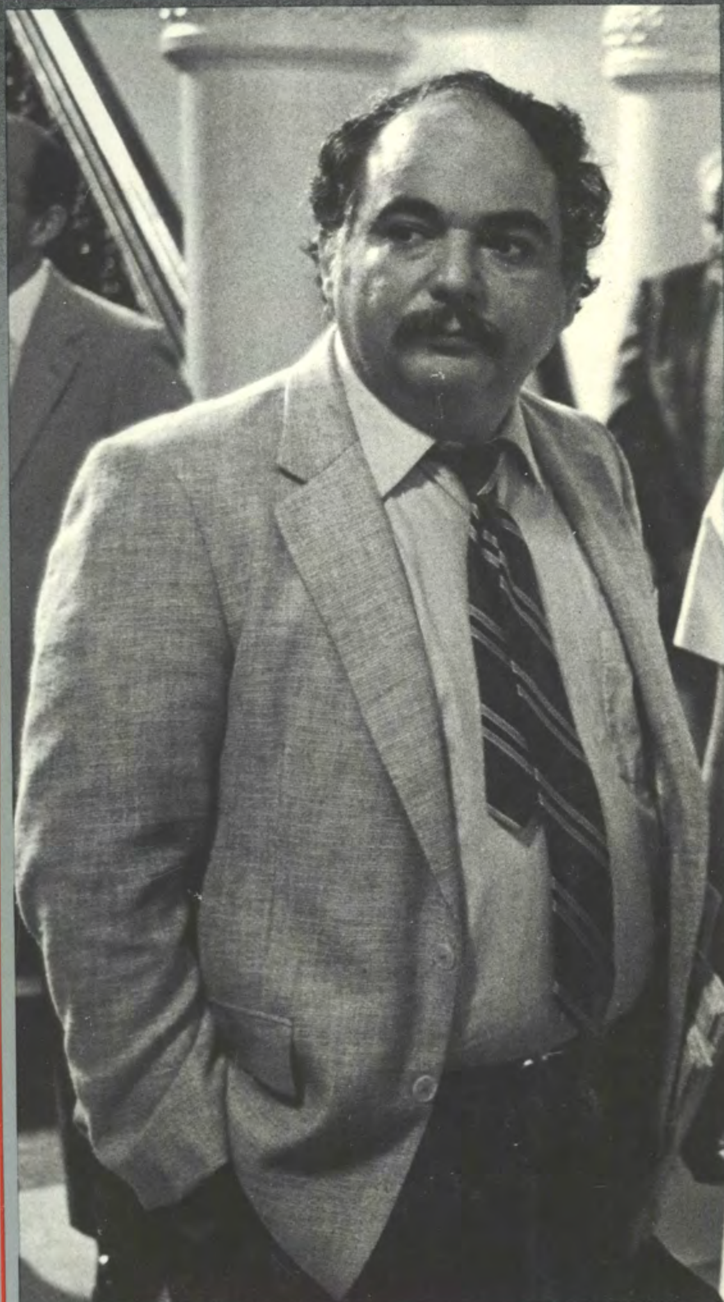
Southern Exposure

TO AGITATE THE DISPOSSESSED

On the Road with Ernie Cortes



P.H. Polk: Carry Me Home

Gulf Coast Tenants Fight for Housing, Peace

Death Watch

and more. . .

JULY/AUGUST 1985

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Southern Exposure

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Lest We Forget

— by Edward H. Peeples, Jr., and John V. Moeser

In these years of the mid-1980s, when we celebrate the twentieth, twenty-fifth, thirtieth anniversaries of the events of the Civil Rights Movement — particularly when we recall the passing of time since the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision of 1954 — we have an excellent opportunity to pause and re-examine some of the reasons why racial problems stubbornly persist in American life.

As two native sons of the South and long-time students of racial politics, we fear that many Americans have yet to learn the essential lesson of our country's racial history, and that our errors today will inevitably come back to haunt us in the future. In every generation there have been those who warned us of this truth. We must ask: had we taken seriously the message of these prophets, would we still have our massive urban slums, our outrageous rates of minority unemployment and infant mortality, and our millions of alienated minority youth?

