident put it, "It seems that the general policy of Dingess Rum is to make their housing as unbearable as possible to coax county residents into trailer camps.

Today, Dingess Rum makes as much renting families plots of land on which to place a trailer as they used to make renting housing. And they pay less taxes, because the land is considered idle for tax purposes."

Figures collected for the land study indicate that the rise in this form of housing is staggering. In seven coal counties of southwestern Virginia, a record number of occupancy permits was issued in the first six months of 1979, and 76 percent of them were for mobile homes. In Wise County, Virginia, mobile homes accounted for over 70 percent of the new housing units between 1970 and 1976. In Pike County, Kentucky, mobile homes represented 98 percent of new housing units between 1970 and 1977.

Trailers may be the only way out for many, but they don't satisfy the family which wants a house and can afford one if only there were one to buy. Their numbers are legion in Appalachia – especially among the miners, whose incomes increased substantially in the 1970s – and their frustration is mounting.

New minerals, new owners

The land study not only documents an old story for residents of the region's central coalfields; it also

THIS LAND, FULL OF SAID REGIONS

full of coal roads slanting from the highways,
winding to those hells hidden not from the sky,
pitting the mountains,
turning the creeks to clay
turning the farms to clay;
this land full of housing by the rivers,
no homes but in the flood plain,
old miners, lost,
resting on lawn chairs lapped by lespedeza;
this land that could have been and was busted down,
home of something never here
a snake coiling fire from the wet easy earth –
for this land nothing waits save death and time
and the cows which look up from their stirrings,
astonished, four-square, brazen.

– Jim Stokely

ROOFING FOR AUNT PEARL

"They want me t' move t' town,"
bent over her cane and squinting
up at me covered with stop-leak and tar,
holding hot rolled roof,
"but a told 'em,"
her palsied hand's finger
pointing to the soil,
"that I'm Cold Knob born,
Cold Knob bred,
'n' when I die, by God,
I'm gonna be *Cold Knob* dead!"

– Bob Henry Baber

uncovers evidence warning that history is about to repeat itself in other areas. With large corporations worried about their dependence upon Third World nations for energy resources and minerals, their agents are again scouring the countryside for land and mineral rights. This time they are moving beyond the coalfields to other parts of the mountains and the deep South. The search is leading to a new corporate takeover, and — the land activists say — “Watch out for the Appalachianization of Dixie.”

Oil shale rights are being leased in central Kentucky, west of the coalfields. Lignite mines are being stripped from Alabama to Texas. Millions of acres of oil and gas rights are being leased throughout Appalachia, known to the geologists as the Eastern Overthrust Belt. And, in the name of national defense, major exploration has begun in Virginia and western North Carolina for “strategic minerals,” especially uranium, bauxite, gibbsite, monazite and chromite. These developments mean a vast expansion of the corporate and absentee ownership of new areas, and extraction of these minerals is likely to have major environmental consequences for the rural areas where they’re being discovered.

The land study also documents

a continuing takeover of the traditional coalfields by energy conglomerates, primarily the big oil companies. The new owners throw around capital and technology on a whole new scale. They plan strip mines of a size never before attempted in the East, the removal of whole mountaintops. They also plan a synthetic fuels industry to turn coal into oil, with unknown environmental effects, and the construction of new, enormous power plants, like pumped-storage facilities, that promise to take still more land out of local production and control.

What is to be done?

Land use planning and regulation are next to nonexistent in most rural Appalachian counties, and so decisions are made, *de facto*, by the large, powerful owners according to their own interests. Even though these decisions dramatically affect the region’s course of development, the people who live there have little say in them.

The local people who did this land study have come to the conclusion that conditions must change. They end their report with a recommendation for fundamental land reform, initiating a broad public discussion mechanism

by which people can gain access to, control over and benefit from the land and its resources. Options range from local governments’ using their eminent domain powers to condemn land needed for community use to statutory limits on corporate and/or absentee ownership of land.

Recognizing that the land reform battle could take a long time, they’ve also called for less direct actions to mitigate the adverse effects of ownership patterns and to hold on to the little land that’s left for local use.

Mitigating actions might include tax reform, new and diverse economic development or housing development projects. Land retention policies might start with a comprehensive land-use plan developed with broad public participation and might lead to statutory prohibitions of land transactions that would take still more land out of local control.

Now, though, in the face of all this bad news revealed, or simply confirmed, by the land study, there is much to report that is good. For one thing, the research is not being relegated to the library shelves. It’s being used all over Appalachia to turn things around, and *Southern Exposure* turns now to a few reports from some of the activists at work in the Southern mountains. □

For more information

For further information on the land ownership study and other land actions contact:

The Appalachian Alliance
PO Box 66
New Market, TN 37820

For more information on your state contact:

Alabama
Angie Wright, State Coordinator
Program of Rural Services and Research
University of Alabama
University, AL 35486

Kentucky
East Kentuckians for Fair Taxation
Box 41
David, KY 41616

North Carolina
Center for Appalachian Studies
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608

Tennessee
Save Our Cumberland Mountains
PO Box 457
Jacksboro, TN 37757

Virginia
Virginia Land Alliance
Route 1, Box 270
Dungannon, VA 24245

West Virginia
Southern West Virginia Land Reform Project
PO Box 109
Griffithsville, WV 25521

To order a copy of the land study for your state, or to order the summary volume, contact:

Center for Appalachian Studies
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608



Tax revolt in Kentucky

Joe Szakos

Tax revolt is an American tradition at least as old as the Boston Tea Party of 1773. Now, in Appalachia, in county after county, it's being kept alive by angry citizens armed, in many cases, with the findings of the land study. They are demanding that the giant corporate owners of the region's vast mineral, timber and land wealth pay their fair share into county coffers.

The 1970s saw middle-class homeowners all across the country rebelling against the upwardly spiraling property taxes needed in inflationary times. By all rights, Appalachia with its land wealth should not be facing a property tax crisis; yet, as we've seen from the land study, much of this wealth is virtually untaxed. And there, the citizens' new cry is not that they should pay less, but that the corporate and absentee owners should pay more. Their tax revolt is urgent and gaining steam as the Reagan administration slashes the federal programs that have supported Appalachian schools and services since the War on Poverty.

The land study's richly documented findings on taxation caught the attention of the press all across the region. A lead editorial in the Louisville Courier-Journal proposed legislative action against "this economic colonialism," and the Nashville Tennessean called the situation "an outrage." The Charleston Gazette demanded, "End the exploitation."

In Alabama, the study's release coincided with legislative debate on a bill to provide tax relief for the timber industry. With copies in hand, opponents filibustered, reading the findings into the record. And, though the bill eventually passed, the new tax reduction was limited to plots of less than 2,500 acres, a striking blow to the big timber companies.

In Tennessee, Save Our Cumberland Mountains (a grassroots group of

coalfield residents) has organized several county campaigns around land study findings. One, for example, targets the Koppers Company, a Pittsburgh energy firm that owns one-third of Campbell County and plans a giant synthetic fuels plant nearby.

In West Virginia, the legislature is considering a bill calling for an "excess acreage tax" on companies with large holdings. And if a pending court case there — the Pauley case — is successful, the effect will be the revamping of the property tax structure to provide greater revenues for schools.

It is in Kentucky, though, where the coal companies pay the least, that action is needed the most. And the land study has helped to crystallize a campaign for action. The Martin Countian, a weekly paper in the county singled out as possibly the most serious victim of undertaxation of big landowners (see page 40), serialized the land study in its pages. Here, one of its reporters describes what has happened since the study was published.

Martin County is Kentucky's second largest coal producer, yet its county government is desperately poor. Now, though, some residents calling themselves the Concerned Citizens of Martin County (CCMC) have launched an "awareness campaign" to alert their neighbors to the fact that the big absentee-owned corporations are not pulling their weight. And their educational workshops on taxation, small group meetings and articles in the *Martin Countian* have already put enough pressure on the tax assessor and local board of assessment appeals to quadruple the tax bill sent to Pocahontas-Kentucky Corporation, the company that owns one-third of the surface and more than half the minerals in the county. (The assess-

ment is under appeal at the state level, but the CCMC is watching closely.)

By focusing attention on a provision in the state constitution that requires all real property to be assessed at its fair cash value, CCMC has also forced increases in the assessments on other large land holdings. The group follows judicial actions and has occasionally filed briefs as a "friend of the court," the idea being that major court decisions affecting local conditions should reflect local situations. And CCMC is now planning a lawsuit charging that land companies and coal corporations are illegally claiming agricultural exemptions for land that isn't agricultural.

The recent reassessments have increased the tax base and helped alleviate the county's financial problems, but still more revenue is vital — the county has no hospital, no sewage system, no legal landfill, an inadequate water system, bad roads and old run-down school buildings. The CCMC has found that state laws and regulations are standing in the way of meaningful tax reform, so they joined forces recently with people in seven other eastern Kentucky counties, and the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition was born. By way of workshops, mass mailings, newspaper articles and so forth, the new coalition is gearing up to put tax inequities on the agenda of the 1982 session of the Kentucky legislature. The goals are to maximize local control of the taxation process, explore different kinds of mineral taxation (the severance tax, for example), be the people's watchdog over the state revenue department and generally resolve the systematic problems that lie at the state level. At the same time the coalition encourages local groups to apply the pressure needed to get new, fair assessments within their own counties and to oversee local revenues until every landowner is paying a fair share. □



Knott Countians celebrate their land seizure with a picnic and music.

Photo by Cathy Stanley

T

ake back the land

Jackie Van Anda

Most members of the Land Ownership Task Force agree that fairer taxes or more favorable leases will not solve the deepest problems caused by concentrated and absentee ownership of land and minerals. Their report calls for fundamental land reform "by which people of the region can gain more access to, control over and benefit from the land and its resources."

Meanwhile, some people have taken matters into their own hands. Jackie Van Anda, who has been covering one such story for Mountain Life and Work, tells what a Kentucky family has done.

Stories of Appalachian families losing their land to speculators or coal companies without their consent, or even their knowledge, are told wherever one turns in the mountains. Now, though, one family in Knott County is fighting to get its land back. Descendants of David Kelts (D.K.) Shepherd have laid claim to 700 acres and are prepared to prove that their land was never legally sold to anyone.

In April, 1980, the heirs, led by Mart Shepherd, set up a tent on the property and began informing the timber and gas crews working there that the land was theirs and that the work crews did not have the owners' consent to be on it. Gas, coal and

timber companies have claimed the mineral rights on the land for years, but the Shepherd family didn't occupy their land until they were convinced it was rightfully theirs. They spent more than two years poring over county land records and doing title searches to get their evidence.

Mart Shepherd explains, "When the power company first came in about three years ago, they went around asking about the land and who owned it so they could buy a right-of-way. So they looked up the deed and it had belonged to D.K. Shepherd, my grandfather.

"We hired an attorney to research the deeds in the county courthouse

and found out that D.K. Shepherd had settled there in 1862. He owned 11 different tracts under 11 different patents. He had eight children. D.K. died in 1890." Shortly thereafter, the family moved away, with most members going toward Hazard, close to the coal camps. One son, Joseph, settled in Lotts Creek. He was Mart's father, and he died in 1930.

"All kinds of discrepancies were found in the old records and deeds," says Shepherd. "Some deeds were completely handwritten with the heirs' names all listed at the end in the same handwriting. The names have Xs by them, but there were no witnesses and it never identifies even who wrote the deed. The further we went, we began to get interested in doing more, and as we finished researching one tract of land we would go on to another. We found that speculators from the land companies back then were taking deeds, signatures or whatever from anybody they could get it from. We are disputing mineral, timber and surface rights to at least three tracts of land up on Buckhorn Mountain.

"Star Fire Coal Company claims coal rights to 2,100 acres of land surrounding, and sometimes including, the Shepherd land. The timber company says they got timber rights from Star Fire. The Kentucky-West Virginia Gas Company, who just finished laying pipe for a well they recently dug on the property [just before the heirs moved on], says they leased the gas rights from the Goodloe Brothers, outside speculators who claimed the land."

When the Shepherds first moved onto the land, they notified the companies that they were claiming their rights. The timber company immediately pulled its equipment out, but the gas and coal companies continue to fight the family's stake.

Soon after a September, 1981, picnic the heirs held to celebrate their land challenge, Star Fire built a guard station in the middle of a road leading to the Shepherd land, and armed guards refused entrance to anyone whose name was not on their approved list.

It wasn't the first time the companies had tried to keep the Shepherds off their land. In June, 1980, the Kentucky-West Virginia Gas Company put a gate on another entrance to the property, but a judge soon ruled that

no gates should be blocking that road.

Then, early in 1981, Star Fire's parent company, Harbert Construction (now owned by Amoco Minerals, Inc., the coal subsidiary of Standard Oil of Indiana), reportedly hired 20-plus security guards to keep out "rough folks" at a third entrance to the property. They were there, supposedly, to protect electric lines being installed for Star Fire's strip-mining equipment, but a Knott County judge ordered them to remove the guards in May.

And family members must go to court again to have yet another gate removed. This one, locked with a gas company lock, has blocked access to the property since the fall of 1981.

"Star Fire was up there again today," reported one of the heirs in mid-November, "trying to put a gate on our back entrance. One of the heirs up there asked him to leave, but they came back, pretending to be gas company employees. We made it clear they weren't to come back again."

The Shepherd case is not an isolated one. Since the Shepherds got started and got some publicity, other families have been researching their land titles. At least five families, including 2,000 heirs, are claiming some 3,000 coal-rich acres in Knott County that they say belong not to the coal companies but to them.

"It's all over — half of Knott County's that way. The coal companies never did have a clear deed to it," says Mart Shepherd.

All these families have had help in learning their way around the county's land records from the Knott County Citizens for Social and Economic Justice (CSEJ), a group organized in 1973 by several low-income families concerned about a variety of economic and political issues. Mart Shepherd has been active since the beginning and was its chairman for several years. It's been a local fight, waged by local people. But the importance of what they are doing is not lost on people throughout Appalachia. The Knott County CSEJ has gotten support for its work from the Council of the Southern Mountains, a regional group to which it belongs. And their efforts have inspired many other organizations. As Mike Maloney of the Urban Appalachian Council put it in a letter to the Shepherds, "It is because of your courage that many of us in the cities can even dream of returning to the land of our mothers and fathers, now claimed in the massive land holdings of the big energy and development companies."

What seems to lie ahead are still more disputes over land access and titles, disputes that have grown more intense recently as the Shepherd family has begun leasing out the mineral rights to their land. It's estimated that their property may include millions of tons of coal reserves.

"This all reminds me of those shows you see about the California Gold Rush," says Mart Shepherd. "This land thing is one of the biggest things that I have ever run across in Appalachia." □

THE BEANS

Are climbing everywhere. I haven't staked them and they're latching onto whatever will help them grow; the handle of the rake I left out all night; the front wheel of the old rusted machine by the fence line; the tall weeds behind them; each other.

And their desperate pushing is faintly crazy. In the way we are all crazy when we try to remember where it was that this happened before in just this way. Like a suicide rummaging for razor blades, a deaf man teaching himself to whistle.

— Maggie Anderson



This has gone far enough

David Liden

"Somewhere way back we lost ourselves. I think it was when the companies bought up the land."

— a West Virginia farmer

Stories of how the land was lost are a powerful component of the oral history of Appalachia, and they flesh out the statistical data in the Appalachian Land Ownership Study. In county after county, we heard about ownership rights clouded by mysterious courthouse fires, phony quitclaim deeds foisted on ancestors, questionable historical patents re-emerging in company hands, "sales" by widows when authentic heirship had passed to the children, uncounted mineral wealth traded for sewing machines, forged deeds, paltry royalties on leases negotiated generations ago, unrestricted access to severed mineral estates by strip miners and oil and gas drillers.

This kind of testimony, in combination with facts documented in the study, can now engender an Appalachian native rights consciousness and encourage local people to resist the enveloping corporate and absentee land control and defend their cultural, social and economic integrity.

Local people are learning fast that land ownership configurations are really power configurations, and they are gaining confidence in their own right to the land. They are beginning to sort through the complex web of relationships that makes this kind of analysis so elusive. In the words of the West Virginia report, "The real villain

is a style of politics established and maintained by external domination . . . yet the submission demanded by the colonial nature of corporate needs is eroding and giving way to an often dramatic enthusiasm for reform."

"I want all the corporations to leave the county. That would get rid of all the crooked politicians and enable people to control the land and their lives again. These corporations just stole the minerals from a lot of people. I believe, though, that stolen land could be got back if enough people would get together."

— an elderly resident of West Virginia

A number of local groups and individuals have taken the coding methodology developed in the land study and begun their own courthouse research. Soil conservation and agricultural groups are promoting plans to control development rights and restrict corporate acquisition of family farms. Some are working on tax reform (see article on page 49). Still other new coalitions and the Appalachian caucuses of several church denominations are committed to more stringent regulations and protection of the use of surface land and water and to increases in liability of corporate owners for damage to the land. As a result, strip mining and reclamation are being closely monitored, plans to strip-mine for oil shale have

been exposed, and new laws are being drafted to expand surface owners' rights.

"West Virginia is used to being exploited by outsiders whether they come from Philadelphia or Japan. . . . We are in sad need of land reform. We have haciendas, we just don't call them that."

— a West Virginia resident

A number of groups are also beginning to address the need to regain control of the land lost to the corporate and absentee interests long ago. They are arguing that no oil and gas drilling should be allowed without the permission of the surface owner. They are working toward nullification of leases with grossly unfair terms and those that have been violated by the lessee. Some people are simply moving back onto land that was stolen from them (see article on page 50).

Ultimately, though, Appalachians must challenge and qualify the concept of private property itself. They must enter a realm of conflicting rights — the traditional sanctity of private property must be balanced against the right to safe and plentiful housing, the right of protection from pollution, flooding, erosion and toxic substances, and the right of communities to grow and plan for the future.

In some cases the Appalachian Land Ownership Study has been the catalyst for organizing; in others it has served as an affirmation. In West Virginia, it has created a rare occasion for the state's biggest newspaper, the *Charleston Gazette*, to agree with concerned community groups: "We join with the Task Force in deploring the spreading corporate ownership and its effect on the people. Additionally, we believe that outside ownership and its attendant influence . . . which has overshadowed the whole history of this state, has gone far enough."

As always, though, a local farmer says it best: "You know what happened in other countries when they got to where we're headed. They redistributed the land. We've got to do that." □

David Liden works for the Southern West Virginia Land Reform Project. He was coordinator of the West Virginia Task Force for the land study.

Is your school doing its job?

Lessons from the Foxfire Experience

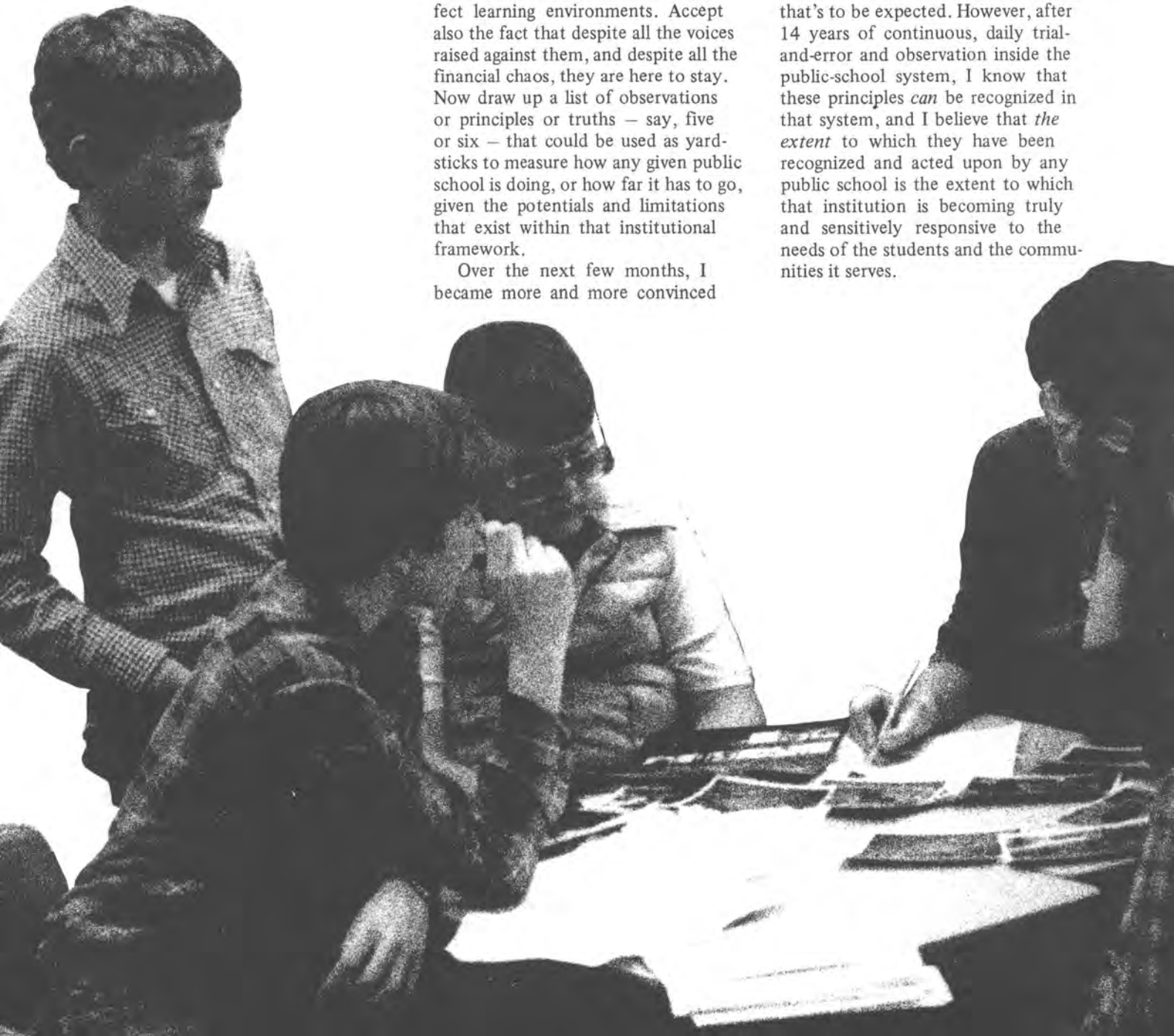
Eliot Wigginton

I constantly find myself in awkward situations. Among the most uncomfortable are those in which I have accepted an invitation to a public school, and I'm asked for advice. I usually refuse, simply because I don't know the situation well enough (and wouldn't if I stayed a month). But recently, over coffee, a new friend and I sat down and half in jest, half seriously, posed the following:

Accept for the moment the fact that public schools will never be perfect learning environments. Accept also the fact that despite all the voices raised against them, and despite all the financial chaos, they are here to stay. Now draw up a list of observations or principles or truths — say, five or six — that could be used as yardsticks to measure how any given public school is doing, or how far it has to go, given the potentials and limitations that exist within that institutional framework.

Over the next few months, I became more and more convinced

that this idea of a checklist was a workable notion. I present it here, realizing that most of these principles are old truths “rediscovered” again and again, but realizing also that most schools still have a long way to go toward implementing them, and so they bear repeating. The 950-pupil consolidated public high school in which I teach, for example, has not, and undoubtedly will not, move wholesale to translate a list like this into action. None of the schools in which I have visited will either. I guess that's to be expected. However, after 14 years of continuous, daily trial-and-error and observation inside the public-school system, I know that these principles *can* be recognized in that system, and I believe that *the extent* to which they have been recognized and acted upon by any public school is the extent to which that institution is becoming truly and sensitively responsive to the needs of the students and the communities it serves.



Students must be allowed to have a constructive impact on their surroundings and be entrusted with the power to make real decisions.

1 Every detail in the physical environment of a school, no matter how small, matters and contributes in a cumulative way to the overall tone.

Recently I taught an experimental course of five students. Because there were no classrooms available during that period, we “floated” from day to day from one available space to another. One of the rooms we used from time to time was a small windowless conference room that was almost womblike in its isolation from the rest of the school environment. Every time those students and I were in that room, their behavior was significantly different from their norm. It was almost as though they were lobotomized. Only through great effort were we able to break through that listless, unemotional trance and carry on some form of discussion. In another environment — one with windows and space and air — they were completely different people. Somehow the combination of colors, windowless walls, isolation and the incessant buzzing of the fluorescent lighting transformed us in a noticeable way. How many other teachers struggle with students daily and assume the problems they are having are due to the students, or themselves, and forget the impact of environment on behavior?

On a more obvious level, classrooms with desks (often covered with graffiti) bolted to the floor, bathrooms with doorless stalls, shared locker spaces, indifferent food served indifferently, a gym that doubles as an auditorium with impossible acoustics and demonic seating arrangements, raucous bell systems, intercoms used inconsiderately, all in fortresslike institutional structures with endless cement block halls and bulldozed, paved surroundings devoted more to

efficient crowd control and total lack of privacy (read “trouble”) than anything else — all such elements conspire to create an atmosphere that is alien, dehumanizing, intimidating and filled with an undercurrent of frustration.

Despite our given environments, there are plenty of solutions available once the problems with them are realized. The possibility of solutions, however, must be seen as a series of priceless opportunities to bring the second principle into play.

2 Students must be allowed a measure of control over that environment, and a degree of decision-making responsibility within it.

If this is ignored, the natural and healthy tendency students have to exert some influence over their surroundings manifests itself in ways teachers and administrators find unacceptable, and much of their energy is spent in pitched battles with students over “classroom management” and in sleuthing out those responsible for vandalism and litter. The amount of “antisocial” behavior in a school is often directly proportional to the amount of hostility students feel toward an institution that is not responding to their needs as human beings.

The most obvious place to begin is at the classroom level. In most high-school classrooms, the norm, except for the blackboard and bulletin board, is totally blank walls and bland colors. (Walk into the only environment a child can call his or her own — usually a bedroom at home — and compare.) In our classroom, when students wanted to fill the walls

with photographs, letters, documents, county maps and quilts — all items appropriate to our work — they were given permission by the principal as long as they did not stick anything or mount anything on the walls that might damage the paint. Undaunted, they eased up several of the suspended ceiling’s tiles, hung long wooden dowel rods from wires they attached to the steel girders above, replaced the tiles undamaged, and hung the quilts and display panels from the rods. The walls remain unscarred. While some classrooms nearby have sustained heavy damage from random student vandalism, ours has not suffered at all. The room is ablaze with color and life and energy, and has become a *working environment* that accurately reflects the amount of energy and commitment that is expended there.

In another school, as part of the curriculum, students in the home-economics classes work with their teacher and the dieticians to create the school’s menus, and then rotate for a week at a time through the kitchen to help prepare and serve those meals and make them as attractive and palatable as possible, using their imaginations to find ways around the budget they have to work with, and other institutional restrictions.

Allowing students to have a constructive impact on their surroundings in ways like the above is important, but it is not nearly enough. They must also be entrusted with the power to make real decisions that affect far more than the physical environment. For example, in the *Foxfire* magazine classes Margie Bennett and I conduct, the students decide individually all details concerning their own articles (for which they do all the interviews, take and print all the photographs,

etc.) and collectively decide such items as what the magazine's cover design and colors will be — seemingly mundane decisions, but for students who have never had experience in making such choices, enormously important. These experiences become part of their normal English curriculum and part of their daily routine. The same pattern is followed in the other classes we sponsor where students produce record albums, radio shows, television shows, active and passive solar collectors and public exhibitions of photography. Their decisions affect not only the final product, but also such things as the specific budgets those classes will operate under given the financial resources available to us at the time.

There are parallels here that can be extended to any school as a whole. Each day, in every school in the nation, scores of decisions are made by the principal and assistant principal that affect the movements and activities of students within. Often these decisions are made by adults *not* because they refuse to believe students could make them just as well, but because it is so much more expedient to make them themselves. And they're right. But one of our mandates is to help students learn to make responsible choices, and the fact is that schools, as microcosms of society, can be perfect learning laboratories for building these skills. It is somewhat less convenient, but schools built for the convenience of adults are often schools where little learning takes place.

I am not advocating — as in some alternative schools — that students make *all* decisions, including such things as whether or not a teacher should be fired. That would place an impossibly heavy load on students'



Margie Bennett (standing) helps Donna Bradshaw select photos for her Foxfire article.

shoulders. Nor am I advocating the situation where students are allowed to make token, sham decisions of no consequence as a means of tricking them into believing they have some "say" in order to help keep them under control. I am advocating real responsibility of the best type that is *possible* within a normal public school, which is, granted, a controlled situation where adults will always be "in charge," but where they can also be regarded by their students as allies and mentors and guides rather than the opposite.

How could the process work? One way might be for each homeroom to elect, on a rotating basis, a representative who would attend the weekly teachers' meetings. At these meetings, in addition to normal business (and, frankly, I can't think of a single meeting I've been to in recent memory where something was dis-

cussed that students should not be allowed to hear, but they could always be excused if such matters arose), the principal and assistant principal would outline those items that needed student body action. The students in attendance would ask as many questions as necessary to make sure they could present all the facts and ramifications to their homerooms as accurately as possible. Then, during homeroom periods each morning, the student representatives would present the issues one by one, lead the discussions and take the vote. The homeroom teachers would be there to help students over snags. Votes from the homerooms would all be tallied by student groups as they were reported, and decisions, as completed, would be carried to the front office for announcement and implementation. The student newspaper would regularly report all tallies, along with

Courses should be rooted in the real world, and the school and the community should be as one.

needed clarifications and explanations.

What decisions would be made? An enlightened principal could easily get an idea simply by listing all decisions made in the course of one week at the administrative level, and then looking at the list. Much of it would consist of business concerning pep rallies, club meetings, test schedules, lunch schedules, disciplinary restrictions, smoking-area regulations and the like, all of which lend themselves easily to student input. As the process became established, teachers and students would begin to identify other areas that would justify student choice. In fact, once a certain public-school mind set is overcome, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify issues and decisions in which the students should *not* be directly involved. Excuses for not involving them even in matters as serious as strategies for dealing with teen-age pregnancy or alcohol and drug abuse begin to sound hollow and defensive.

The fact is that students in possession of accurate information are far more skillful, responsible, creative and moral in making and carrying out decisions than most adults are willing to admit. Schools trying this for the first time sometimes give up in frustration from a feeling that the students aren't being responsible enough — that the students are "playing with them." The schools give up too easily. Invariably, these are schools where, usually for good reason, the students refuse to believe that their collective voice is going to be taken seriously. They are playing with the school because they feel that the school is, once again, playing with them. It takes time and patience — a slow forging of an atypical alliance between young people and adults — and it's worth every ounce of energy it takes.

3 All courses, to the fullest extent possible, should be experiential — rooted in the real.

A friend of mine has a young son who just completed a ninth-grade unit in botany. Not once did the class go outdoors. Not once did the teacher bring plant materials in. The entire course was taught from a text. The fact that any teacher in 1982, given all we know about education, would be allowed to — or even choose to — teach a unit like *botany* in that fashion is grounds for parent/student revolt.

Teachers must constantly ask themselves how material they are covering can be brought to life and application in the real world for the benefit of the students involved and for the ultimate benefit of the larger society they will enter. If teachers cannot, or will not, make those linkages, the course should probably not be taught at all.

Let me give another example. One of my students brought along an American history text during a recent trip to speak at an educational conference. He was studying for a test. One of the sections he had to learn concerned Spanish monasteries that were established during an early period in our history for the purpose of converting Indians to Christianity and to the Spanish way of life and to loyalty to the Crown. Now, the course over, that student tells me that he remembers nothing of that section of the book; he only remembers the motel room in which he studied it. The teacher completely missed a priceless opportunity to open up that piece of history and bring it to life through numerous real-world linkages that the students could have researched first-hand: the implicit arrogance, for

example, of the missionary's calling, and the moral dilemma of imposing one value system on another; to say nothing of the effects of all agents of cultural change at work on that student's family, community and throughout the Appalachian region yesterday and today; and the real — sometimes positive, sometimes negative — effect such people and organizations have on any indigenous group of people anywhere. Weeks could easily have been spent following that aspect of our history, and the fact that many of the events of the past have resulted from the desire of individuals or groups to exert dominance or influence over others. It has gone on throughout the past, it is going on today (students can witness that process in any peer group and community in this nation, and by extension come to a more focused understanding even of national and world affairs), and it will continue through all the tomorrows that we have left.

How will this particular student deal with that fact as an adult? When confronted by injustice, for example, will he shrug his shoulders and rationalize events and turn away, or stand for what he knows is a more moral and humane course of action in the world? He came no closer to a decision of any sort in that history course — in fact, he never saw how the material his class was covering applied to him at all — but he should have. Why else study history?

It has been shown through projects all over this country that experiential components can be built into every subject area of the curriculum, not in place of the academic aspects of the course or the basic skills, but as one of the few ways through which students master those skills and internalize them by having the chance



Decisions concerning Foxfire magazine are made by the student editors in the class, working in groups.

to put them to work. Demanding academic rigor is justifiable, but reaching for it through numerous new kits, packages, drills and tests usually defeats the purpose – creating, instead, students who simply respond more quickly to certain stimuli – like Pavlov’s dogs – but who know not a whit more about the world outside the school, the use of those skills within the world or learning as an independent and lifelong passion. What we too often get for our money is a better class of robots.

4 The school and the community should be as one. Far more than simply using the community as a laboratory, or allowing the school facilities to be used by the community in the evenings and during vacations, students and teachers must be engaged directly with the community-at-large, forging two-way relationships that not only educate, but also endure and make a difference in the quality of life.

One of the most distressing facts I encounter in every school I work with is how ignorant teachers are of the community from which their students are drawn. The teachers can sometimes recite some basic historical facts and figures and the results of some government surveys, but they

know few people on a first-name basis.

This fall, for example, one of my students and I worked for several days as consultants to an urban high school in a decaying city where a group of teachers was interested in talking about and perhaps implementing some of the things we have tried. After working with them and their classes for a day, their consensus was that nothing we had talked about would work in their setting. For one thing, they claimed, there wasn’t anything good about the surrounding community to celebrate, and everyone who lived there was dreaming of the day when he or she could move away. In the second place, there was so much hostility, anger and fear that adults would be afraid to talk with students, and the students would be too fearful of their own safety to explore the area.

Believing that in a situation of this nature there is more need than ever to attend to this particular principle, I suggested we try an interview anyway. None of the teachers or students could think of a soul who would be willing to come into the school, so a school librarian who had lived there all her life was invited. Since none of the teachers could demonstrate interviewing techniques, I spent several hours training a volunteer group of about 20 students,

stressing that if anything else were to be done along these lines, members of that group would have to be the teachers.

At the appointed time, the librarian arrived, apprehensive and a little stiff (“I can’t stay long; I’m very busy”), and the students arranged themselves in a semicircle around her and went to work. The teachers stayed in the background and observed. After about 15 minutes, I could feel the mood changing as the woman relaxed and the prearranged questions of the students began to drop away and be replaced by amazed, genuine inquiries. She talked about such things as the goats she had raised as a child in the pasture where the city-block-huge school now stood, and how the gradual influx of new racial and age populations had begun to polarize and fragment what had been a cohesive community. The students were fascinated as they began to see her as a completely different human being from the one they had known previously in her professional role only.

After 45 minutes, the pace had not slowed a bit, but since the bell was about to ring, I interrupted to ask the librarian, with the students present, how she thought things had gone. She admitted honestly that she was amazed at the quality and obvious sincerity of the students’ questions. When I asked if she knew other people in the community who would be willing to undergo the same thing,



After each interview, students transcribe the tape recordings made during it. Here Pam Nix (left) and Randy McFalls check the transcription of an interview they did with Pam's grandmother, Lillian Nix.

she said there were many.

There may be other ways to deal with hostilities and suspicions, but offhand I don't know of a better way than getting people talking together face to face, beginning to know each other for the first time, beginning to correct misconceptions and prejudices about each other, and beginning to explore together the reasons why the community is now in a siege mentality, and the strategies available for turning that around. It's hard to think of a more perfect setting for what could be one of the most fascinating and valuable high-school courses ever, set up to explore what conditions must exist for people to be able to live and work productively and positively together. It would take patience and time to implement, but the alternative is to leave all the barricades standing.

Students are basically moral — quick to recognize injustice and prejudice, and, in the proper atmosphere, to challenge them. With their peer group, they sometimes make a great show about hating this or that group or race, but for most young people, those statements have not yet hardened into adult convictions.

Better still, once moved, they are willing to take action for what they believe is right. A student and I worked as consultants in a Midwestern high school, and we discovered, within

easy walking distance of the school, a historic feed mill in operation that was about to be torn down, as it was in the path of a new highway project. The local students I was working with had never done interviews in the community before (despite the fact that they were enrolled in a history course), and so we started with the mill. One of the former owners told us its history while the students tape-recorded and took black-and-white photographs and color slides — all for the first time. Then the new owner described the battle he was waging with the highway department, told us why he had decided to take a stand against all odds, and showed us the petitions he was circulating in the city.

As we left, the students wanted to sign one of the petitions, but their local history teacher, who had been along as an observer, refused to let them. Her fear was that some school-board members might favor the highway project, and she was afraid of repercussions. We left, the students visibly disappointed, and the teacher, I believe, regretful and feeling a little guilty. Such are school politics.

The next day, on the way to the airport, I asked our driver to stop by the mill so that my student and I, at least, could sign one of the petitions. We went in and I asked for one,

and the owner apologized, saying that he hadn't had a chance to have new ones printed yet, but they were ordered. I asked what had happened to the stack of blank ones he had had the day before. "Well, you know those kids that were in here with you?" he asked. "When school let out, they came back with their friends and took every blank one I had. They said they were going to get them all signed and bring them back."

The school and the community must marry. We've only begun the courtship, but already students in our classes, through the creation of visible end products created within, about and with the cooperation and involvement of the surrounding towns, keep the residents in our area constantly involved in their work. Television shows Mike Cook and his students create are broadcast daily over the county cable TV network. In fact, students run the cable TV studio as part of their academic work. Radio shows that students create are broadcast locally. *Foxfire* magazine is constantly visible, as are the record albums that come out of George Reynolds's classroom. Bob Bennett's environmental class recently displayed the solar collectors they had designed and built in the parking lot of the local bank, and Paul Gillespie's photography classes mount regular exhibitions of their work in the lobby of the same bank. When a group of my students helped a class of sixth-graders design

Refuse to accept the status quo. With sensitive leadership, public schools can nourish exciting and creative environments.

and build a low-cost playground at their elementary school, the local newspaper devoted three pages of text and photographs to that project. (The willingness and ability of students to get involved in such ways, and their passion for doing so, has been documented hundreds of times by the National Commission of Resources for Youth [36 West 44th St., New York, NY 10036]. You might want to receive their newsletter.)