And what about those who scorned the prophets and stood in the path of racial progress? Are they not now accountable for their resistance? We do not mean accountable in the sense that acts of racial injustice must be avenged, but rather that we as a society must never forget how the irresponsible acts of one generation can injure the next.

The case of an especially persuasive opinion-maker who fought court-ordered desegregation in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the 1950s and '60s may serve to illustrate the necessity for careful intergenerational accountability.

In 1954 most white Virginians, like most other white Southerners, gazed in total incredulity at the Supreme Court's order to desegregate the public schools. The notion of racial separation so possessed their leaders that they went to every length to preserve the status quo. At the time, almost all of Virginia's political elites enthusiastically endorsed the strategy of "massive resistance," which called for blatant defiance of the *Brown* decision. While the list of these powerful people is long and interesting, perhaps the most intriguing individual was one of the state's more highly touted newspaper editorial writers, James Jackson Kilpatrick of the *Richmond News Leader*.

photo by: Joe Pfister

The nation knows James J. Kilpatrick as a clever and erudite syndicated columnist whose byline from Scrabble, Virginia, is widely read and whose adroit repartee with Shana Alexander on "60 Minutes" made him an instant celebrity. This is the very same James Kilpatrick who, in the days of Massive Resistance, wrote extensively and engaged in relentless attacks on civil rights advocates.

From the very first days after the Supreme Court decision, Kilpatrick employed his flair for writing to incite resistance among whites. His editorials often deeply insulted blacks or impugned the integrity of those who opposed segregation. In 1962 he outlined his own racial dogma in a book called *The Southern Case for School Segregation*. There he argued for continuing apartheid, citing all of the widely circulated white supremacist rhetoric and pseudoscience of the period. Samples of his brief for racism appear in quotes on the next page.

Clearly the most tragic consequence of Kilpatrick's and others' influence was Virginia's closing in 1958 and '59 of all public schools in four districts that were under orders to desegregate. Among these was one of the original *Brown* decision cases, Prince Edward County, whose public schools were shut down for five years. The social scars of that catastrophe are still borne by our people today.

Ultimately, Massive Resistance failed; 1959 saw the first school desegregation in Virginia. The Civil Rights Movement then gained momentum and Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, all leading Kilpatrick to ease himself away from segregationist positions. He quit his job at the *News Leader* and moved on to the *Washington Star*, writing a nationally syndicated column and contributing frequently to the *National Review*.

In recent years Kilpatrick has acknowledged that discrimination on the basis of race is wrong, but he expresses no shame or embarrassment over his

earlier views. We cordially welcome him out of the camp of racial bigotry. But we have to wonder what drives converts like Kilpatrick to continuously pursue their inexhaustible attacks against every measure which could conceivably foster racial and economic progress.

This brings us to the crux of the Kilpatrick example and to the broader question of intergenerational accountability. The current obsession of the Reagan administration with dismantling the meager methods we have had to rectify past racial and economic inequities reflects a serious deficiency in understanding the future price we shall pay for today's neglect.

The deliberate dismemberment of civil rights divisions in the federal government, affirmative action programs, school busing plans (even where they have proved practical), and educational, health, income maintenance, and community development programs — all these are actions with grave consequences for our nation's future. When the next generation is compelled to face the exponentially increased social and financial debts associated with these painful and costly human problems, who then will be held accountable?□

Edward H. Peeples, Jr., is associate professor of preventive medicine and biostatistics at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). He served for many years on Richmond's Commission on Human Relations and was its chairperson for the year ending in June 1984. John V. Moeser is associate professor of urban studies and planning at VCU. He chaired the same commission from 1981 to '83.

Words to Remember:
Quotations from James J. Kilpatrick

"I cherish the further idea that a really massive, significant change in race relations will not come until the Negro people develop leaders who will ask themselves the familiar question: 'Why are we treated as second-class citizens?' and return a candid answer to it: 'Because all too often that is what we are.'"