5 There should be an atmosphere inside the school, fostered by the principal, of fermentation, excitement and anticipation – the feeling that something is *happening* that is good and worth being a part of – all laced with a generous dose of the unexpected.

In many schools principals allow themselves to become so buried in the day-to-day minutiae of maintaining the status quo that they despair of ever having time to do anything else. Perhaps asking more of them is asking too much, but in schools where principals dream in broad strokes and lead and inspire in such ways, breaking out of the day-to-day and forcing a sense of forward motion and experimentation, the school is transformed in a magical way.

One of the most vivid illustrations I can give of this sort of schoolwide experimentation (or craziness, if you will) happened recently in our school for the first time when our organization, in association with the school librarian and her staff, and with the cooperation of the principal and all the teachers, sponsored a three-day celebration of community resources. With the exception of two-period blocks each day for activities that the entire student body witnessed (con-

certs, plays, etc.), every class on every day was visited by a person from the community who could bring what was being studied in that classroom to life. An American history class was studying the Depression at the time, and so the people that visited that class were ones who could add a human, here-in-Rabun-County orientation to the study of that subject. They were people who, for example, had worked in CCC camps and on WPA projects in the area, and even included Roosevelt's Under Secretary of Agriculture, who lives in our county and was able to give a fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at that period of time in a way a text never could. A chemistry class was visited by a chemist from the local Burlington carpet mill who demonstrated the mixing of chemical dyes and talked about the role of chemistry in his work. A biology class was visited by a beekeeper who came with all the tools of his trade; an English class studying poetry, by a local songwriter; a drafting class, by an architect; a business class, by a secretary; a government class, by our local state representative; a small engine repair class, by a man who makes his living in that field – and so on, in every class, for three days. Hundreds of community residents were involved in a coordinated assault that kept the students in a state of anticipation and excitement I had never seen before – an invasion of the fortress that people in this area are still talking about. During an evaluation period the following week, 953 students (out of 956) and every teacher said they would like to see the same thing happen again the following school year. Since then, teachers who had never before invited community residents to work with them have been doing so with regularity.

Some of you – teachers, students, principals, parents, librarians, school-board members, custodians, grandparents and the like – may be tempted to use these five principles in evaluating your own school. May I offer two cautions?

First, use my yardstick as exactly that – a measuring device, not a road map. Different kinds of activities that evolve from your own situation's soil *will* (and perhaps already do) serve you far better than carbon copies of those developed by others. In fact, sometimes the developing and the testing of a new idea becomes as much a solution as the final project itself.

Second, the principles I advocate are evolutionary and based on personal observation. Change them. Challenge them. Add to them.

Above all, move. Refuse to accept the status quo. *Know* that despite the fact that public schools are less than perfect learning environments, within them exciting and creative environments can be nourished where genuine learning does take place; with sensitive leadership those environments can spread within the system to infect the whole and to embrace the surrounding communities and the larger community to the ultimate benefit of all. □

Eliot Wigginton teaches high school in Rabun Gap, Georgia, and edits the Foxfire series for Doubleday/Anchor Books, which are taken from the student magazine by the same name. A longer version of this essay appears in Foxfire 6 and is used here by permission of the author.

THE STORY OF THURNELL ALSTON

by **Melissa Fay Greene**

The town flattens under the white sky of midsummer. In the restaurants, coke-water sits in the uncollected glasses. Government employees quietly shut their office doors and doze, their belts unloosed. Secretaries tiptoe in their stocking feet along linoleum hallways to the soda machines. In the air-conditioned, magnolia-shaded houses, white women will pull closed the curtains of their bedrooms and browse through a mail-order catalogue; and black women out in the kitchen will sit down and eat leftover meatloaf off a paper napkin, with the soap operas going.

But there is nothing to *do*, and all the families feel it, except perhaps the families whose pink-cheeked children head out to college in Statesboro or Atlanta. For the rest, the beaming senior portraits get dusty and are packed away, and the manila programs from commencement end up as coasters for beer bottles.

In the country, the dirt yards bake. There is the sound of gasoline chainsaws, but the fields along old U.S. 17 are pock-marked by gravel piles and weeds. Summer vacationers in air-conditioned cars once looked at the roadside families through closed car windows: families on kitchen chairs in the yards, shelling peas. Now, few tourists cruise the town for its fish houses, antique stores and Spanish moss. A new interstate – 10 miles west of old highway 17 – arches above McIntosh County and shoots toward Miami and Disney World. The cool four-door cars from the North choose the super-route where they are serviced efficiently by Howard Johnsons, Stuckeys and Gulf. Only mishaps or confusion will pull them to the old two-lane, the bottomland, where they scrape along like rescue-crews dragging a river, grim-faced and pessimistic. The local pickup trucks line up, like steers at a trough, outside the Eulonia convenience store – shotguns bar their rear windows. In the Dairy Queen, bouffant-haired waitresses mother the high school football players and lower paper plates of the Bar-B-Q specials before them where they lounge in the booths. Two hundred miles of coastal pine trees rake the dry sky.

The U.S. 17 motel owners douse their establishments with pink or lime-green paint, and the Tourism Department plants signs that urge: Stay and See Georgia. But the lawns crack and yellow, the windows blur, the neon signs burn out. Women in the nickel postcards wear ponytails and ankle-length skirts, and the aging waitresses lean on their damp sponges and reminisce. Half the guests at Plantation Estates, or the Old South Manor, are shrimp or lumber businessmen who eat the diet lunches and leave after a night. The other half are near-forgotten children, down to

claim an inheritance and see an old relative buried, or to show off a Northern spouse and kids. The last flamingoes topple and lie rusting in the driveways.

The old highway becomes a long hot daydream of Florida. At night the motel owners dream about the shiny cars and New England families whooshing south on the interstate, and the vigil continues with daylight, and finally they sell their places or board them up, and move to mobile home parks along Palm Beach. There they wait for the red beach crowds to sate their yearning. The timberland is purchased by paper companies and felled sparingly, and time or pollution thins the shrimp crop and slows the canning factories.

But the county holds.

July, 1971

Ed Finch showered at the factory and came cruising out of Darien at dark, rich with aftershave. He was easing on the brakes near his girlfriend's house when his stomach clenched — before his mind realized — there was a patrol car in her front yard. He whirled off the road, left his lights on and door open, and came hop-running across the highway into the yard, half-tripped over the barking mongrel and stumbled toward the porch toward the chief of police.

Hutchinson filled the doorway. "Now you can turn around and go back where you came from," said the white man.

Like that, Finch knew, breathing hard.

"If you don't *get*, I'll have to arrest you," said the smiling white man.

"What you here for?" said Finch.

"I done told you to get out of here," said Hutchinson, and casually, the way he would toss a softball, he pitched a tear-gas canister at the man's face. Finch stood amazed in the smoke. Hutchinson stepped into the yard and closed a handcuff around Finch's wrist; the black man started to fall backward, reaching behind him. Hutchinson later said he saw the handle of a hoe in the dirt so he took out his pistol and stuck it in Finch's mouth and shot him, shattering his jaw.

The family room was dark and blue with television light and the sleepy boys circled, rubbing their eyes. They kissed Mama goodnight with their toothpaste mouths, then Daddy, then roamed off to bed. While Becca picked up milk glasses and saucers from around the room, they heard cars crackling on the gravel driveway and a gathering murmur at the front door. Men were talking and banging the glass. "Thurnell!" whispered Becca and

she moved toward the boys' room until she heard his name called outside: "Thurnell! Thurnell!" They opened the door to a crowd of neighbors and kin, redlipped in the dark, tearful, and furious. "They done shot Finch," they said, entering, taking off their caps and nodding to Becca. They stood around the kitchen table attentive as soldiers. When the little boys assembled at the kitchen door in their pajamas, the men lifted and held them, and Becca gave each a cookie, absently. They grinned at each other over the men's backs, at the late hour.

At midnight throughout the county, with voices and lamps low, men oiled their guns. In the morning they drove into town, a slow cortege of station wagons and trucks, and their numbers increased at every side road and driveway. Two hundred black men waited for the mayor at City Hall; their circle of cars and trucks was ringed by a larger circle where white men sat watching through their windshields, shotguns across their laps.

A white man strolled up to Thurnell and advised: "I hope you all ain't gonna start no stuff, because the sheriff done authorized the stores not to sell no ammunition to no blacks." He nodded at the black men, turned, and walked off. Then there was bitter laughter among the black men as the story was handed down the line. "They think we come all the way *here*? from all over the *county*? *carrying* guns, and ain't got no ammunition?!" They laughed at the notion of black men politely lining up by the hundreds to purchase cartridges from the white stores.

The mayor arrived disheveled from his job at the docks, and he waved at the whites in the pickup trucks to calm them, and led the silent black men up the stairs to his office. They faced him grimly. Thurnell said they wanted the chief of police removed from office pending investigation of the incident. Of course, yes, said the mayor, ruffling his desk papers. We appreciate your concern. We'll give you a call.

They trooped back downstairs, went to their trucks amid jeers, and drove home to pull anxious wives from the phone and learn that Ed Finch had been arrested.

"That was a breaking point for me," said Thurnell Alston later. "There wasn't no excuse. If I'm that close to you with a .38, I'll knock you over the head with it."

Ed Finch was tried for resisting arrest and served four months' imprisonment. Chief Hutchinson was removed temporarily from patrol duty.

Afterwards, the smallest things stung Thurnell: a heavy-faced blonde cashier plunged coins into his

hands without looking at him, and stuffed his ground beef and jello fast into the bag and shoved it from her. So he glanced behind him, as if called to, at the row of tired white girls in striped uniforms. And turned again in the parking lot, astride dark puddles and spilled cereal, to look at the front of the store. Neon blazing, plastered with signs, it blanched the night sky.

It froze him, too, walking downtown and sensing himself sidestepped by plump secretaries and housewives doing errands. Or to be hailed, heartily, by the white men who knew him: "Hey there Thurnell! How you getting on?" while they plied their lips with toothpicks, and he smelled the gold salt of catfish on them and knew they'd lunched at Archie's, where he'd never been except before desegregation, when he'd been to the side door.

Or he'd steer, almost accidentally, down a black-topped residential street in Darien on his way to pick up the boys from baseball. Accidentally, without forethought: streets trellised with oak leaves, sunlight jittery among them, and the wind sweet with peach and honeysuckle. The houses were sober and columned, and birdbaths like Grecian fountains stood in the grass.

He could feel, if not actually see, pin-striped young men home at 5:30, unbending tall from a bright Audi, welcomed by the cheers of a five-year-old or coos of a slim wife gliding along an oak hallway from her all-electric kitchen.

Pain quenched any desire in him. Not for him.

Home in the sluggish heat to find Becca and a friend propped against pillows in the dark family room, while a blurry Lone Ranger galloped over rocks. Faces damp with heat, bare feet flattening their houseshoes.

"You want dinner, Thurnell?" said Becca.

"Oh let me get up," said the friend and struggled erect: a short obese woman with painful veins and ankles, she worked in the shrimp factory. "Hey Thurnell," she said vaguely and went out, softly scuffing.

May, 1975

The only black member of the school board retired. Black ministers, teachers and parents sent a plague of letters to the grand jury, pleading that a black man or woman be appointed to replace the black man. In response, the grand jury, all white, appointed a white man. So the question arose: who appointed the grand jury?

Thurnell Alston, Sam Pinckney and Reverend Nathaniel Grovner organized a meeting.



Illustrations by Patricia Ford

June, 1975

First they met in garages. They circled around garden hoses and metal barrels in the grey and cobwebbed light. A hundred people gathered quietly, and there was immediate alliance among them, simply for having ducked out of the midday sun into the queer, grimy darkness. Men with crossed arms were crowded back into the cement walls and onto hanging rakes and shovels, obligingly, like men in an elevator. They paid a dollar apiece and elected officers. They made modest proposals into the dusty air and skinny, spectacled Reverend Nathaniel Grovner printed them on a pad with a magic marker: Black Representation on the School Board, More Police Protection at School Crossings, Recreation Programs for All Children of the County, More Paved Streets. Folks shook hands all around when the meeting adjourned. Then several were stopped by police on the way home and berated for drunken driving. "Been to a meeting?" the policemen asked.

So they moved to a church social hall and gathered every warm cricket-filled night. They sat on folding chairs under the basketball hoops, and their voices echoed off the vast floor and tiled walls. A nonchalance rooted in Thurnell, and he hauled in crates of Cokes and bags of cookies, and served the old people tea in styrofoam cups. Night after night, in the neon light, with green summer darkness humming at the open doors, they made a reckoning: in a county 50 percent black, there was no black mayor, city council member or county commissioner. There was no black sheriff, judge or jury member, and never had been. No black store owner, clerk, salesperson or cashier. In the poorest county in the state, there were no black employees at welfare or Social Security, or at the fire department or the post office. Or at the phone company, the power company, the courthouse or the convenience store. They pounded the tables with their litany. They shouted at one another.

He came home drenched and hoarse every night for a summer. He stood alone in the dark kitchen above the mottled clutter of soaking pots, with the brown gleam of bourbon-coated ice in the glass before him. And Becca would come calling in search of him through the rooms, dragging a housecoat about her, and soften her voice when she found him: "It's late, Thurnell, come on now." And jam the Old Granddad back behind the cut-

glass punchbowl in the sideboard on her way out. He could be furiously silent those nights.

It pained her to look at him so stricken. And he: even the white-tassled roadside weeds had become prison walls to him. His own ignorance starved him. And the older men of the county — if pressed, if *angered*, might unjam a match stick from between their teeth and remind him of days when the white men would as soon spit on a man as reason with him, and just as soon lynch him as either. His roving took him nowhere: past the same stores and fields, through the living rooms of county men who saluted him proudly and sat him down, tossed sweating beer cans to him and made their children hush.

He was tall and black-skinned, with a crest of straight, back-combed hair. He, almost alone among them, had an outside income: he'd won a pension as a boilermaker for a bad back. How this freed him, he was just beginning to tell. He had nothing to offer but his own restlessness, and it kindled theirs. If he stayed late, refusing dinner, whole families stood in their front doorways, blocking the light, to see him to his car. And Becca's supper pots were warm on the stove and his place neatly set when he traipsed home: becoming weightless, sleepless, becoming mute. She put up the food.

Then, an elderly woman needed food stamps, and rather than spend another winter spitting and complaining and eating collard greens, she threatened to get a lawyer. The caseworker smiled indulgently. The old woman seized her cane, hacked her way out of the office, and sped grumbling through the halls. To her own surprise, she found a lawyer. "She a sweet little white girl," the old woman told Thurnell. "Don't know where she come from, but she say she from Brums-wick."

So, abruptly, there was a lawyer among them, smiling and thin, taking notes. And then there was a carload of lawyers among them — disheveled and friendly — young white men from Georgia Legal Services in Brunswick, taking notes. Their eagerness amazed him. He and Sam Pinckney and Reverend Grovner visited their office.

They were abashed and polite at the first visit, though the lawyers and paralegals crowded into the library to get a look at them, and sat on top of the file cabinets and tables wearing boots and blue jeans, eating potato chips, apparently willing to talk all night.

Within a month they were driving to the legal aid office every day, and boisterously occupying the library with their feet on the tables. They shouted to each other down the hall and from room to room while the lawyers, paralegals and

secretaries happily circled them, taking notes.

Each was just what the other needed. The lawyers – from San Francisco, El Paso, Atlanta – circuit-rode hundreds of miles and spent their days in tiny borrowed offices in towns with such drawling names as Jessup, Nahunta, Blackshear and Waycross. They amassed more divorce and welfare cases than their car trunks and back seats could carry. They propped their minds awake with afternoon coffee and labored till midnight amid stacks of manila folders that rose like snowdrifts on their desks and blew from room to room.

And into this red-eyed, baffled and isolated group the McIntosh men came, wild-eyed and wound-up like natives of some hinterland that the attorneys had dreamed about, but never actually seen, or read about in Faulkner and Agee and Welty, but never quite believed in.

For the McIntosh men, for Thurnell, these educated white boys might have been young angels: a type of white boy *they* may have speculated about, but never met, a type of white man and woman the preachers said existed, though even the preachers weren't exactly acquainted with any.

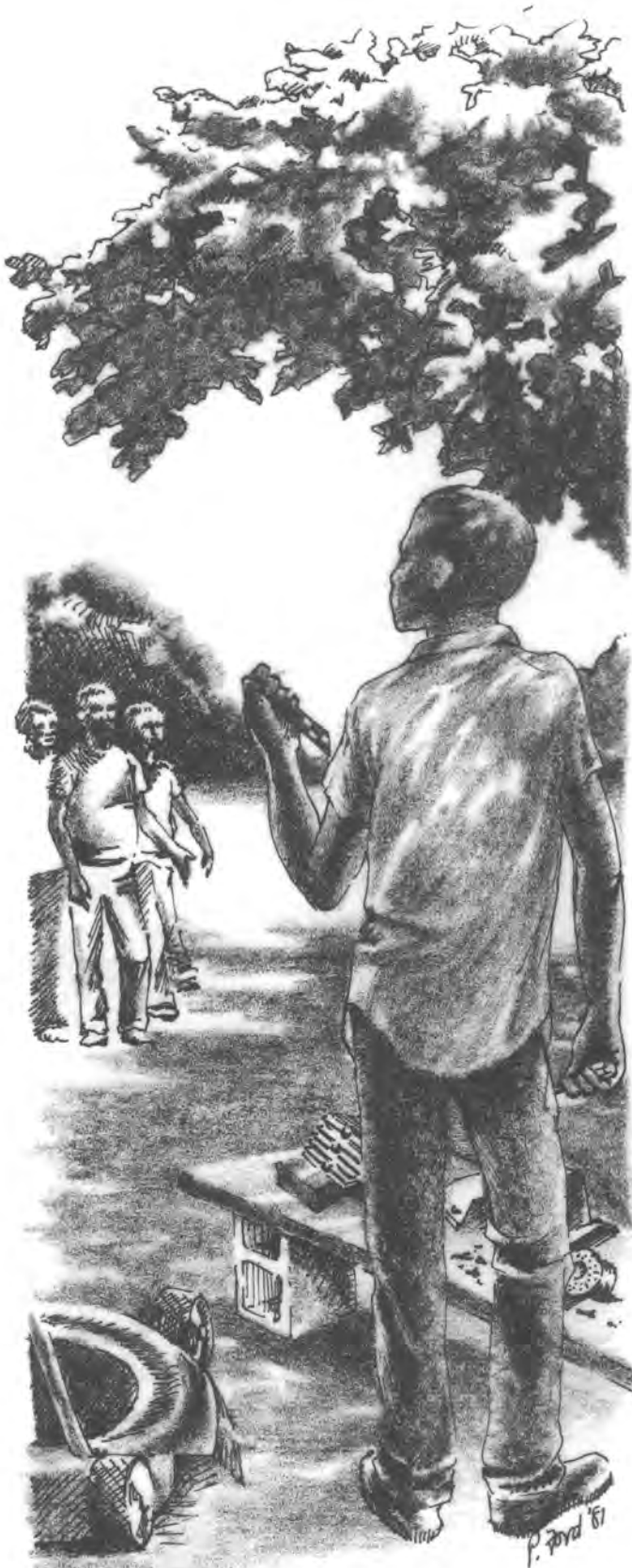
Becca liked one of them, because when he came to circle the backyard with Thurnell, debating, and he got hungry, he simply sat down in the kitchen and made himself a sandwich and kept talking.