"In terms of enduring values — the kind of values respected wherever scholars gather . . . — in terms of values that last, and mean something, and excite universal admiration and respect, what has man gained from the history of the Negro race? The answer, alas, is 'virtually nothing.' From the dawn of civilization to the middle of the twentieth century, the Negro race, as a race, has contributed no more than a few grains of sand to the enduring monuments of mankind."

"Dr. W.C. George, head of the Department of Anatomy at the University of North Carolina, [writes]: 'Whatever other virtues Negroes may have, and they have many, all of the evidence that I know about — and there is a lot of it — indicates that the Caucasian race is superior to the Negro race in the creation and maintenance of what we call civilization.'

"A great many white Southerners accept this thesis implicitly and unquestioningly; they infer the innate 'inferiority' of the typical Negro . . . simply on the basis of their lifelong observation of the Negro people about them. No other explanation appeals to their common sense, or to their native prejudice, or to both. This is something they know, *and they profess to know it not in anthropological terms, but in terms of ordinary human observation.*

"I incline toward this view myself."

"These are children *we are concerned with, white and Negro alike, and the fact is . . . that white and Negro children in the South have many quite different educational requirements. The essentially dual and separate society of the South cannot be dissolved overnight by court decree. For years to come in the South, the practice of law and medicine, the handling of banking and finance, the sale of stocks and bonds, the management of large retail and wholesale enterprises, and the administration of commerce and government will continue to be overwhelmingly restricted to white persons. . . .*

"All this has to be considered practically in terms of curriculum planning, guidance, teaching emphasis, and the like. Nothing very significant is accomplished, really, in offering physics or calculus to Negro boys who intend to drop out at the ninth-grade level and go to work farming or cutting pulpwood. Negro girls who realistically expect to find employment in a tobacco stemmery, a laundry, a bakery, or in domestic service have educational requirements materially different from those of their white counterparts."

Nuclear workers call for safety changes

After an historic conference in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in May 1985, a national coalition of unions representing hourly workers at U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) installations has called for fundamental changes in health and safety practices in the atomic industry.

The meeting was hosted by the Atomic Trades and Labor Council (ATLC), which represents 4,400 hourly workers at the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons facility and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), both in Oak Ridge. Other unions attending the meeting included United Steel Workers of America Local 8031, representing 3,000 workers at the Rocky Flats Plutonium Facility in Colorado; the Amarillo Metal Trades Council, representing 3,000 workers at the Pantex Nuclear Weapons Facility near Amarillo, Texas; International Association of Machinists Local 314, representing 4,000 workers at the Bendix Plant in Kansas City, Missouri; and five other local international unions.

The conference was the third in a series which began in November 1984 when labor representatives from 11 nuclear fuels and weapons plants and four international unions met in Cincinnati, Ohio. The May conference centered on the Radiation Reorganization Act currently being considered by Congress. After the meeting, the coalition called for three specific actions for the protection of workers' health:

- strip DOE of all health research authority, and transfer that authority to the Department of Health and Human Services;
- strip DOE of all regulatory authority, and transfer that authority to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration;
- place workers on all advisory, oversight, and investigative boards concerned with health and safety.

The unions' concerns grew out of evidence of high cancer death rates emerging from long-term studies of over 600,000 U.S. nuclear weapons workers. Among the specific findings are:

- workers at ORNL have a 49 percent excess death rate from leukemia compared to the general public; deaths from leukemia increased dramatically with greater radiation exposure;
- workers who fabricate nuclear warhead parts at the Y-12 plant have a death rate from brain tumors nearly 500 percent higher than the general public and a death rate from leukemia and aleukemia over 900 percent higher than the general public;
- a 1976 study of employees at South Carolina's Savannah River Plant found an incidence of lung cancer in male white-collar workers 60 percent higher than average and an incidence of leukemia among male blue-collar workers 114 percent above normal.