September, 1975

They sued the county.

The surprising thing, for Thurnell, wasn't learning that the grand jury was composed from tampered-with voting lists; nor was it the fact that they filed the suit. Once desperation like thirst or grief beset him, he knew it would have outlet. Nor did it shock him – despite the countless mute and craven years – that at the last moment a group of dark-eyed plaintiffs showed up at Club Seventeen and soberly signed the thing and witnessed one another's signatures, darkly, as they witnessed a fatal act, a brawl or a burial. What his mind balked at was how the lawyers had listened to all his rattled stories, and how they had smoothed them into a proper complaint.

"This action arises under the Sixth Amendment and the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution," the lawyers wrote, and affixed his name to their inventiveness. "This is an action for injunctive and declaratory relief to secure the right of qualified adult black residents and adult female residents of McIntosh County



to be fairly chosen for grand jury . . . service in McIntosh County without discrimination as to race and sex . . . to correct the continuing effect of past and present race and sex discrimination against adult black and adult female residents of McIntosh County. . . .”

The stunning thing, of course, was that they were quite right. Was such knowledge, then, harvested from books? And what did it mean that itinerant outsiders could so label and quantify the events of his life that a federal judge could be moved to pronounce *him* victimized? (A sensation like trying on a factory-made suit for the first time, and learning that a mass-produced commodity might slip easily over one's own private body.) Simply: that it had all happened before, and had happened elsewhere; and that the wrath and indulgence that he and his neighbors and their white people generated toward each other was common stuff.

The city council fired all but two of the black city employees, or a grand total of five sanitation workers and a policeman.

Thurnell stood in his backyard digging into the family lawnmower, which coughed and ate rocks and shoved back when shoved across the yard. He laid its secret parts along a bench by the driveway and then enjoyed its defenselessness. It had been a quiet month until — interrupting his operation on the machine, again — neighbors filled his driveway with their cars and ambushed him under the trees. He listened to their news with his black-oiled hands held aloft.

When they left, he wandered down to the highway and stared down it. The blows were falling already, but on other men. One could gauge the force of one's threat, really, by the force of the blows that fell in return. The reaction told them their strength. It was like a brass gong battered once and in ignorance, that did not sound immediately, but months later, without warning, the countryside felt its resonance.

February, 1976

Was it possible then, he wondered, to change their axis? To revolve around some midpoint of their own choosing, instead of the bland and friendless shops of Darien?

Two hundred people met that Saturday night in a cool and dusty church in Crescent. Already white oleander flowers were lolling open in the liquid spring evenings, and the families met on the

gravel in the mild darkness: smiles and copper-colored arms curling out of the dusk. They filled up the hall with a solid presence, and Thurnell had to push open an aisle by sidling up the middle and shaking hands. Old men in loose-fitting brown suits thwacked him with their newspapers and the broad-faced women rattled their beads and beamed at him. The young men lined the walls like lieutenants, their T-shirts and bare folded arms a uniform.

Thurnell, beneath the high dim lightbulbs, regaled them with possibilities: now that they'd sued the county, docility was no longer even a choice. He was tired and jittery and shy when he finished talking, and made room for the other speakers; then the men's choir arrived on the stage, tilted and crooned together while the audience clapped, and by the end of the evening they had invented a boycott of the white stores of Darien.

It was like harvest time 50 years ago. They shared milk, eggs and sugar from house to house; and the old highway stayed lit up past midnight with crowds in the yards and children playing hide-and-seek under the porches. Neighbors ruined each other's lawns by sinking large idling cars upon them, and women spread newspapers flat like quilts on their dining room tables and parcelled out the news. “Say ain't been a black soul near one of them stores be four weeks Saturday.” Or, “Somebody say she seen Bertha Hines go ducking out of that Smart Shop in town.” They rode three abreast in the long cars to Brunswick and Savannah, and tied the trunks down with twine over crammed shopping bags. So they would snip together this new life, and still have steaming beans and hamburgers and corn to ladle from their stoves.

By the time the city council trumpeted the rehiring of the fired black men, the outlying community had plunged deeper than pain at that surface affront. “We want more blacks hired in businesses, banks, supermarkets, offices, cafes, motels. We want black people hired proportionately for city and county jobs,” they wrote, and the *Darien News* erected their lists between the Sheriff's Report and the Scouting News.

“AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BLACK CITIZENS OF MCINTOSH COUNTY: WE APPRECIATE AND NEED YOU” flew in a banner headline paid for by the Chamber of Commerce: “The merchants here like to believe that they have contributed much over the years for the good of all citizens here. We *had* thought we were appreciated by *all* our citizens. . . . The objectives of the Blacks against the merchants in the hiring of more Blacks is *hurt* rather than helped



when buying in stores is stopped. If the boycott continues longer, sensible businessmen will be forced to discharge their present employees, Black and White alike. . . .”

In the provinces they were belly-laughing, and stripping green beans. They had decided to run Thurnell Alston for county commissioner.

August 28, 1978

Local saying: Even the *dead* white folks vote in McIntosh County.

Yellow watery sky, mattress of pine needles underfoot: at sunrise on Election Day, Thurnell stood alone in a roadside clearing. He was running for a seat on the county commission. It was the second time. The first time, two years before, he had lost by three votes. An estimated 157 black voters had been turned away. (The poll workers had checked the names. . . . They were *sorry*, they said, some *mistake*, but no voting for you today.)

Half the county still slept, blackbirds and squirrels chased up and down the dirt roads. The August incandescence began. Half the county was yawning out of bed; some shuddered into the chill of air-conditioned bedrooms, others lay bare feet onto warm wood floors and, in a moment, were out the cabin door into the weedfields of their front yards. Thurnell, erect in the buzzing thicket, waited for the carloads of black voters.

Seven years, he figured, to get here.

At 6:45 a.m. he had inspected the voting machines in the cinderblock building exactly 250 feet down the gravel road from where he stood. He saw for himself that the machine registered zero zero zero, and the white woman had demonstrated that the yank of the lever registered one vote. As if it were a new idea, he thought later, smiling. One thin black woman in a pantsuit had busied herself among the others, and his eyes had glanced across hers, once. Then he had retreated to the clearing. He waited for the black carloads.

He had left home impatiently. The boys had sat kicking in their chairs at breakfast, sticking forks through the toast and patting the grits with their fingers. The sink rang with pots and water. Becca, with her hair stuck out sideways, set down a platter of scrambled eggs and suddenly there they were, with the baby under the table, and eggs and sausage steaming before them, and not an appetite in the house.

“All right,” he had said gently, or maybe it was Becca. “Get going.” And the oldest boy, pleading: “Daddy do I *got* to go to school today?” and the

second boy smacking himself in the forehead: "Oh man! he think he gonna get out of going to school!" but raising his eyebrows hopefully just in case.

"I'm going," Thurnell said, and stood, and left his full plate; and Becca, with her back turned, elbow-deep in the dishwater, said, "All right then."

He kissed the boys goodbye on top of their heads and walked out and slipped under the steering wheel, not seeing the house or road or trees; and she, as he backed out, left the tepid water and came winding a towel around her hands to sit alone at the littered steaming table to watch him drive off.

Thurnell checked off the black carloads against his memory and his list of registered voters. A line of trucks and cars dug off the main road crunching onto the gravel and moved in second gear past Thurnell in the clearing. White men wore hard hats and balanced styrofoam cups of coffee on their dashboards. "Morning, Alston," some said, nodding. The black men in overalls slowed and bent through their windows to clasp his hand. "All right, brother," he said, smiling and nervous. This morning his mind was an abacus. As soon as they freed his hand he was squinting up the road, looking for more.

Some, white, lurching forward, in pickup trucks, or idling in air-conditioned sedans, ignored him. Thin, straight-backed, copper-haired women in navy or black dresses chose the moment of passing him — outstretched smile, tall and handsome in the green clearing — to look out to their right, to study the drainage ditch.

Local story: A black man with a Harvard law degree went to the polls in Georgia to vote. The registrar said he had to take a reading test. All right, said the black lawyer. They gave him a section of the state constitution, and he read it aloud and interpreted it for them. Then they gave him a section of the U.S. Constitution to read, and he read and interpreted that for them. Then they consulted each other, came back, and gave him a Chinese newspaper. "Can you read this one, boy?" "Yessir," said the lawyer. "It say ain't no black man gonna vote in this here election."

By noon, 200 people had passed, and the sky was white with heat. The clearing whined with flies and mosquitoes. Workmen in white overalls jammed the convenience store and shoved together into the soda and ice cream coolers. The day's only relief was in bending to delve for a popsickle with the icy air circling the arm. Then the black men, with uplifted Coke bottles, ambled toward Thur-

nell's clearing.

"How's it going man?"

"All right, all right," he said, jittery, watching the road, not thirsty until someone shoved an open Coke into his hand. They watched him down it without a breath.

"Hey man," he said, "where's your mother been?"

"She'll be here, Thurnell."

"Arnold, haven't seen your cousin."

"They coming tonight after they get off."

"Good afternoon, good afternoon," Thurnell was saying to the slow-passing cars, squeezing the hands of delighted old ladies and socking men on the shoulder.

Local saying: You may as well vote white, cause they're lynching the nigger tonight.

At seven o'clock the last carload crept off the highway. Bland smiling faces drew up to chat. "You better get on up there and not let those damn polls close!" everyone yelled. They went cracking out of sight over the gravel. By seven o'clock, Thurnell had long been stunned by the daylong siege of white sky, sunlight striking him blind off the car chrome, and all the damp merry faces. It weighed on him now: fatigue, an impatience, and what an ordeal it had all become. He would have preferred to sleep off the half hour while they counted, or to be wakened at dawn by sons climbing onto his chest, so that he could, finally, get to work.

He rolled the list of voters under his arm and walked toward the poll-site. The neighbors and young cousins followed on foot, or funereally in the big cars, their faces quieted by dread. And rising in him? A kind of sullen anger, that began to burn out everything else.

The sun, by 7:30, was an orange globe, the streak of white heat dispersed. The cinderblock building was buried in chirping greenery when Thurnell, his friends and a group of whites parked and stood leaning against their car doors. Official humming filled the neonlit place.

The pine trees at dusk shadowed the clearing. The whites and blacks stood in separate groups, though Thurnell suspected he had some of their votes — a few had called him, once or twice at home; and one man occasionally pulled into his driveway after work, casually, and with great nervousness. A few, though, in the last days of the campaign, had reworked the plastic billboards in front of their service stations and dairy huts to read: "All you honkies get out and vote!"

A vigil. Reverend Grovner and the young kinfolk

drawn by the light and bustling in the building, stumbled closer and stood two feet from the doorway. Thurnell watched the sky grow ragged and dark with clouds. The whites, too, were silent; farm people, they crossed their arms over their stomachs.

Reverend Grovner and a white man were invited inside to witness the final count. The reverend ducked out once from the doorway and jumped his eyebrows up and down, then bent back inside. "Now what the hell do *that* mean?" said the young men in the dark, exhaling, and looked over the pine trees, their eyes rough like the branches.

Then Reverend Grovner sang "Whoop!" and dashed out of the doorway like a tangled colt, carrying his flat hand over his mouth. He did a jig in the soft grass while the others surrounded him intently. He lowered his hand, his eyes leaping, his face laughing: "We got it! We got it!"

And no shout rose from the group, though their arms lifted in surprise and every face craned toward Thurnell's face. Louise Holt, a school teacher in her forties, murmured, "Well praise God," and two of the high school girls squeezed each other's hands, laughing. And every one of them was shocked to the bone. Except Thurnell Alston. A seizure like glad lust, or revenge, had shot through him at the word, but in the immediate aftermath he feared, for the first time, that he'd worked too hard for it. He'd killed every other possibility within himself, and what if it were the wrong thing? Unlike the others, he was not surprised. That afternoon he and his white opponent had waved affably at one another and he had called, "I think I got you this time!" Now that it was certain, he wondered for the first time what he could have said all summer to these people, to get them there. He found no rejoicing in himself at having won.

Louise, in pearls and plaid double-knits, put her arm around his neck. He walked stiffly beside her but felt himself watching the white people. A sunburned woman in a green blouse scooted off the hood of her Mustang, threw open her door, pulled it to and backed off with the tires furiously throwing gravel. A group of large men in white shirts, arms and faces clean and puffy as dairy-men's, ambled to the far side of the clearing. He saw one shake his opponent's hand. What if the election turned out to be a fraud, something the blacks had been taught to crave so the whites could give it up with pomp and regret, as if it were a thing of great value? What if the round-faced men were simply going to close their portfolios and withdraw to another chamber one more door removed? He felt an almost blinding eagerness

at the thought; he wanted a fight. A fight was *clear*. It was the apparent simplicity of winning that alarmed him.

His friends had turned away from the building in tears and were making their way back to the cars. Soon they would begin the evening's business of *believing* the thing, and drinking and shouting to bring down the stars.

A red-lit gyrating night: Club Seventeen throbbed like an artery. Dancers seethed in the red smoke. Louise Holt drank and clapped in the middle, repeatedly knocked by the hearty crowd circling around her. Thurnell came tiptoeing through the disarray of chairs and little tables, pawed and kissed at every turning. The paneled walls bobbed with the dancers' shadows.

A flat wooden building that mildews faintly after a rain, Club Seventeen serves, on Sunday mornings, as the local representative of Sin. Prayerbook-toting matrons, stepping across its parking lot on the way to church, expel "Humphs!" and glare at the backs of oblivious husbands or sons. But on election night, half the blacks in the county gathered there and shouldered through the doorway crowd into the single deafening room. And the other half was fed the throbbing bass-line, like a flutter in the bloodstream, across cropland and forest. Children in flannels hopped wonderingly in their doorways miles away, and elderly couples on front porches waited until all the constellations were circling overhead before retiring out of the warm resonant air. It was a clear night; the country sky was fuzzy with stars, and everyone knew: they were celebrating at the club.

Church ladies – aglitter with earrings and beads, since it was an occasion – appeared for the first time inside Club Seventeen. The wall of regulars in the doorway parted politely to let them through. Inside, the thunderous heat and music wilted them, and they shuddered when friendly bourbon bottles were poked in their direction. But it *was* an occasion, so they placed their pocket-books neatly under a booth, touched their hair and flounced to the dance floor. "Look at Miss Watson!" cried Willie Pearl, alarmed, but the president of the Ladies Auxiliary had her eyes closed and her great hips rolling. "She *doing* it up!" cried the younger dancers. "Shake it, Miss Watson!"

For the young people on the dance floor, it was a strenuous happiness. They danced until they were breathless, deafened, loose-limbed and wet. They got drunk and threw their arms around each other. If they had a thousand secret questions, Thurnell Alston had at least answered a few of

them: what happens when you wake up sick to death of your own poverty. What happens if you are torn between punching, and kneeling before, the bony old beggars who drag into the churchyard from the highway? What if the high-voiced choirs wrench your breath away and leave you bitter and panting? What if you wear a fine outfit to town, and speak in a well-modulated voice, and pretend you have forgotten that you are black? What if your posture changes?

Blasted by music, reeling with alcohol; they conspired, by shoving together in the hot beery place, to raise a sound like roaring. They smiled at each other blandly, and it was like they all pumped in the furious red darkness to pummel something underfoot, or like the building itself rose several feet off the ground.

The workmen had wedged tight at the bar. They slid glasses over pools of ice water standing on the polished wood. The bottles looked chrome and copper in the half-light, with labels like foreign flags or royal seals. "You damn right the sheriff's surprised," they said aloud to no one in particular, because the sheriff's stranglehold on the county had been busted up forever. "You damn right," they said, raising whiskey glasses in toast to invisible partners. The picture of Thurnell as a suave black man letting himself into the commission meeting grew upon them. Then they moved on, with the music exploding around them, toward the soft interior explosions of liquor in the bloodstream.

"Hey nigger!" they said when they saw him.

"Come here, man!" and they opened a place for him at the bar, but he was breathing hard already, already well-lit, they could see. He stood holding onto the counter. They saw him through a brown fog, with the leaping figures in the background.

Their hands hungered. This he understood by their silence and their drinking. Red-eyed, muscles like stone under their damp T-shirts: they would be up at dawn, stamping into boots to clear their minds, but they were laborers, and therefore mute. Not one of them filled his arms, chest and eyes with loved work. They worked for wages. They came home caked with cement or sheetrock, or with the scream of metal tools in their brains, or reeking of fish. They worked for white men. Getting Thurnell downtown was one thing: the lid of the pot which compressed them lifted, a little. But meanwhile they were getting older and their hands hungered, and it was only a lousy drunken Tuesday night.

Thurnell was sober, but the crazy hurling music kept him moving, like a swimmer in a lake with no beach. What could he do, for the moment,

except affectionately slap the back of the man next to him at the bar, and paddle back through the crowd?

At the door he stood watching. The church ladies, not wanting to presume, blotted their foreheads and around their eyes with paper towels, retrieved their pocketbooks and wobbled toward the door. They stopped to take Thurnell's hand and squeeze it tearfully before hurrying out. Thurnell watched the young people hopping on the dance floor, and considered that they were celebrating a fact many years beyond him.

"Dance with us, man!" they yelled.

He waved.

What did they know of the process, that they could fling into a frenzy of joy-making at a moment's notice? He wondered this, indulgently, until the picture of his friends at the bar — each shoveling deeper into a private grief — reminded him how little *he* had to do with the night's rituals. *He* could slip out and be gone, and the same men and women would still toss up the bottom of their glasses with the same despondence, or whirl in the drumming music until their muscles came untied. *He* was nobody's savior.

He turned and crossed the parking lot. The cool air assailed him. The driver of a carload pulling out tilted a forefinger at him and winked. Alone, his head was a cannonball, heavy and flying. He had read the signs that appeared to him, and so became county commissioner. That was all. He might have made different choices and become a shrimp worker. How similar the obstructions were, either way.

He headed home where Becca waited with his wide-awake sons. He knew the party behind him was reddening the night sky. If he risked a bit more than another, then he was merely among the first sparks given off. □

Melissa Greene is a writer who lives in Rome, Georgia. This piece is part of a much longer work called Stories from McIntosh County, based mainly on extended interviews with four people there, two of whom were Thurnell and Becca Alston.



Escaping out of slavery (Harper's Weekly, 1864)

The Challenge of the Children

Creating a New Vision of America

by Vincent Harding

Freedmen of North Carolina, Arouse!!! Men and Brethren, these are the times foretold by the Prophets, "when a Nation shall be born in a day," the good time coming. Four millions of chattels, branded mercantile commodity, shake off the bands, drop the chains, and rise up in the dignity of men. The time has arrived when we can strike one blow to secure those rights of Freemen that have been so long withheld from us.

*— call for a black convention
Wilmington, North Carolina, 1865*

... traitors shall not dictate or prescribe to us the terms or conditions of our citizenship, so help us God.

*— Black Convention
Norfolk, VA, 1865*

Passing through Norfolk, Virginia, on his way south during that spring of 1865, a Northern newspaper reporter noted that every black dwelling in the city "exhibited the tender tokens of mourning for the good, dead President." Everywhere in the nation, the story was the same. In the midst of the ecstasy of this year of freedom, just days after word of "the surrender" had sent paroxysms of thanksgiving and joy flooding through their lives, the black communities of America were stunned and sobered by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Down on one of the South Carolina Sea Islands, a man who had risked his life to escape from slavery now wondered if there was any purpose to it all, any hope, saying, "The rebs won't let us alone. If they can't kill us, they'll kill all our frien's sure."