The study which drew the most attention from the unions gathered at Oak Ridge was one which DOE never published or even finished. That secret study showed increased rates of respiratory disease and four kinds of cancer among 19,000 women who worked at the Y-12 plant between 1943 and 1947. The results of the study are detailed in a recent report by the Environmental Policy Institute of Washington, DC.

At the conference, Robert Keil, president of the ATLC, charged DOE with "out and out deceit. I don't think we've been leveled with." He cited a fall 1984 meeting with Robert Goldsmith, the DOE official in charge of worker health studies, in which "he specifically said that no studies were being done on women workers."

Dr. Carl Lushbaugh, a scientist at Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) and a member of a team investigating workers' health at three DOE plants, including Y-12 and ORNL, says that women hadn't been studied as a group because they were too hard to

keep track of since "They always change their names." In an interview with a Knoxville reporter about the secret study, he added, "I know we didn't carry it on because we didn't get anything that was finite. We were doing many other things at the time. It didn't come out as a high priority." Lushbaugh also told the workers, according to Keil, that there were not enough blacks working at the plants to make an accurate study.

Lushbaugh has stated, "We don't think anybody should have alarm about [the studies], or consider them a basis for action. . . . We just don't consider them substantive conclusions." When asked by a union representative when the studies will yield conclusions, Dr. Shirley Fry, another ORAU investigator, replied, "Oh, never. These studies will never be conclusive as long as we have workers out there to study."

Keil charged that health and safety conditions were getting worse at the plants. He said that those responsible for analyzing potential work hazards in the plant are being overruled by supervisors more interested in cutting corners and saving money. "There's more emphasis on productivity, saving money and corporate profit than there is on safety of workers."

The unions say workers, as the subjects of these studies, should be informed of even "inconclusive" results, as well as have an oversight role in selecting the design of the studies and monitoring them. When there are exposures to known cancer-causing substances, "the union's priority is to *reduce exposures*," according to the

ATLC. "We oppose the 'wait and see' attitude which postpones all action until studies are completed. By that time, it may be too late to do anything except bury the dead."

Southern connection to Central America

Covert and overt, private and public, the connection of the South to right-wing forces in Central America is vast and growing.

Perhaps the most dramatic case is that of a private organization based in the Southeast recruiting Native American Vietnam veterans to train Miskito Indians who are fighting Nicaragua's Sandinista government. The effort has drawn heavy fire from some North American Indian leaders, who see it as part of a move to wreck a recently concluded agreement between the Sandinistas and one Miskito group on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.

Captain D. L. "Pappy" Hicks, a Cherokee living in Croup, Texas, who is a former Special Operations Black Beret, told Pacific News Service reporter John Ross that a six-man team of Native American Vietnam vets has signed on for a three-month tour of Honduras. Hicks, who says, "We support President Reagan 100 percent," claims they will provide what he calls "humanitarian" aid to the Miskito faction encamped north of the Coco River led by Steadman Fagoth. "We're not taking weapons," he says, "but the Miskitos have cases of them just rotting there in the jungle that they don't know how to use. We're just going to show them how."

The all-Indian tour is being pieced together by Civilian Military Assistance (CMA), a group which drew public notice in 1984 when two of its members were killed in a helicopter crash inside Nicaragua. CMA has been assisting anti-Sandinista troops based inside Honduras since the CIA's program of covert military aid was terminated by Congress over a year ago.

Hicks is recruiting among members of the Vietnam Era Veterans Inter-Tribal Association. That group's board chairperson, Billy Walkabout, says he wholeheartedly supports the project. "They're fighting communism, aren't they?" says Walkabout, a former Black Beret like Hicks. The group has 500 members, 75 percent of whom saw combat in Vietnam.

An agreement between the Miskito "Misurasata" group and the Nicaraguan government was signed in Mexico City in April. At that time the Nicaraguan government agreed to resume supplying medicine and food to Atlantic Coast Indians and to guarantee the resumption of such subsistence activities as fishing, hunting, and agriculture in native villages with no "offensive armed action between responsible forces."

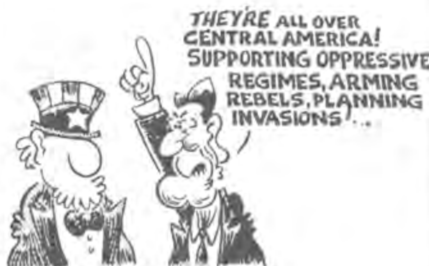
Also promised was amnesty for some 50 Miskito prisoners, according to Steve Tullberg of the Washington, DC-based Indian Law Resources Center which has monitored the negotiations between Misurasata leader Brooklyn Rivera and the Sandinistas. He points out that fundamental issues which sparked the Miskito resistance remain. In fact, the delicate negotiations broke down in the follow-up round held in Bogata in May.

"There's no question in our minds that the negotiations between Misurasata and the Sandinistas have embarrassed the Reagan Administration, and this program to convince Indians to go fight their brothers has been stepped up to disrupt that agreement," comments Bill Means, director of the International Treaty Council. "Eighty-seven percent of the Nicaraguan people have enough Indian blood to qualify as Native Americans by U.S. standards. Any time you get Indians being asked to go kill Indians, you can be sure the U.S. government is involved," he says.

Meanwhile, in Texas, what officials called a routine military exercise angered a number of Hispanic and church leaders. Over 60 percent of the 419 National Guard members chosen to play the role of "enemy" in the U.S.-Honduran Big Pine III military exercises in April were Hispanic. Asked State Senator Gonzalo Barrientos, "Is it to see how they [American Hispanics] will stand up against an enemy that looks and speaks like they do?" Church leaders, especially from the Texas Conference of Churches and the Lutheran Synod, also opposed the exercises.

The Texans took 120 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and jeeps in the five-day anti-armored invasion exercise 30 miles north of the Nicaraguan border in Honduras. Guard members played the role of a heavily armored enemy to be repelled by the joint U.S. and Honduran forces. The only other National Guard participation of comparable size came in 1983 when approximately 380 members of the Puerto Rican National Army Guard went to Honduras. Their trip also led to vocal opposition.

Those in the guard, however, supported participation in Big Pine enthusiastically. Captain Arnulfo Esqueda looked forward to the exercises, saying, "I don't use the word Hispanic. I classify myself as American." He said he is excited to be taking part in the exercises. "We look at it as a bonus for being a



good unit, as an adventure."

Governor Mark White, peacetime commander-in-chief of the Texas National Guard, defended its participation in the exercises. The regional American Friends Service Committee had campaigned to get White to pull the Texas guard out of the exercises, but White, a Democrat who has been moving to the right lately, actually went on a Department of Defense trip to Honduras during the exercises to show his support for Reagan's policies there.

These two cases, dramatic as they are, comprise a secondary part of the South's tie to the wars in Central America. According to Highlander Center and the Center for Defense Information, almost all overt U.S. military activity in Central America originates in the South. A Highlander report on military spending in the South states, "Bases in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia all play a significant role in the widening US involvement south of the border."

For example, the 46th Army Engineering Battalion from Fort McClellan and Fort Rucker in Alabama built housing and roads in Honduras for Big Pine II. MacDill Air Force Base in Florida shares responsibility for the unified Readiness Command (U.S. Rapid Deployment Force) with the Panama-based Southern Command. In Georgia, over 1,000 Salvadoran officer candidates have trained at Fort Benning; the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion, based at Hunter Army Airfield, pilots reconnaissance aircraft out of Honduras.

— thanks to David Butts, John Ross, Tom Schlesinger, and Pacific News Service

Oil company sued by former employees

— by Ken Kahn

William S. Shepard and Robin Marriott, two former employees of the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) have brought civil actions in Texas against the company, alleging violations of the Export Administration Act. This law, administered by the Department of Commerce, seeks to prevent U.S. companies from complying with Arabian requests that they boycott Israeli companies and companies doing business with Israel. Aramco, based in Houston, is a consortium between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Texaco, Exxon, and Standard Oil of California. Its international headquarters is in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and Saudi interests dominate the company.