In spite of the difficulties they had had with him during

the war, the children of Africa in America considered Lincoln a friend, an ally, a leader in their developing struggle to create the institution of freedom, to chart the new land. Now his death in a heroic, sacrificial mode made it possible for the emerging black community to avoid the harsh and certain clashes between their soaring visionary projections and the president's attempts to keep the future of black freedom in narrow bounds, to hold the rushing river within limits that he and other well-meaning whites could manage. So, after April 15, Abraham Lincoln could serve as a mythic symbol of Emancipation, a companion to John Brown, while black people tried to size up the flesh-and-blood realities and prospects of Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's vice-president and successor. They had heard that Johnson, a Tennessee loyalist, hated the Southern aristocrats who had been the leaders of the Confederacy. At one point, while military governor of Tennessee, he had told its newly freed people that he was willing to be their Moses. Time alone would reveal what that meant. Meanwhile black people refused either to be mesmerized by their mourning for the "good, dead president," or to live on false hope concerning the self-proclaimed Moses. Rather, in that spring of grief and exaltation, where the paths of God were not always clear and their friends not easily identifiable, they continued to move forward, making their own way.

In thousands of individual and collective actions black men and women persistently experimented with freedom, tentatively creating its forms and content. Working at the communal bedrock of their religion, blacks made it clear that freedom meant independence from white control of their churches, of their organized religious lives. So in Wilmington, North Carolina, those black church people who had responded to Chaplain Hunter's liberation preaching in spirited ecstatic ways quickly demonstrated their sense of the connection between rapture and political decision-making. Their nervous white Methodist pastor, L.S. Burkhead, had already sensed what was coming when he complained that the Reverend Hunter's message had unsettled all the congregation's "former principles and ideas of subordination." Under the influence of the black preacher, said Burkhead, the people "seemed already in imagination to be walking the streets of the capital of the nation and listening to their own silver-toned voices dispensing the 'glad tidings' of the Greeley and Sumner gospel to the Congress of the United States." To lift the imaginative powers of recently enslaved people to the point of seeing themselves as leaders of the entire nation was, of course, a great feat. However, the congregation at Front Street Church soon moved beyond imagination to create their own new reality, demanding that the Southern Methodist leadership dismiss their complaining white pastor and let them ally themselves with the burgeoning forces of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This was what freedom required.

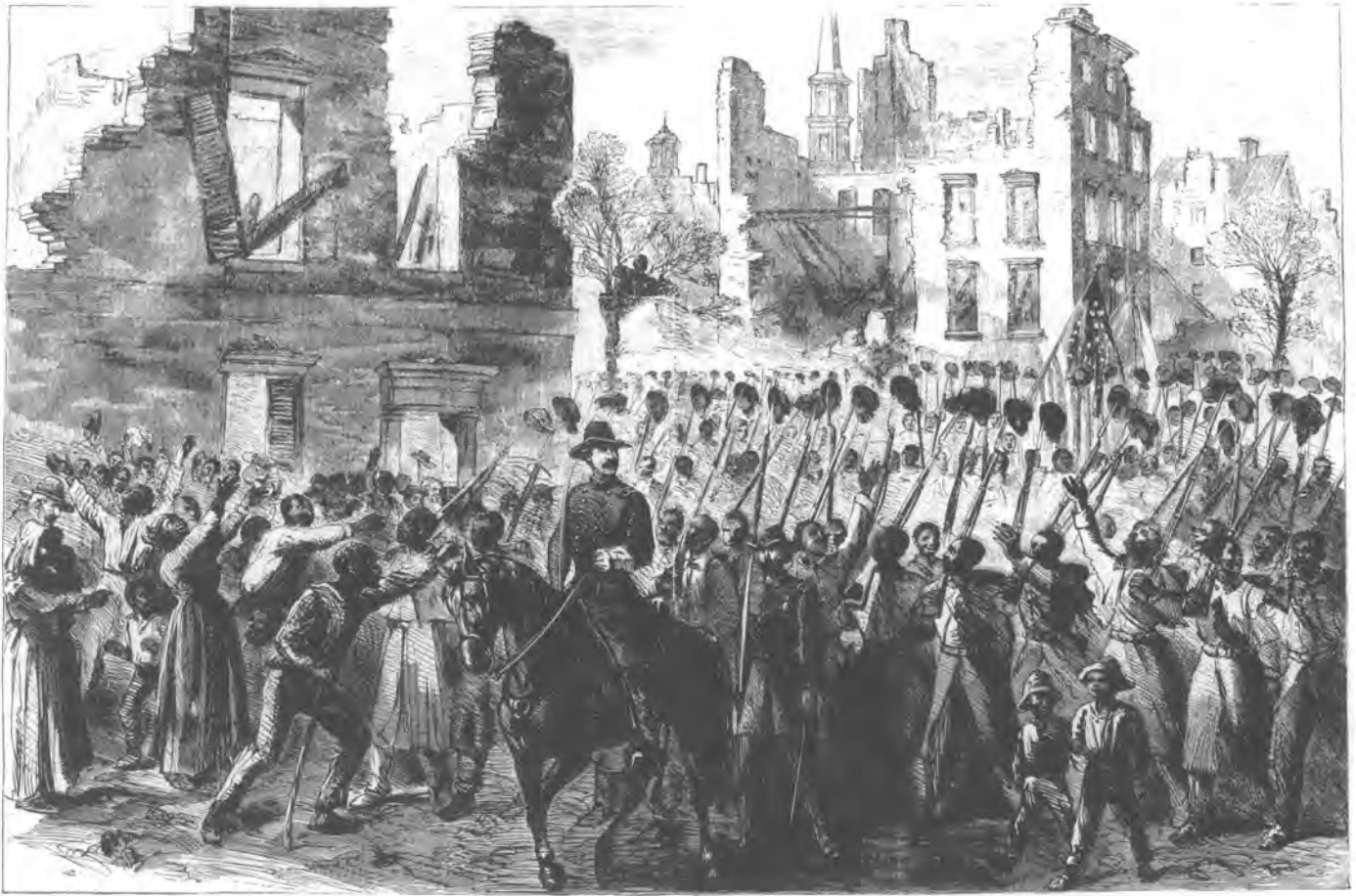
In other situations the struggle to define freedom was much more individual, eccentric, unique. For instance, in many places black folk simply assumed new forms of dress, the women wearing brighter colors than ever before, donning white gloves, carrying parasols, writing their own speeches of freedom in each formerly forbidden item of apparel, in each proud movement of their bodies. For their part, the men kept dogs and guns, hunted whenever they chose, traveled around the countryside without passes.

Both men and women often refused to yield the sidewalks to white folks when they met. They omitted the long-standing and deeply understood obeisances and signs of inferior status. They rode horses or mules or drove carriages, taking the right of way from white pedestrians. They argued with white people, refusing any longer to say yes when they meant no. They met in public with any blacks they chose and with as many as they chose, at any hour and for as long as they chose. They changed their names. They made new demands on white people, based on their own sense of dignity and their new freedom to express it. Thus one army officer wrote that black people had obviously resolved "that in their present condition as free men their former masters and present employers should address them in a more respectful manner than formerly."

In Washington, Georgia, one young white woman complained to her diary that with the coming of freedom and the military occupation forces, several of the most dependable and apparently subservient black folk, among them house servants, had radically changed (or revealed) their character. Eliza Andrews cited one man who had been known to them all as kindly Uncle Lewis. Now, she reported, "Uncle Lewis, the pious, the honored, the venerated, gets his poor old head turned with false notions of freedom and independence, runs off to the Yankees with a pack of lies against his mistress, and sets up a claim to part of her land!"

There were many resurrections, many former cripples now rowing toward freedom, many "uncles" seeing visions of justice in the lands of their "nieces." But the price could be high, for almost every black act of assertion was seen by whites — in a sense, accurately — as "insubordination" and "insolence." White people knew that such spirit and action were dangerous to the world they were seeking to maintain, and wherever possible they attempted to contain the force, to break its assertive movement. In Savannah a delegation of black people from surrounding rural areas called on Chief Justice Salmon Chase, who was making a Southern tour that spring, and complained that "their old masters were abusing them, were whipping those who said they thought they were free." In Alabama, Chase's party heard of black people in the rural sections who had come into Montgomery "with their ears cut off by their former masters, in punishment for their assertion of their freedom." Such practices were common in many parts of the South, especially the rural districts, and often the news came from persons who spoke for friends and relatives who could not come, men and women who had lost their lives in those early movements toward hope.

The costs were familiar, but neither whippings nor torture nor death had ever stopped the black movement toward freedom, and they did not stop it now. Indeed, there was a spirit at work in this special year which could not be broken. A change *had* taken place, and because it had begun within them, black people knew it was indeed necessary to assert — to demonstrate — their rights, if they were determined to maintain them. A quintessential example of this consciousness arose in the Laurens area of South Carolina, where, once emancipation was official, a black woman named Patience Johnson was asked by her former mistress if she would remain with her and work for wages.



The 55th Massachusetts Colored Regiment singing John Brown's March in the Streets of Charleston (Harper's Weekly, 1865)

As mistresses went, she was not bad, so there was reason for Patience to consider the request. But the young woman's response was simple: "No, Miss, I must go; if I stay here I'll never know I am free."

Compressed in that one woman's words was the great power of the sweeping, explosive black movement of 1865, announcing that, beyond the laws and proclamations of others, black people themselves, through their own action of freedom, must not only shape their emancipation but also develop some fundamental self-knowledge, some palpable assurance of their freedom, upon which all else would have to be built.

Who knew all this and appreciated it more than Sojourner Truth? That sturdy, seasoned walker into freedom, creator of liberty, was still on the road in the year of change, asserting the transformation which had begun in her own life decades before. During the latter part of the war she had come to Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC, to work among the newly freed black community, inspiring them with her indomitable spirit, ministering to their material needs. In the late winter of 1865, when Congress finally passed a bill prohibiting segregation on all the District's horsecar lines, Sojourner knew that rights must be tested, fought for, seized and defined through struggle. Out on the street one spring day, she tried to flag down one of the horsecars. One passed and refused to stop. Another went by, with the driver ignoring her long, waving arms. At that point, according to her biographer, Sojourner "gave three tremendous yelps," shouting,

"I want to ride! I want to ride! *I want to ride!!*" Her shouts and vivid gestures drew a crowd that made it impossible for the next car to go by without stopping. Then when Sojourner Truth got on and took her seat with the other passengers, the conductor told her that either she would ride outside on the front platform directly behind the horses, or he would throw her off. Probably the man did not know to whom he was talking, and the powerful Truth remained firmly in her seat. Indeed, to make her point, she stayed on beyond her stop. Finally, she left the car and said joyfully, "Bless God! I have had a ride." In addition, later she had the conductor arrested, caused him to lose his job and did much to establish the right of blacks to ride all the horsecars in the nation's capital. It was, to be sure, quite a ride.

All through that year when the contours of freedom were being searched out and created through words and deeds of assertion and hope, black women were deeply involved in the process. It was not always as direct an engagement as Sojourner's, but it was real. For instance, one of the most significant movements toward the definition of freedom came as black families all over the South made a momentous decision to withdraw their women from the full-time agricultural labor force. In many cases children moved out of the role of full-time field hands as well. Everywhere in slavery's former domain, black families were openly declaring the autonomy they had fought so hard to develop and maintain under the old regime; they were establishing their right to decide who should work and how. Now mothers and wives were often free to give more attention to their own families and work; children could

attend the schools now being created at great cost by blacks and their white allies.

Indeed, it was a group of the school children on Saint Helena's Island off the South Carolina coast who offered one of the most powerful testimonies to the meaning of black freedom. On a warm day in May, a prestigious group of white visitors from the North had stopped to visit this place which had produced so many men for the first black Union regiment and so much hope for the possibilities of black self-reliance on the land. Hundreds of newly freed residents gathered for the occasion in the open field between their old church and their new school. Then, after speeches and songs, a group of young children from the school was called up to the outdoor platform. "Mothers passed up their little four-year-olds, decked in all the cheap finery they could command; fathers pressed forward and made room for sons and daughters, whom they followed with eyes of paternal pride; and there was a general smiling, and bustling, and eagerness to show off the shiny-faced, large-eyed little creatures." Then the black children sang:

*"My country, 'tis of thee, / Sweet land of liberty, /
Of thee I sing. / Land where my fathers died, /
Land of the pilgrim's pride, / From every moun-
tain side, / Let freedom ring."*

In May, 1865, it was easy to miss the young singers, to try to avoid the hard and painful implications of their song and its vital connections to the past and future black struggle for America. The war had finally ended. The ratification process for the Thirteenth Amendment was working its way through the states. Even long-standing abolitionist allies like William Lloyd Garrison were so eager to move on with the things that made for peace among white people that he proposed disbanding the American Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison and many like him were still trapped in one of the fundamental abolitionist flaws: convinced that all evils of racial discrimination, subordination and oppression flowed out of the institution of slavery, he was certain that once the legal institution was destroyed, the other evils would quickly disappear. Filled with this strangely optimistic (or deluded) view of human development, Garrison, as he watched the approaching ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment expressed his

absolute certainty that black men and women would now, without any special help, "win their way to wealth, distinction, eminence and official station."

Most black people who watched these developments were in full accord with Frederick Douglass as the black leader staunchly opposed the self-destruction of the best-known abolitionist organization. For a time such wisdom prevailed. Nevertheless, it was hard for most white people to hear the voices of the children. They represented the claims of a black community moving toward freedom, a community whose right to make such assertions, to engage in such movement, was hardly recognized by the larger society. For just as they had done in the war, so now in the chaos of transition these freedom-possessed people were forcing themselves and the issue of their role in America's future onto the center of the national stage. Although many white political leaders were willing to transmute the issues at stake into such simple matters as the creation and domination of new black voters, in order to assure continuing Republican control over the South and the party's pre-eminence in the nation, there was obviously far more involved, and black people knew it.

Since the crisis of secession, a series of crucial transformations had taken place in the life of the young nation, and the fundamental questions at hand for the entire society turned out to be national versions of the questions black people were raising concerning the institution of freedom and the nature of the new land. As such they carried profound political, economic, social and constitutional implications for the government and for all the people of the United States, whether they recognized it or not. At stake were such constitutional questions as: what would be the new relationships between the central government and the seceded states, and through what processes would these relationships be developed? Since for all practical purposes black people were now free, how would representation be allocated in each of the former slaveholding states? Who would be their citizens, their voters, their elected officials? What would be the role and rights of black people in the future of these former slave states? How would their protection be guaranteed? A central corollary concern was the matter of who would make such judgments — the president, Congress, the military commanders in defeated states, the provisional governments or some other body? How would blacks be related to any

Freedman's Village, Arlington, Virginia (Harper's Weekly, 1864)





Black troops liberating slaves in North Carolina (Harper's Weekly, 1864)

decision-making bodies?

Just as the constitutional issues constantly intersected questions of human justice and destiny, so too did the economic problems. The economic life and resources of entire sections of the South had been disrupted, destroyed or badly damaged. Atlanta, Columbia, Fredericksburg and scores of other cities were filled with the rubble and shells of burned-out, battered buildings. Thousands of miles of railroad were in disrepair. Hundreds of thousands of acres lay uncultivated or with their crops destroyed, and millions of acres had been deserted by supporters of the Confederacy as they fled the Union armies. What was the future of that land? Who would work it, own it, and under what conditions? The slaves who had worked the fields in bondage were now free, often claiming the land as their just due. Many had left the places where they had labored for decades, and others were eager to follow the path of Patience Johnson. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Confederate veterans were returning, looking for work that did not exist, unable to envision themselves in jobs once held by slaves, carrying currency which usually could buy nothing but pity. In light of these developments, few could imagine how the basic agricultural life of the region would be reorganized without slavery.

At the same time, in the course of the war the factories and mills of the North had greatly expanded, moving that section toward a rate of industrialization which would not slow down for a century. Equally important, the Northern-based banking institutions and railroad corporations which provided the economic undergirding for this rapid growth

were also gaining more power and were setting their eyes on the resources of the South. How would all these forces relate to the insistent black demands for land, for autonomy, for independence and full citizenship?

These questions and conditions were new in the spring of 1865. But the end of the war, the defeat of the Confederacy and the active, articulate, ubiquitous presence of four million newly freed black people sharpened all the issues and added a profound sense of urgency to the search for solutions. Well into the spring of the year, however, it was still not clear where Andrew Johnson stood as he addressed the crucial questions of the nation's future, especially the issues which defined black freedom. Within his own party there were increasingly conflicting views over the future of these new "Americans of African descent," as they were sometimes derisively labeled. But black people were generally satisfied with the label and had determined not to wait for white Republicans to make up their minds about its meaning. For just as they were laying immediate claim to the country, so too they boldly assumed their right to participate in the life of the Republican Party itself. Even without the paradoxical black theodicies that had arisen out of the flames of war and identified this party as the Almighty's tool of redemption, even without the dramatic force of Lincoln's martyrdom, there was a certain cool and simple logic in the need for a black approach to the Republicans. This was the ruling party of the nation, the leaders of the government which controlled the occupying forces in the South. This was the party whose decisions would go far to determine

which aspects of the evolving black freedom platform would be nationally legitimized and which would not, which black initiatives would be affirmed and which would be fought, smashed or betrayed.

As the former slaves explored the possibilities of their Republican allies, new realities began to appear. For instance, it was immediately apparent (as any careful reader of a journal like the *New Orleans Tribune* could have predicted) that these black men and women were not approaching the Republican Party as abject, imploring dependents, seeking help from their powerful potential helpers, or simply hoping to take advantage of white disagreements. Rather, some came to the new moment with their own definitions of what it might mean to join certain elements of the Republican forces. Indeed, the hopeful, audacious mood in which many first entered this political arena, the assumptions they brought, cannot be over-emphasized; for black people were preparing themselves to join, to participate and not simply to serve as wards, passive recipients or voting pawns in the new relationship.

Early in the struggle to define their role in the Republican Party, some of the black leadership seemed no less intent on transforming Lincoln's party than the nation. Nor did one have to look only at the pages of the *New Orleans Tribune* to see this. In that same city, near the end of the war, Dr. S.W. Rogers, a former slave who had become a highly respected and educated clergyman, now began to publish a newspaper called the *Black Republican*. Here the familiar term took on new meaning, not as an accusation or epithet bandied among white men, but as a statement of black determination and pride. In the first issue of the paper, published in April, 1865, Rogers wrote:

Black Republican is a proper name for the newspaper organ of American colored men.

We mean to maintain our race – not deny it. The name of our paper asserts at once our race and our principles.

White men may be monarchists, aristocrats or oligarchs, but American colored men should be nothing but Republicans. In the prevalence of Republican ideas and the establishment of Republican institutions, are the hope and the safety of our people.

As we have fought for these ideas on the field, and have suffered for them through revolution, so shall we proclaim and defend them on the forum and through the press in the face of all foes whatever.