William Shepard went to work with Aramco on July 16, 1979, and was soon advised he was being "groomed" for a management job. When told he would need some "time in the sand" — a tour in Saudi Arabia — Shepard notified the company that he is Jewish. His supervisor, John Quayle, then told Shepard that both a tour of duty in Saudi Arabia and career advancement at Aramco were out of the question.

Suggestions followed that Shepard resign. He was allegedly subjected to a daily barrage of work-related criticism and anti-Semitic remarks, and the removal of his name from promotion lines. The complaint further alleges that prior to telling the company of his religion, Shepard attended a meeting in which employees were advised on how to discourage potential Jewish applicants from a career at Aramco.

Marriott, a British citizen, was assigned by Aramco in 1981 to "coordinate the importation of film and television material for public broadcast, entertainment use and instruction of company personnel in Saudi Arabia." He was allegedly advised by Aramco's legal department that "certain producers, actors and production companies were banned from importation and/or use in Saudi Arabia because they were Israeli or were known to provide financial support for Israel or had Israeli sympathies." They told him "not to request or obtain information as to the identity of producers, writers, directors and actors from suppliers in the United States by Telex or in writing."

In April 1984 Marriott assumed a management position which allegedly forced him to violate the Export Administration Act by providing the Saudi Ministry of Information data on "the identity of each imported program's director, writer, distributor and two principal actors." Aramco authorities allegedly told Marriott he would not be personally responsible, but he resigned in December. Soon afterwards, agents employed by Aramco began an extensive investigation of his private life. In February 1985, Marriott was informed that he had been terminated "for cause" and was not entitled to severance pay; it was allegedly implied that he could be detained by Saudi authorities until he left the country.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE **READER DICK COUTO TOOK THIS PICTURE IN FLOYD, VIRGINIA. HE WRITES, "THIS PICTURE MAY BE WORTH 150 WORDS ON THE SOUTH'S NEW AND MIXED ECONOMY." WE AGREE.**

Shepard seeks $500,000 in exemplary damages, a permanent injunction to prevent Aramco from continuing to discriminate against Jewish applicants, and attorney's fees. Marriott seeks $5,000 in compensatory damages, $20,000 in punitive damages, and attorney's fees.

OSHA fights against shipyard safety

As much as 70 percent of the rules governing health and safety in shipyards will be scuttled by the Reagan administration, according to charges made by the United Steel Workers of America (USWA). They say the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company collaborated in a private task force which was set up after the Virginia-based firm had been cited for 617 violations of current regulations.

The existence of the task force was revealed at a House subcommittee hearing at which OSHA administrator Robert A. Rowland came under fire for his management of the agency. Rowland owns between $15,000 and $50,000 worth of stock in Tenneco, Inc., the company that owns Newport News. At that hearing Michael Urquhart, president of the government employees union that represents 4,500 employees of the Labor Department, including 300 at OSHA, testified that the safety agency's "experts close to the work believe that 60 to 70 percent of the present safety standards covering shipyard workers will be deleted or watered down."

The day after the hearing, OSHA director of safety standards Barry White responded to press inquiries by saying the agency's revision of shipyard regulations would not cut back on standards. But USWA safety director Michael Wright said he suspected White's position was newly adopted "in the last couple of days when OSHA discovered that its dealings with the industry were going to become public."

Wright blasted the agency for setting up a secret task force and for denying workers representation on it. He said that although the task force had been in existence for four years, the USWA only learned of its existence in September 1984. The union then filed immediately under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for all the OSHA documents relating to the task force. Over the next six months, the agency provided some documents to the Steel Workers, but declined to give the union any internal memoranda on the subject of the shipyard safety code revisions.

The USWA represents 18,000 workers at Newport News, and it was union pressure that prompted OSHA to inspect the giant, three-and-a-half-mile-long shipyard in 1980, assessing a record fine of $786,000 for the 617 violations, most of which were cited under the general industry regulations.