Refusing to quibble over small or capital Rs, black men and women were not simply seeking help from the Republican Party; they were, as usual, challenging white men and women to live by their announced principles. In May, 1865, as he traveled through the South, Chief Justice Chase witnessed something of the rising tide. He reported that "everywhere throughout the country colored citizens are organizing Union Leagues." While there is still some debate about the precise line of descent and role of the Union Leagues in the early postwar South, there can be no question about the significance of these politico-religious clubs. Appearing at least as soon as Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment in January, 1865, and taking their name and perhaps more

from the war-created Northern Republican organization, the Leagues became one of the most important mechanisms for creating and organizing black Republicans in the tumultuous three-and-a-half-year period from the end of the war to Grant's election in 1868. Nor is there any question that black people took this white institution, as they had taken so much else, and shaped it to their own needs.

Though that transformation became most apparent after 1865, it could not be ignored that spring. The League was already so active and organized in Wilmington, North Carolina, that when Chase visited the city the leaders of the group arranged for an interview with him. One of the justice's companions noted: "They have a Union League formed among themselves, the object of which is to stimulate industry and education, and to secure combined effort for suffrage, without which they insist that they will soon be practically enslaved again." A few months after the chief justice's visit, they indicated their clear intention to continue forward, petitioning the city government to appoint black policemen and inspectors of fuel. Wherever the league was encountered, observers like Chase and his party noted that there were primarily black organizers at work. Some money and direction had begun to come from white Republicans with motives of their own, but a people ready to transform their songs into the living of their lives did not need much prodding; they were ready. Thus Chase advised Andrew Johnson that the black-dominated leagues rising in the South constituted "a power which no wise statesman will despise."

Well beyond the confines of the Union Leagues, often at levels not accessible to chief justices or presidents, serious black organizing had been going on all year. The former slaves had determined that this activity was essential to the creation of their freedom. So, ever since those initial conventions in Nashville and New Orleans in January, they had been coming together all winter and spring, gathering in churches, homes and fields, sometimes in newly accessible public buildings. They met and argued and prayed over the wording of petitions and addresses. Calling themselves by many names – "Colored Peoples Convention," "Convention of Loyal Citizens," "Convention of Colored Men" – they organized hundreds of preparatory meetings and scores of conventions. Everywhere one turned – especially in the towns and cities of the South, but not there alone – thousands of black people were convening. In Norfolk, New Orleans and Knoxville, in Petersburg and Vicksburg, in Wilmington and Chapel Hill, in Baltimore and Little Rock, black men and women insisted that the nation and its leaders face the determination of the former slaves to help define and create the free, new time.

Sometimes the meetings were held under threat of armed attack or arson from a white community deeply troubled by such thoughts and action from their former slaves. Many times black patrols had to be set out on the road and guards had to be placed around the buildings where they met. In places like Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and elsewhere, attacks against the black conventions were actually carried out. Still, the meetings went on, the speeches were made, the committees were organized, the petitions were written and proclaimed.

Although the records are scanty, there is also evidence of a good deal of formal and informal Republican organizing at the major statewide black conventions. Almost invariably, one of the most important features of each gathering

was a speech, or a series of them, from a visiting black political exhorter. Apparently a network of contacts already existed which made it possible to bring these itinerant organizers to conventions and mass meetings in many places. Sometimes it was James Lynch, the brilliant young Methodist churchman, who combined his ecclesiastical and political organizing with consummate skill, and who became one of the great orators of his time. On other occasions it was James Rapier, the articulate leader who, born free in Alabama and educated in Canada, had returned to exhort and organize his people toward defining their freedom and shaping the Republican Party in the South. Elsewhere the excited crowds could hear John Mercer Langston, hero of the antebellum struggles in the North and now a Freedman's Bureau official. No less ubiquitous was Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the essayist and poet who had given so much of her life to the antislavery circuit. Here at the beginning of the new time, dealing with the men and women she had worked so hard to help free, Harper was just as selfless in her commitment and as effective in her organizing. Only Langston, in his role as a Freedman's Bureau educational supervisor, was an official representative of the Republican-dominated federal government; still, the functions of most men and women like these were essentially the same: to encourage their people to define and demand freedom, and to help them organize for such action, including participation in creating the new Republican Party of the South.

At the springtime and summer conventions, many of the basic themes and demands rising from the people remained the same. Black delegates constantly pressed the relationship between the military service of their men and the demand for the vote. The connection was obvious in a petition circulated that spring throughout the black community of North Carolina, and then broadcast in newspapers across the nation. Originating in the dynamic and self-sufficient leadership of New Bern, North Carolina, the petition was on its way to Andrew Johnson, saying:

Some of us are soldiers and have had the privilege of fighting for our country in this war. . . . We want the privilege of voting. It seems to us that men who are willing on the field of danger to carry the musket of Republics in the days of Peace ought to be permitted to carry its ballots; and certainly we cannot understand the justice of denying the elective franchise to men who have been fighting for the country, while it is freely given to men who have just returned from four years of fighting against it.

Everywhere that idea was insistently raised: blacks had won their citizenship rights through the sacrifices of their husbands, brothers, sons and fathers on the battlefields in the armies of the Union. Simple justice required the right, the reward, of nothing less than full suffrage. To reward white "traitors" with full citizenship privileges, allowing them to control the land and the new governments, while denying essential rights to black "patriots," did not seem right at all. As they continued to press such issues in their speeches, sermons and petitions, it became increasingly evident that black people were again forced not only to define the nature of their own freedom, but also to play a crucial role in the creation of a new political and moral philosophy for the entire nation, a nation patently

unprepared for freedom, equality or justice.

Late that spring in Vicksburg, Mississippi, black men again put forward profound ideological and ethical challenges to the nature of the state and national governments. In a mass meeting chaired by Jacob Richardson, a member of the 49th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment, the newly freed community boldly petitioned Congress not to seat Mississippi's delegates while black people were disfranchised there. They demanded that "the State of Mississippi be not restored to federal relations unless by her constitution she shall enfranchise her loyal colored citizens." In Tennessee the same voice was raised. There, following the all-white constitutional convention, the state's black communities petitioned the first session of the postwar legislature for full citizenship rights and were again rebuffed. So they too turned to Congress and said, "We protest against the Congressional delegation from Tennessee being received into the Congress of the United States, if the Legislature of Tennessee does not grant [our] petition . . . prior to December 1, 1865."

In Georgia, the black word was directed to Andrew Johnson, who was considering a petition from Georgia's white population for the appointment of a provisional military governor for the state. Aware of events around them, quietly insisting on their new role, the black petitioners said:

Should your excellency grant the Petition now in circulation among the White People . . . we humbly and most earnestly pray that our interests, as well as theirs, may be regarded in your selection of the proper person for the important office. We ask not for a Black Man's Governor, nor a White Man's Governor, but for a People's Governor, who shall impartially protect the rights of all, and faithfully sustain the Union.

So simple and yet so grand a vision was beyond the comprehension of most of white America, yet the struggle to define their new freedom required that black men and women dream such radical, quietly eloquent dreams, complementing the fiery visions which were rising out of Wilmington: if black people's freedom were to be real, America and its ideas and structures of racial supremacy would have to be fundamentally transformed; the old white America would have to die with slavery, and the children of Africa would need to become co-creators of the new United States.

In Virginia, Norfolk was a major center of such visionary activity and leadership. There, ever since winter the black community had begun to develop a new set of organizations and to hold mass meetings, at times involving 2,000 or more persons. In April, at one of their fervent, overflowing sessions, the Norfolk blacks had organized the Colored Monitor Union Club, whose main function was to keep the issue of equal rights for blacks before Congress, to publicize their views concerning the rights of free people across the state, and "to assist the present [national] administration in putting down the enemies of the government, and to protect, strengthen and defend all friends of the Union." The club quickly became a leading force in organizing Virginia's black people as they proclaimed and acted out their freedom.



A black orator addresses a pre-election meeting on the steps of the State House in Richmond, Virginia.

Within the Union Club the central, driving leadership appeared to come from Dr. Thomas Bayne, who had started life in the state as a slave, seized his own freedom by fleeing North well before the Civil War and then returned to his native ground during the conflict to continue the deeper struggle. Now he was a dentist and also, like so many other leaders of the time, an itinerant preacher. With the tools of his profession, the conviction of his ministry and the sharply honed will to be free, he moved through the communities of eastern Virginia like an envoy of the new times, insisting that the good news he carried must include the gospel of freedom.

In the course of that spring of hope and danger, Bayne chaired a meeting in Norfolk which produced a series of militant resolutions, including demands from the black community for the right to be heard, as well as proclamations of their responsibility "to speak and act as freemen . . . to claim and insist on equality before the law, and equal rights of suffrage at the ballot-box." Referring to the last-ditch attempts of the Virginia legislature to enact Black Codes which sharply proscribed their freedom, the Norfolk black community vowed civil disobedience. In a spirit reminiscent of the late 1850s in the North, Norfolk's black people said that obedience to such laws was absolutely wrong. In their view it would be "inconsistent with our own self-respect, or . . . the respect of others" to submit voluntarily to "invidious political or legal distinctions, on

account of color merely." As the city's Afro-American community developed its positions, it offered insight into the varied emphases coming from different black centers in the South. Thus land and self-government were central to the agricultural areas of Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi, whereas in this port city a major emphasis was placed on the vote, on the right to participate in the political process, with somewhat less attention to land.

Here, recognizing the significance of their numbers as a powerful minority of more than 40 percent in the state, the black Virginians said they would prove themselves worthy of the franchise by "insisting on it as a right." They vowed that "traitors shall not dictate or prescribe to us the terms or conditions of our citizenship, so help us God." Believing that God helped those who were self-reliant, the Norfolk group went further, declaring that they were ready to back up their demand for equal rights by organizing a boycott, resolving "that as far as in us lies, we will not patronize or hold business relations with those who deny to us our equal rights."

Whether or not the boycott attempt was successful is not presently clear, but the Norfolk group did not stop at that. They were afforded another opportunity for action that spring when the presidentially appointed provisional governor called for the election of a new state assembly. The call to vote was unmistakably issued to white male Virginians only, but blacks issued their own call and offered a direct challenge to the all-white balloting. On May 25, the election day, approximately 1,000 black men and women gathered at the Bute Street African Methodist Church in the city. Most had once been enslaved, others had been



A meeting of freed blacks on Dr. Fuller's plantation in St. Helena Island, South Carolina, 1866.

fugitives, some had been born free. Now on this momentous morning they gathered as free men and women, proclaiming their status through their deeds.

At first they planned to move from the church as one body and march to the various polling places in the four wards of the city, so as to establish their right to share the franchise; but some argued persuasively that their numbers and their determination might provide a convenient excuse for white violence. So instead, the group decided to send a reconnoitering committee to each ward, where they would attempt to vote and thereby test the policies of the white officials. It was a dangerous situation in which to assay the range and meaning of black freedom, but the committees went out on their mission, and the masses who remained behind filled Bute Street Church with songs and prayers, continuing a long tradition that combined religion and revolutionary action. When the scouting/voting parties returned, they reported that black people were being turned back in three of the wards, but in the fourth they were allowed to place their names on a special contested-vote list. Immediately men who lived in that ward began to move out in groups of 10, leaving the church to enter the fight, to be without external sanctuary.

Meanwhile the rest of the males in the freedom congregation cast their votes right in the church, legitimizing themselves, refusing to submit to the mandates of disloyal white men. Here was the birth of the freedom ballot among blacks, which in Norfolk went beyond the symbolic in its revolutionary significance. For not only did it give men (and women?) an opportunity to act out their commitment to freedom, to define their own liberation, but eventually the highly organized community used the contested ballots to challenge the legality of the white election.

Their example led to similar action elsewhere in the state, and the entire determined movement not only forced Andrew Johnson to meet with a black delegation, but eventually brought about the repeal of the Virginia codes which denied political rights to the black community.

By word, by deed, by the singing of children, the people who had been the slaves of American society were now engaged not only in creating the definitions of their own freedom but in suggesting the outlines of the new nation which would be necessary to contain them. As the tumultuous spring of 1865 ended, the initial word was there for all who had eyes and ears – and hearts. Black people were saying that freedom meant above all the right to participate in the process of creating it. In a democratic society, freedom meant not only the right to vote, but the right to participate in all the political decision-making processes. From their petitions pouring into state and national legislatures, indeed, it was obvious that the black community was even proposing that yesterday's slaves must have the right to help define the means by which the former slaveholding states would be brought back into the Union. Thereby, they were claiming the right to participate in the re-creation of the United States.

In an agrarian society, they said, freedom meant the right to land – the land they had nurtured. Freedom meant the right to work, both off and on the land. In a country now shedding the coils of racially defined slavery, freedom meant independence from white domination of every kind; it meant the right to protection – from the worst white intentions and actions. Moreover, in all conventions and messages, in all the newly organized educational associations, it was clear that black people considered the right to education crucial in their future as a free people. As a matter of fact, a people who knew the nurturing power of a loving community naturally defined freedom as the right and opportunity to develop themselves and all the institutions of their common experience, whether families, churches or schools, or “The Ladies of Naomi Court of the Heroines of Jericho” and “The Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity.” This was the message. The confluence of the river of struggle and the terrible chariots of war had broken open the way, and the children of bondage were crossing over, bearing visions of a new land, challenging white America to a new life.

*My country, My country,
Tis of thee I sing.
Country still unborn,
Sweet land yet to be.*

Vincent Harding, a scholar and participant in the Freedom Movement of the 1960s, was the first director of the Martin Luther King Memorial Center and the founder and current chairperson of the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta. He now teaches at the Iliff School of Theology at the University of Denver in Colorado. This article is adapted by permission from his recent book, There Is A River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Copyright © 1981 by Vincent Harding.

REVIEWS

Organizing, by Si Kahn.
McGraw-Hill, 1982. 387 pp.
\$11.95/7.95.

The Backyard Revolution, by
Harry C. Boyte. Temple Uni-
versity Press, 1980. 288 pp.
\$14.95/9.95.

HOW TO ORGANIZE

An anyone who still thinks that the book on community organizing hasn't been written yet has not read *Organizing* by Si Kahn. The new book is a comprehensive guide to "grassroots" or citizen organizing. It's a valuable resource for people who have never organized anything, but who would like to become organizers; and it's equally valuable for experienced organizers, who will enjoy comparing their techniques with those recommended by Kahn.

One of the most refreshing aspects of this work is the way Kahn strips away the mystique of community organizing. "Sometimes to listen to us professional organizers," Kahn says, "you'd think that organizing was a difficult and mysterious way of doing things. Organizers, like many professionals, sometimes exaggerate the skill needed to do what they do. They talk in a mysterious language: actions, models, constituencies, coalitions, agendas, strategies, tactics. This kind of 'shop talk' sometimes makes people believe that there is something very complicated about the organizing process." Many organizers will chuckle when they read that passage, for we are apt to see ourselves all too clearly.

Another positive factor of *Organ-*



Scenes of organizing: Mine workers meet in Harlan County, Kentucky, 1940s.

izing is its easy-to-read, direct style. Education need not be a barrier to using this book as a guide for organizing and for training organizers. We can all understand that matching tactics to practices, places and events that are familiar to most people is an excellent way both to achieve confidence in one's own abilities as an agent of change and to further demystify the process of community organizing.

Having worked as an organizer, Kahn reflects on his experiences and the experiences of others in a comprehensive "walk-through" of the steps involved: from how to organize to the more complex problems of fundraising and the impact of culture on community organizing. He points out the problems that will surely be encountered and offers workable, alternative solutions. He also pro-

vides an evaluation process that is as straightforward as the rest of the book: community organizing should also be leadership development; if new leaders are not being developed, it is fair to say that we are not organizing well.

A second book that should be on everyone's reading list, and especially organizers', is *The Backyard Revolution* by Harry Boyte. Unlike *Organizing*, the Boyte work is not a how-to-organize manual or handbook. Rather, it is an analysis of what he calls the "new" citizen movement, which, as he takes us through the various protests, we realize is not new at all. Only the issues and techniques are new, for the Boyte book begins with what is the foundation of all movements, whether they involve freedom fighters in Namibia, or merely

Photo by Russell Lee

James and Julia Grant picketing alone for five years outside of the old statehouse in Hartford, Connecticut, to protest the incarceration of their son, Jim Grant, in a North Carolina prison: "Throughout our society, there is a deep and basic need among people to get some handles on the institutions which control their lives politically, economically and socially. People need to feel there is something they can influence and control and in which they can trust." Movements/revolts happen when the power structures resist this basic need.

The Backyard Revolution describes so-called grassroots organizations of ordinary, everyday working people who often feel the most powerless. In episode after episode, Boyte shows through his interviews that the biggest problems can be tackled and changed through group action. He somewhat downplays the system's resistance to citizen movements, when he mentions it at all, as he does in describing the problems Myles Horton and the staff of the Highlander Folk School had in helping union organizers overcome resistance from the Ku Klux Klan. Boyte reports that Horton advised organizers to include women and blacks in efforts to build majorities in the Klan-dominated local unions. "You have to treat people right and get a program that involves them. Then you get a majority. It was just as simple as that." Of course, nothing is "as simple as that," and there are many graves and permanently injured union members to prove that it's never "simple." However, the "majority" formula did work with the union organizers and continues to be the foundation of group action by the new/old citizen movement.

An important thread that runs throughout *The Backyard Revolution* is the breadth of the citizen movement on a local level and the declining importance of the "organizer." Boyte points out the shortcomings of the Saul Alinsky style of community organizing that many of today's organizers cut their teeth on, and it is clear that he feels some approaches are more effective than others. Most organizers would probably not take serious issue with him over methodology, and certainly all serious organizers concede that people on the move will organize themselves and choose spokespersons, just as Martin Luther King was selected to be a spokesman

by the Montgomery movement protesting Rosa Parks's arrest. While Boyte has included some organizations whose methods are controversial (such as ACORN) and treated others with something akin to contempt (SNCC organizers), the important message in *The Backyard Revolution* is that the helplessness and apathy of Mr. and Ms. Average Citizen is a myth.

The appearance of both these books is well timed for this period of our history. The action formulas in both shall see many testings during the 1980s. And, as we read about the successes of backyard revolutions, the "organizer" in all of us hopes that the entire nation will become a massive backyard of citizen protest. For only citizen movements on a large scale will preserve communities during the chaos and trauma of massive unemployment, social spending cuts, escalating crime and incarceration rates, government corruption, media boondoggles and the rush to war. In the face of such, Boyte's and Kahn's call is more than understanding the new/old citizen movement, is more than how to organize the movement; it's also a persuasive command to get involved. □

— L.C. Dorsey

by John R. Salter, Jr. Exposition Press, 1979. 248 pp. \$10.00.

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Beginning in October, 1961, Jackson, Mississippi, was engulfed by a seemingly invincible people's movement. Wave after wave of young blacks, often joined by their mothers or fathers, marched unflinchingly into seas of jeering, spitting whites, platoons of baton-wielding police, into the very face of white supremacy, knowing they would be beaten, kicked, jailed or hospitalized. Freedom was on their minds. With each assault on racism's legalized barriers, their heroic resolve gathered momentum in Jackson.

By May, 1963, they were attracting

wide attention. Leaders with national followings began arriving in Jackson to march with them. The nightly television news broadcast their bravery. Their cause caught the attention of a president. Then, with a rifle blast, their long-maturing movement was over. On June 12, their leader, Medgar Evers, the man who had galvanized their feelings into a movement after years of patient organizing, was ambushed and murdered. Six days later, two of his colleagues, John R. Salter, Jr., and the Reverend R. Edwin King, Jr., lay unconscious after a car accident which may well have been another assassination attempt. The Jackson Movement, remarkable for its grassroots tenacity even during the turbulent '60s, was over.

Salter and King survived and have remained linked both by their dedication to a belief in equality and by their scarring brush with death. This sober memoir by Salter, with its somewhat shrill introduction by King, continues to bind them in Southern history. Salter's account begins when, as a new sociology professor at Tougaloo College outside Jackson, he was asked by a small group of college and high school students, the North Jackson Youth Council of the NAACP, to discuss with them a federal ruling prohibiting segregation in interstate bus and train terminals. Their interest had been sparked by Freedom Riders traveling through the South testing the ruling. Jackson had been one of their bloodiest stops. Salter accepted the invitation and was subsequently invited to become the group's adviser. If he hesitated, his book doesn't mention it. Salter and his wife, Eldri, had come South sensing (and hoping) they might have a role in the still-forming Civil Rights Movement.

They did not arrive in a vacuum, as the epithet "outside agitator" so often implies. Tougaloo had long spawned dissidents. Right after the Second World War, the Reverend William Bender, a graduate who had come back to teach there, founded the first, but furtive, chapter of the NAACP in Mississippi. Its handful of members never met twice in the same place, usually gathering in such uncontested places as the "colored" waiting room of the railroad station, or the corner of Farish and Amite streets. In 1953, Gladys Noel Bates, another graduate, unsuccessfully sued Mississippi seeking to force the state

to pay black teachers the same wage as was paid whites. By the time the Salters arrived, Tougaloo faculty members and students were openly flaunting Jim Crow by exchanging visits with their white counterparts at Millsaps in Jackson. Tougaloo became a center of insurgency, a safe, secure base for the academic likes of Salter. According to the college's historians, Clarice T. Campbell and Oscar Allan Rogers, Jr., in their book, *Mississippi: The View from Tougaloo*, the modest residence occupied by John and Eldri quickly became "Salter's Coffee House."

this alliance between Salter and Evers would set Jackson on its ear, a political fusion such as Paul Goodman once described would be required for change to occur in America: "a creative synthesis of the individual ethical insights of the great religious leaders and the collective social concern of the great revolutionists."

As "Never" buttons became commonplace in downtown Jackson, "Now" buttons were sported in equal, if not larger, numbers on the fringes of downtown where blacks had been segregated. "[O]ur Youth Council met," Salter writes, "usually

registered to vote, if they would permit their children to attend an integrated school should the day ever come or if they would join in a suit to open the schools to every child. Silent people got to talking about questions of concern to them and, in many instances, heard themselves publicly voicing an opinion for the first time.

Giving voice to feelings was the first step; taking action was the second. To dramatize their power and focus on segregated facilities at local businesses, the activists called for a boycott of downtown merchants. Swelling marches and bitter clashes with police occurred almost daily. Even Sundays weren't sacred. Students from Tougaloo sought to worship at the all-white churches, including prestigious First Jackson Baptist, where governors themselves communed. By May, 1963, thousands of people were in the streets at the call of Evers.

From outside Jackson, the national leadership of the NAACP, according to Salter's account, sought to turn the movement away from direct action toward the more predictable and controllable tactics of voter registration and civil-rights litigation in the courts. The "friendly" foundations also wanted to slow events in Jackson. They didn't want their money used for insurgency, just reform. The Kennedy administration, too, wanted the marches in Jackson, which seemed to get bloodier each day, switched to a voter registration drive. The direct action campaign was proving to be a smudge on the nation's democratic image and an embarrassment to an embattled liberal president.

Inside Jackson, business leaders were prepared to agree to any deal "to get things back to normal" — in other words, to restart the engine of commerce. Salter and King were rebaited, then alleged to be outside agitators seeking to mislead blacks. The few black attorneys in Mississippi were ordered by the NAACP to stop defending Jackson demonstrators, particularly Salter and King. Cointelpro, at that time an unheard-of FBI operation, used unsuspecting Jackson blacks to stir suspicions about SNCC workers, Evers's other key aides, as well as Salter and King.

Regular readers of *Southern Exposure* won't find this interpretation novel. Other works purport to demonstrate that similar collusion between



Photo by Michael Russell

Retired textile worker being tested for brown lung disease at a clinic sponsored by the Carolina Brown Lung Association.

Students by the score dropped by after classes or during the evenings to talk sometimes about sociology but usually about racism. In the Salters, they found sympathetic listeners, advocates and abolitionists. Coming to trust Salter, the students introduced him to Medgar Evers, long the target of the unofficial hate of the White Citizens Council and the Klan and official abuse by Jackson's police. He was the seasoned, indefatigable, unflinching president of the NAACP in Mississippi. In a matter of weeks,

in someone's home in North Jackson. . . . A dozen or so attended initially, but we began to pick up a few members here and there. The climate of fear was strong, though, among the youth and especially their parents, and out of that an apparent apathy had developed." To overcome this fear, and to evolve confidence, individually and collectively, Salter got the students to survey every black neighborhood in Jackson, asking folks such "touchy" questions as their names and addresses, if they were

national and local forces was a pattern across the South, not just in Jackson. Salter, however, offers a blow-by-blow account of a movement and its destruction which will be difficult to refute. In the final analysis we learn that when the politics of civil rights took precedence over civil action, then Evers, Salter, King and, tragically, Jackson's black community's struggle for freedom became expendable. Years earlier, as the tragedy of Little Rock unfolded, David Wieck, like Salter a scholar and activist, warned liberals that the federal government's use of "violence to enforce the new pattern [of desegregation] is not only dangerous, its effects are likely to be contrary to the aims which persons of liberal and radical social beliefs claim to share." For when a direct-action movement surrenders the initiative and responsibility for setting its own agenda to the federal government, Wieck continued, at exactly that point it abandons its own latent power. Perhaps the most damaging indictment Salter levels against the national NAACP leadership is that it, rather than the Jackson leadership, surrendered the responsibility and betrayed the movement. The question arises, then, did the grassroots, the people at the bottom, ever recover the initiative afterwards?

By his own account, Salter, as an organizer, placed himself at the heart of events in Jackson, giving unselfishly of body, opinion, resources, even family. In hindsight, and with the comfort of a book rather than a billy club to contend with, it is fashionably easy to point out how by today's measure of conduct Salter relegated Eldri, his equally committed wife, to boiling coffee, fixing sandwiches, nursing their children or hurrying them out of the state when the toughs got going. Male chauvinism is not the only charge which has been leveled against Salter. His role as a man who was seen as white — he actually is half-Indian, half-white — unabashedly taking leadership in a black community's struggle may also be questioned. But here in this book, and in this time, and within the context of Tougaloo, which was not a fort but a campus, his behavior is recorded as it took place. Salter's account of the events gains credence precisely because he unflinchingly tells about his part, refusing to spare himself from possible criticism.

Finally, it must be noted that Salter, who is among the most exciting community organizers alive, uses this book to teach about his art. Effective community organizers must address both the political and the immediate personal needs of those who are part of the organization. Salter details the ways of listening, the whys of patience, the compelling need to provide outlets for people to speak their own minds, all elements in the ever-evolving dialectic between what is and what ought to be. If the North Jackson Youth Council had confined its efforts to immediate obstacles to individual fulfillment, then they might have survived as a social service agency treating symptoms rather than causes. But if they had completely ignored the seeking of solutions to short-term needs, the Youth Council's struggle could not have kindled enough people's interest long enough to permit the development of skills and attitudes necessary to change oppressive institutions. Jackson never got over the time between October, 1961, and June, 1963.

As a book for organizers, Salter's self-published volume deserves a place beside Alinsky's more publicized *Rules for Radicals*, or the lesser-known classics *Tin Horns and Calico* by Henry Christman, *Heros and Heretics* by Barrows Dunham or the recent novel by John Nichols, *The Milagro Beanfield War* — four vital bibliographic supplements to the only real teacher for organizers, the hard-pressed seeking justice. □

— Frank Adams

by Chet Fuller. Houghton-Mifflin, 1981. 320 pp. \$12.95.

I HEAR THEM CALLING MY NAME

In the 17 years since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a good deal of media attention has been focused on the South and its re-

emergence as a major cultural, economic and political region of the country. Journalist Chet Fuller gives us a different perspective on this complex and rapidly changing region. *I Hear Them Calling My Name* is a penetrating account of the forgotten members of the South: people who never reaped the benefits of civil-rights legislation and who weren't equipped with the skills or education necessary to get the kinds of jobs that provide the middle class with its insulation. His is the story of a South that seems to have been tucked or wished into the recesses of Southern history.

Fuller, a reporter for the *Atlanta Journal*, traveled throughout the South in the guise of an itinerant laborer; he talked with the unemployed, the elderly and the urban and rural poor, as well as with those people at the local, state and national levels whose decisions shape the daily lives of millions of people. The result is a book which suggests that the growth and newly discovered affluence of the region have not benefited a significant number of black and poor people. In incident after incident, Fuller introduces us to the personal tragedies, the hopes and the resilience of the disfranchised and excluded members of our society, the black and poor people on whose backs the Civil Rights Movement and the New South were built:

Freddie Lee, who told me he wanted to join the Job Corps, claimed that he loved school when he was younger. "In elementary school," he boasted, "I got perfect attendance." He went to a nearby dresser and pulled out some certificates from a drawer and showed them to me. He was proud. Perfect attendance, they said.

"But in the eighth grade and the ninth grade," he said, "everything started changing and looks like I just couldn't hack it no more. I don't know what it was, everything . . . just went wrong. I couldn't do nothing right. And on top of that we couldn't afford to buy no clothes, cause my grandmama just git a little check. . . . I was shame to go to school after we couldn't buy no clothes," he said. "You don't wanna be raggedy all the time. People might not understand that, but I do. I know how I feel."

We hear the resistance of a black farmer:

"I wasn't gonna let him [the white man] take my land," he said one day, screwing his long-billed cap onto his boney head. "I got me a lawyer and got my land square. You can't get out there with no talk when these people trying to take your land, you got to git out there with some money and fight. . . . I seen so many people washed out," he said sadly. "They was too trusting and didn't tend to their business right. You got to watch these whites. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not militant or nothing, cause you got to live with these people. But you got to stick up for yourself so they won't run over you."

And the enduring dream of an elderly woman:

"This 16 acres of land we sitting on right here. This used to be my land. Me and my husband . . . bought it 35 years ago. . . . Now it ain't mine. We built this house ourself, my husband and me. . . . It ain't mine no more. It belongs to a white man now and he says I got to pay 'im rent to stay here. And I made this house — made it! Wasn't nothing here . . . made it!

"I want that land 'fore I die. I want it. And I b'leve the Lord will make a way for me to get it.

"When I first lost my land, it hurt me to my heart; to my heart; to my heart! You hear me! To my heart!"

As a journalist Fuller is at his best in moments such as these, where the daily experience and pain of social and economic oppression is exposed unfettered by needless interpretation. In this way, *I Hear Them Calling My Name* joins such works, as Studs Terkel's *Working*, Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's *Hidden Injuries of Class*, David Wellman's *Portraits of White Racism* and John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* in illuminating important features of racial and class inequality as persistent realities of American life.

One other feature of the book makes it an interesting and useful



Photo by Russ Smith

The United League of Northern Mississippi demonstrates in Holly Springs for jobs and housing, while it protests Ku Klux Klan intimidation and violence.

volume, particularly for political activists. Fuller's treatment of the rural and urban black underclass is infused with self-dialogue, especially about the personal conflicts the project generated for the author.

To celebrate my homecoming, we fired up the gas grill in the back yard, put ribs and chicken on to cook, and stuffed a few beers into the freezer to get ice cold. . . .

Here I was cooling it with beer and barbecue, while the family I'd eaten grits with the day before in Americus was

probably eating grits again, if they even had that. And what did Freddie Mullins and his grandmother have on their dinner table? How could I have gotten so far away in only a few hours? How could I have forgotten all the pain so quickly? I was already turning my back on them again. And how could I? They were my people.

They were without my college degree, without my job and middle-class lifestyle. They were me without the chance I'd had to climb the great American ladder of success.

In that frozen moment, I decided I would go back and face them again. I had to, for I realized that I bore them some responsibility.

As a product, participant and benefactor of the struggles of the 1960s, Fuller uses his self-dialogue (and ultimately his dialogue with others of his generation) to invite the reader to share his thoughts, values and conflicts as a member of the emerging generation of black middle-class professionals. That he has such a dialogue is itself significant; that he shares it with the reader as an integral part of the book is persuasive; that he

observational approach which Fuller employs is firmly rooted in the ethnographic traditions of sociology and anthropology. The book offers invaluable illustrations of the interaction between the investigator/participant and the subject(s) of the investigation, of the careful and relentless use of description and detail as the basis for the construction of a complex social world, and of a writing style which is accessible to both the layperson and the professional. In this sense I find the book written very much in the spirit of Kai Erikson's sensitive yet penetrating account of the Buffalo Creek, West Virginia, flood in *Everything in Its Path*.

people is particularly crucial. As Fuller demonstrates, this question is complex, painful and full of contradictions. His ultimate answer, by writing this book, is instructive to others: he chose to recognize, discuss openly and act on his moral, historical and political responsibility toward the people he reports about, the people who "were me without the chance I'd had." □

— Herman Gray

by Doris Betts. Knopf, 1981.
359 pp. \$13.50.

HEADING WEST

T

he first thing I thought when I started reading Doris Betts's new novel, *Heading West*, was: this is Anne Tyler's plot — the one she used in *Earthly Possessions*, which I reviewed in these pages nearly four years ago (Vol. VI, No. 4). In both novels by these two North Carolina-bred writers, we follow the adventures of a dissatisfied woman in her thirties who's been longing to flee from home, where she's hemmed in and weighted down by family responsibilities (involving in both cases a querulous invalid mother). And in both novels the woman gets (in the words of the traditional excuse of rapists) "exactly what she's been asking for": forced escape, at the hands of an armed kidnapper who takes her with him as a hostage on his wild flight across several states. But while Tyler's heroine/narrator grows and changes during this journey, and eventually arrives — however reluctantly — at a new understanding of her life, the travels of Betts's character are for the most part merely geographical; we don't understand much about where she's been, emotionally, and so we don't much care where she ends up, at least until the last 100 pages.

My disappointment with *Heading West* has, however, nothing to do with the similarity of the two plot lines. No verifiably unique stories are left under the sun, and, as Faulkner said, the "eternal verities of the



Carolina Action protests unfair insurance rates in Greensboro, North Carolina.

wrestles with the contradictions of his own personal affluence in the face of such poverty is hopeful evidence that intellectuals and professionals can maintain strong ties with the larger black community and the struggles of an earlier era. *I Hear Them Calling My Name* is thus a statement about a current generation of scholars, activists, writers and journalists who are products of the nationalist, civil-rights and student movements of the 1960s. As we continue in the traditions of people like DuBois, Malcolm and Martin, it is important that we continue the dialogue with ourselves, our elders, our communities.

Finally, it should be noted that the

The limitations of Fuller's work stem from the form and style of the presentation: I was left wanting more analysis of this carefully observed society than Fuller could deliver in the context of journalistic reportage and self-reflection. However, the book's limitations may at the same time be the sources of its real strength. This kind of self-reflection has important implications for the political direction and intellectual leadership of the black community in the decades ahead. As a new generation of scholars, thinkers and middle-class aspirants assume various professional and leadership responsibilities, the question of their relationship to the masses of black

heart" remain always new, always fresh grist for the mill of a good novelist. But comparison with Tyler's book (and with much of Betts's earlier work, particularly the fine first novel, *The River to Pickle Beach*, and the short story collections) does help to pinpoint some of Betts's failures here. A major flaw in *Heading West* is that both the major characters are so dreadfully unlikable that a reader is hard put to know where her or his sympathies should lie. The woman — Nancy Finch — is the epitome of an embittered small-town spinster; her kidnapper is right out of a bad movie: he's a ferret-faced, narrow-eyed creep with a broken tooth and tattooed arms. This use of stereotypes does not in itself doom the novel, but Betts never lets us inside, never cracks the shell to show us — as Tyler does so beautifully with her pair of misfits — the tender flesh which connects them to the rest of the human race.

The novel does pick up, though, in its final section, after a horrifying confrontation between kidnapper and hostage in the inferno-like depths of the Grand Canyon. This upward movement happens mostly because Nancy has the good luck to be rescued by a kindly Arizona dog-breeder and her son. Under their intelligent care, Nancy warms up enough that the reader can begin to take some interest in her fate: will she return to the confines of her family home in Greenway, North Carolina, or will she opt for a wider, more stringent life out on the mesas? The conclusion of the story is intriguing, and far more satisfying than the first two-thirds of the novel. □

— Chris Mayfield

SHORTS

Southern Strategy, by Bob Lancaster. Seaview Books, 1981. 218 pp. \$10.95.

Next fall will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the traumatic Central High School desegregation crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas. (One reason that no official commemoration has been scheduled is that the city and state are still commuting between federal courts over racial balance in the public school system.) Reading a hilarious new account of the period, *Southern Strategy*, a first novel by Bob Lancaster, might be an appropriate way to celebrate the occasion. Lancaster, a young Arkansas native and former newspaper employee, gives us the controversy through the eyes of Amos Shellnut, a wacky sawmill worker living in the small town of Sherman, Arkansas, not far from Little Rock.

Amos seems to be the only white resident of Sherman not preoccupied by the Army's "invasion" of Little Rock and the integration crisis. Since his wife left him, he quit his job, burned all his furniture and decided to run for county sheriff for lack of anything else to do. This raucous and ribald fable makes a serious point: not all white Southerners, particularly

working people, can be led by the nose by politicians using the ring of racism. □

— Mark Pinsky

Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America, by Linda Atkinson. Crown Press, 1978. 246 pp. \$7.95.

Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America stands head and shoulders above most biographies written for young adult audiences. Atkinson captures the rebellious essence of Mother Jones by weaving the details of her life into a warp of the social, political and labor strife of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. The book places great emphasis on Jones's concern with child labor, a subject which quickly captures the hearts and minds of young readers. Debs, Haywood, Powderly — all of the great socialists of the day — are depicted with great respect as men and women of extraordinary courage and integrity. The book stands not so much as a biography of Mary Jones as an alternative to watered-down and distorted textbook history. □

— Liz Kettle

Nuclear Witnesses: Insiders Speak Out, by Leslie J. Freeman. W.W. Norton & Co., 1981. 330 pp. \$16.95.

Amidst the never-ending stream of technical reports, gloomy forecasts and shrill rhetoric, Leslie Freeman's *Nuclear Witnesses: Insiders Speak Out* stands out as a unique study of the powerful effects the nuclear industry has on individual human beings. Freeman allows 16 people to explain how the nuclear fuel cycle has intruded on their lives and why they now feel it's time to pull the plug on nuclear reactors and quit producing nuclear weapons. Six of the 16 interviewees are certifiable "technical experts," but most are blue-collar nuclear industry workers, including a carpenter, uranium miner, welder and atomic bomb test veteran. The gripping stories these folks tell provide a fine non-technical examination of an often-imposing topic and make the book must reading for anyone interested in the nuclear power/weapons issue. □

— Jim Overton

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

L.C. Dorsey is director of the Mississippi office of the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons.

Frank Adams is a writer, teacher and long-time friend of *Southern Exposure*.

Herman Gray, a former student at Florida A&M and a former teacher at North Carolina A&T University, is now a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Chris Mayfield edits *Facing South*, the syndicated newspaper column of the Institute for Southern Studies.