The documents obtained by the union under FOIA show that six months after President Reagan took office and three months after he appointed Thorne Auchter to head OSHA, the agency set up the eight-member Maritime Standards Task Force made up equally of OSHA staff and management personnel from Newport News. It met for the first time in June 1981, evidently planning a quick revamping of the shipyard codes. A 1982 report recommended dropping many of the general standards: industry members of the panel recommended that 70 percent be eliminated, while the staffers sought to drop 20 percent. By August 1984, OSHA's director of maritime safety was recommending to White that the industry proposal "be used as a base. By doing so, we are satisfying the vast majority of the industry. I strongly feel that the way I am proceeding is best for your office, OSHA, [former] Sec. [of Labor Raymond J.] Donovan, and the industry as a whole."

White now concedes that setting up a task force with representatives of the industry it regulates while excluding the workers it is supposed to protect "was an unusual way to proceed." New drafts of revisions are circulating, but the only thing still at issue is just how many of the general industry rules will be eliminated from a new shipyard code.

— Thanks to Arlee C. Green and the **AFL-CIO News**

Merit pay attacked in Florida and Alabama

Merit-pay teacher incentive programs have come under fire recently in two states. In Florida, a coalition of groups representing teachers and administrators called for an immediate halt to the Master Teacher Program until a legislative inquiry can be conducted into the evaluation process following the "imbalanced" results of the evaluations, released on May 9.

Florida's Master Teacher Program, one of the first such state efforts in the country, allocates $20 million to award $3,000 bonuses to teachers who qualify for merit pay. The bonuses are to be awarded on the basis of performance

evaluations and a subject-area examination. The wide variation among districts and among schools in the proportion of qualifying teachers provoked calls for a moratorium on the program by the Florida Teaching Profession (FTP) and the state's affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. John Ryor, executive director of the FTP, claims that the evaluation instrument, a one-page form with a list of 20 "effectiveness indicators" and 18 "ineffectiveness indicators" to be checked off by the evaluator, is "an ill-considered document to measure teacher success or failure. It was developed hastily and the results demonstrate that it is not reliable."

Donovan Peterson, one of the developers of the evaluation procedure, denied the charge that it was produced hastily. He did agree that a moratorium on the program for the purpose of studying the variations might be in order.

Alabama lawmakers approved a career-ladder plan that will raise teachers' salaries and provide them with performance-based pay incentives following fierce opposition to the plan in the state senate. The plan calls for an initial across-the-board pay raise that would increase the average teacher's annual salary from $20,000 to $23,000. It also creates five graduated categories of teachers based on experience and performance in which a master teacher at the top of the scale could earn an annual salary of more than $38,000 and establishes a "working committee" to develop a statewide teacher evaluation system. Eighteen members of the 35-member working committee will be teachers, 15 of whom will be appointed by the Alabama Education Association (AEA), a National Education Association affiliate.

Opponents of the plan claim it is too costly and puts too much control into the hands of teachers and their union. Michael Martin, a spokesperson for the AEA, said, "Some of this criticism is just a knee-jerk reaction from people who always take an anti-union position, regardless of what the issues are. . . . For the first time, teachers in the state will have input into the direction that their profession is going."

Sunbelt Not So Hot for the Unemployed

They tell us the depression is over and the Sunbelt is booming. But we were reading the *AFL-CIO News* recently and ran across a few charts on unemployment rates for February 1985. It seems that eight of the 13 Southern states have higher unemployment than the national average. And of the 10 metropolitan areas with the worst unemployment, four are here in the South. Three more cities are in that nonSouthern Sunbelt boom state of California.

Just for a bit of sanity, we also present here the real unemployment rates as calculated by the Full Employment Action Council. The real rate — the official rate multiplied by 1.75 — includes workers discouraged from seeking employment and part-time workers who would take a full-time job if they could find one.