Liz Kettle is a librarian in California and a former intern of the Institute for Southern Studies.

Mark Pinsky is a free-lance writer living in North Carolina.

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

BOOKS on the SOUTH

This list consists of books published since September, 1981. Book entries include works through January, 1982. All books are to be published in 1981 unless otherwise indicated. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index in July and August, 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

"Agrarian Chautauqua: The Lecture System of the Southern Farmer's Alliance Movement," by Lois Scoggins Self. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism, by Bell Hooks (Boston: South End Press). \$7.00.

All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies, ed. by Gloria Hull et al (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press). \$7.95.

"An Analysis of the Clash Over Issues Between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois," by Thomas Edward Harris. Temple Univ.

The Black Discovery of America, by Michael Bradley (New York: Everest House). \$12.95.

"Civil Rights: The Emergence of a Movement," by Jack M. Bloom. Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1980.

The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History, by R. Douglas Hurt (Chicago: Nelson-Hall). \$9.95.

"Educational Imperialism in the South: An Analysis of Schooling Opportunities for Blacks in the Southern United States from 1865 to 1954," by William Bernard Harvey. Rutgers Univ.

The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr., by David J. Garrow (New York: W.W. Norton). \$15.95.

"Frontier Exchange in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Race Relations and Economic Life in Colonial Louisiana, 1699-1783," by Daniel Henry Usner, Jr.

Duke Univ.

"Graduation and Non-Graduation Rates of Black and White Freshmen Entering Two State Universities in Virginia," by James Archie McLean. Ohio State Univ.

The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War, by William Harris (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). \$15.95.

A History of Hamilton County, Tennessee, by James F. Livingood (Memphis: Memphis State Univ. Press). \$17.50.

The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860, by Drew G. Faust (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$8.95.

Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina, by Harry L. Watson (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$32.50.

"Lawyers in Politics: Mid-Nineteenth Century Kentucky as a Case Study," by James Wice Gordon. Univ. of Kentucky.

Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: Southern West Virginia Coal Miners, 1880-1922, by David A. Corbin (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press). \$12.50.

Long Memory: The Black Experience in America, by Mary Berry and John W. Blassingame (New York: Oxford Univ. Press). \$10.95.

Mississippi 1990, ed. by Walter M. Mathews (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$12.50.

Petroleum Politics and the Texas Railroad Commission, by David F. Prindle (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press). \$14.95.

"Power, Its Locus and Function in Defining Social Commentary in the Church of Christ, Illustrated by a Case Study of Black Civil Rights," by Robert Christy Douglas. Univ. of Southern California, 1980.

Public Policy in Texas, by Neal Tammarhill and Wendell M. Bedichek (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.) \$10.95.

Slavery and Freedom, by Willie L. Rose (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). \$17.95.

"The Slavery Debate in Missouri, 1831-1855," by Barbara Layenette Gray. Univ. of Missouri-Columbia, 1980.

"The Transformation of Local State and Class Structures and Resistance to the Civil Rights Movement in the South," by David Ray James. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.

Why the South Will Survive, ed. by Clyde N. Wilson (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press). \$8.00.

Working With History: The Historical Records Survey in Louisiana and the Nation, 1936-1942, by Burl Noggle (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$14.95.

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Archie Campbell: His Story, by Archie Campbell and Ben Byrd (Memphis: Memphis State Univ. Press). \$9.95.

"Arkansas's Charles Hillman Brough, 1876-1935: An Interpretation," by Charles Orson Cook. Univ. of Houston, 1980.

"George Walton: A Political Biography," by Edwin Clifford Bridges. Univ. of Chicago.

George Washington Carver: Scientist and Symbol, by Linda O. McMurray (New York:

Oxford Univ. Press). \$25.00.

"John L. McLaurin: A Political Biography," by Rodger Emerson Stroup. Univ. of South Carolina, 1980.

"The Life and Legacy of Oliver Brown, the First Listed Plaintiff of Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas," by Isabell Masters. Univ. of Oklahoma, 1980.

"The Life and Work of William Joseph McGlothlin," by Carl Wesley Wilkinson. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"The Mind of Frederick Douglass," by Waldo Emerson Martin. Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1980.

The Oratory of Southern Demagogues, ed. by Cal M. Logue and Howard Dorgan (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$35.00.

Reflections of Southern Jewry: The Letters of Charles Wessolowsky, ed. by Louis Schmier (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press). \$14.95.

"Sam Houston's Quest for Personal Harmony: An Interpretation," by Thomas Heard Kreneck. Bowling Green State Univ.

Texas Rhapsody: Memories of a Native Son, by Bill Porterfield (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston). \$13.95.

"The Wild Ass of the Ozarks: Jeff Davis and the Social Bases of Southern Demagoguery, 1888-1913," by Raymond Ostby Arsenault. Brandeis Univ.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

"The Archaeology of Afro-American Slavery in Coastal Georgia: A Regional Perception of Slave Household and Community Patterns," by Theresa Ann Singleton. Univ. of Florida, 1980.

Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues, by David Evans (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press). \$29.95.

Black Beauty, White Heat: A Pictorial History of Classical Jazz, 1920-1950, by Frank Driggs and Harris Levine (New York: William Morrow). \$29.95.

Daily Life in Louisiana, 1815-1830, by Liliane Crete (Baton Rouge: Lsu Press). \$25.00.

"Linguistic Variation in the Speech of Wilmington, North Carolina," by Ruth Aleman Nix. Duke Univ., 1980.

Nashville Tales, by Louise Davis (Gretna, LA: Pelican Press). \$12.95.

The South and Film, ed. by Warren French (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$12.50.

Varieties of Southern Evangelicism, ed. by David E. Harrell, Jr. (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press). \$8.95.

LITERATURE IN THE SOUTH

The Achievement of Robert Penn Warren, by James H. Justus (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$12.95.

"An Anthology of Tennessee Short Fiction," by Linda Burton. Univ. of Tennessee.

Black Sister: Poetry by American Black Women, 1746-1980, ed. by Erlene Stetson (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press). \$9.95.

A Cosmos of My Own: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, ed. by Doreen Fowler and Ann Abadie (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$9.95.

"The Development of the Theme of

Chivalry in Nineteenth-Century Southern Literature," by Susan Page Ward. Duke Univ.

"Family in the Fiction of Flannery O'Connor," by Donald Devere Ross. Georgia State Univ.

"Faulkner and the Novelistic Imagination," by Robert Dale Parker. Yale Univ., 1980.

From the Dark Tower: Afro-American Writers, 1900 to 1960, by Arthur P. Davis (Washington: Howard Univ. Press). \$7.95.

Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817 to 1967, ed. by James B. Lloyd (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$50.00.

"The Novels of Black American Women," by Barbara Jean Varga-Coley. SUNY-Stony

Brook.

"Protest and Resistance in Six Novels of Racial Conflict," by Alva Maria Edmondson. UNC-Chapel Hill.

Tomorrow Is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936, by Anne Goodwyn Jones (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$12.95.

Washing the Cow's Skull: Texas Poetry Anthology, ed. by Dave Oliphant and Luis A. Ramos-Garcia (Austin: Studia Hispanica). \$10.00.

"Women on Women: The Black Woman Writer of the Harlem Renaissance," by Deborah Edith McDowell. Purdue Univ., 1979.

CONTEMPORARY MARXISM

Contemporary Marxism, the provocative journal of the Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis, takes on crucial issues from a working class Marxist perspective. Editors are Marlene Dixon and Susanne Jonas. Authors, representing a broad range of positions, include Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, Anibal Quijano, Samir Amin, Ruy Mauro Marini, James Petras, Étienne Balibar.

Revolution and Intervention in Central America

Special Emergency Issue in response to the urgent situation in Central America. Features documents from revolutionary organizations in the region, as well as analyses by leading Marxists in the U.S. and Latin America. *No. 3, Summer 1981*

Rise of the Right in the Capitalist West

Timely, in-depth analysis of the growing right-wing movements worldwide and the failure of liberal "solutions" in response to the international capitalist crisis. Invaluable for movements resisting austerity and repression in the coming period. *No. 4, Winter 1981*

Upcoming Issues

- Immigration and Changes in the International Division of Labor
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No. 2, The European Workers' Movement
Guest Editor: Immanuel Wallerstein

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MAILING OFFICE: [Blank]
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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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MAILING OFFICE: [Blank]
BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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MAILING OFFICE: [Blank]
BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]

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MAILING OFFICE: [Blank]
BUSINESS OFFICE: [Blank]




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Human Rights: A Cry for Freedom

by Malcolm X

All 22 million Afro-Americans have the same basic goal, the same basic objective. We want freedom, justice and equality, we want recognition and respect as *human beings*. We are not divided over objectives, but we have allowed our racist enemies to divide us over the *methods* of attaining these common objectives. Our enemy has magnified our minor points of difference, then maneuvered us into wasting our time debating and fighting each other over insignificant and irrelevant issues.

The common goal of 22 million Afro-Americans is respect as *human beings*, the God-given right to be a *human being*. Our common goal is to obtain the *human rights* that America has been denying us. We can never get civil rights in America until our *human rights* are first restored. We will never be recognized as citizens there until we are first recognized as *humans*.

The present American "system" can never produce freedom for the black man. A chicken cannot lay a duck egg because the chicken's "system" is not designed or equipped to produce a duck egg.

The American "system" (political, economic and social) was produced from the enslavement of the black man, and this present "system" is capable only of perpetuating that enslavement. In order for a chicken to produce a duck egg, its system would have to undergo a drastic and painful revolutionary change . . . or REVOLUTION. So be it with America's enslaving system.

In the past the civil-rights groups in America have been foolishly attempting to obtain constitutional rights from the same Government that has conspired against us to deny our people these rights. Only a world body (*a world court*) can be instrumental in obtaining those rights which belong to a human being by dint of his being a member of the human family.

As long as the freedom struggle of the 22 million Afro-Americans is labeled a civil-rights issue it remains a domestic problem under the jurisdiction of the United States

and as such bars the intervention and support of our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as that of the well-meaning whites of Europe. But once our struggle is lifted from the confining civil-rights label to the level of *human rights*, our freedom struggle has then become *internationalized*.

Just as the violation of *human rights* of our brothers and sisters in South Africa and Angola is an international issue and has brought the racists of South Africa and Portugal under attack from all other independent governments at the United Nations, once the miserable plight of the 22 million Afro-Americans is also lifted to the level of *human rights*, our struggle then becomes an international issue and the direct concern of all other civilized governments. We can then take the racist American Government before the World Court and have the racists in it exposed and condemned as the criminals that they are.

Why should it be necessary to go before a world court in order to solve America's race problem? One hundred years ago a civil war was fought supposedly to free us from the Southern racists. We are still the victims of their racism. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was supposedly to free us. We are still crying for freedom. The politicians fought for amendments to the Constitution supposedly to make us first-class citizens. We are still second-class citizens.

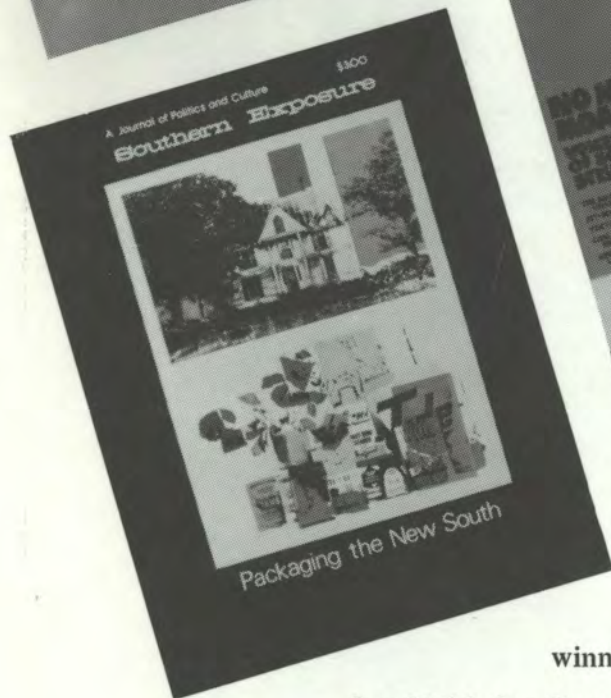
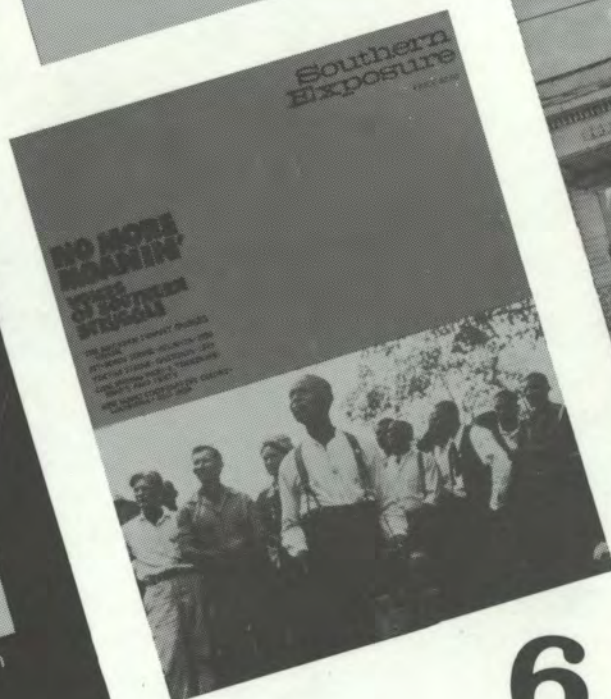
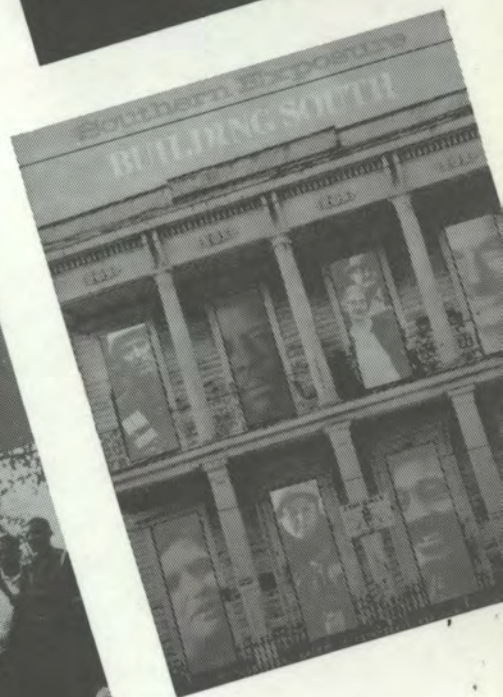
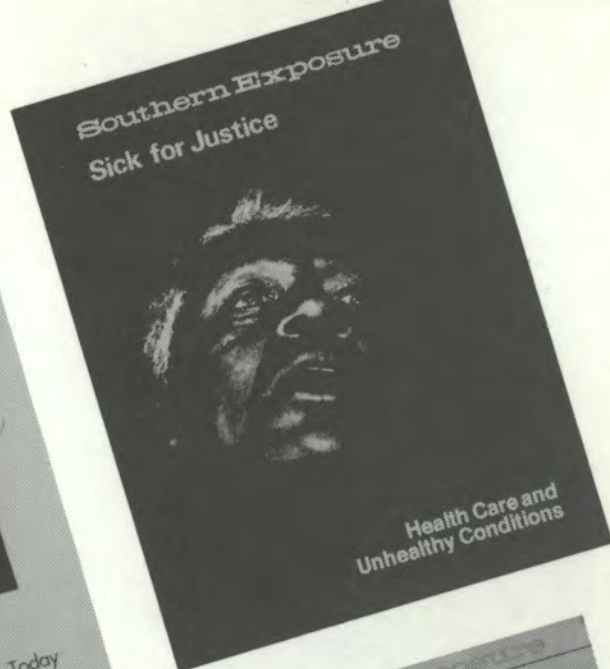
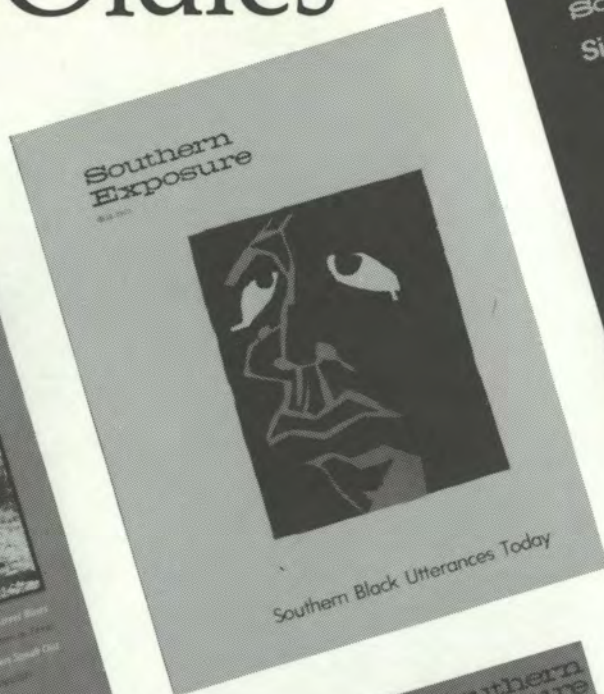
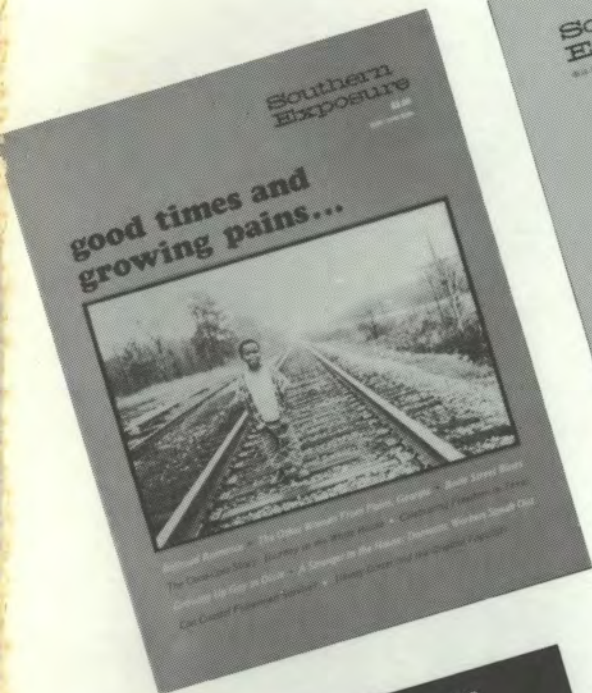
In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court itself issued a historic decision outlawing the segregated school system, and 10 years have passed and this law is yet to be enforced even in the Northern states.

If white America doesn't think the Afro-American, especially the upcoming generations, is capable of adopting the guerrilla tactics now being used by oppressed people elsewhere on this earth, she is making a drastic mistake. She is underestimating the force that can do her the most harm.

A real honest effort to remove the just grievances of the 22 million Afro-Americans must be made immediately or in a short time it will be too late.

El Hajj Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X), one of the most influential people ever to speak out on the subject of Afro-American liberation, wrote this for the Egyptian Gazette of August 25, 1964. It is reprinted from Malcolm X, the Man and His Times, edited by John Henrik Clarke (Collier Books, 1969), with the permission of the editor. February is Afro-American history month and the sixteenth anniversary of Malcolm's assassination.

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