State Unemployment Rates

State	Official Rate	Real Rate
Alabama	10.9	19.1
Arkansas	9.5	16.6
Florida	5.8	10.2
Georgia	6.1	10.7
Kentucky	9.7	17.0
Louisiana	11.6	20.3
Mississippi	11.3	19.8
North Carolina	6.7	11.7
South Carolina	7.6	13.3
Tennessee	9.0	15.8
Texas	7.1	12.4
Virginia	5.9	10.3
West Virginia	15.4	27.0
U.S.	**7.3**	**12.8**

10 Worst Metropolitan Areas

Area	Official Rate	Real Rate
1. McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	23.9	41.8
2. Modesto, CA	18.8	32.9
3. Laredo, TX	17.6	30.8
4. Gary-Hammond, IN	16.9	29.6
5. Kenosha, WI	16.4	28.7
6. Stockton, CA	15.7	27.5
7. Lake Charles, LA	15.5	27.1
8. Brownsville-Harlingen, TX	15.4	27.0
9. Fresno, CA	15.2	26.6
10. Johnstown, PA	15.1	26.4

Source: AFL-CIO News

Mixed verdict in Klan-Nazi trial

— by Paul Holmbeck

Five and a half years after the fatal shootings of five anti-Klan demonstrators on November 3, 1979, a jury found that two Greensboro, North Carolina, police officers, five Klansmen and Nazis, and a police informant were liable for "wrongful death."

In two previous criminal trials, Klansmen and Nazis were acquitted of murder charges and civil rights violations. In this civil suit, the jury awarded plaintiff Martha Nathan $351,500 for the loss of her husband. Other awards on assault and battery charges brought the total amount to three plaintiffs to about $400,000. Although 16 plaintiffs had asked for a total of $48 million in damages, they considered the verdicts a victory in that part of the liability was assigned to police officers.

The jury refused to find the defendants guilty of conspiracy. The plaintiffs had charged (1) that police officers and federal agents knew of the impending violence and deliberately failed to protect the Communist Workers Party (CWP) marchers; and (2) that a police informant and a federal agent acted as provocateurs in Klan and Nazi groups.

On the other hand, the wrongful death verdicts did support the substance of the conspiracy charges. The jury

found that Greensboro police officers Lieutenant P.W. Spoon and Detective J.H. "Rooster" Cooper contributed to the death of Michael Nathan by failing to protect the anti-Klan demonstrators.

Both officers knew that Klansmen and Nazis were coming to Greensboro, that the Klansmen and Nazis had a copy of the CWP marchers' parade route, and that they had guns at their meeting point that morning. Yet even Cooper, who followed the Klan/Nazi caravan from its formation to the shooting, made no attempt to stop the caravan, warn the demonstrators, or assure a police presence to stop violence.

Although more than 20 officers besides Cooper and Spoon were privy to information on Klan and Nazi plans or were listening to Cooper's street-by-street broadcasts, only Cooper and Spoon were found liable.

The plaintiffs also charged that injuries and losses were a direct result of the activities of police informant Edward Dawson and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms undercover agent Bernard Butkovich.

Dawson admitted that he recruited Klansmen to come to Greensboro, obtained the marchers' parade route from the police, and led the caravan to the site of the shootings. By naming Dawson and his "control agent" Cooper in the wrongful death decision, the jury concluded that Dawson's actions as an informant contributed significantly to Michael Nathan's death.

The jury came to a different conclusion regarding Butkovich. Several Nazis testified that he encouraged the Nazi unit he infiltrated to bring guns to Greensboro. He admitted offering to transform semi-automatic weapons to fully automatic weapons and to give training in guerrilla tactics and the use of explosives. Butkovich characterized his actions as giving people with a known propensity for illegal activity the "opportunity to violate the laws," consistent with his law enforcement role.

Still, this third North Carolina jury stood up to the anti-communistic defense arguments enough to find that some of the victims had been wronged by Klansmen, Nazis, and police. Violently racist groups have not been emboldened by another acquittal.

New nukes: IRS comes to the rescue

Utility companies can now finance the construction of nuclear power facilities through tax-exempt "pollution control" bonds, thanks to a loophole in income tax rules. A recent investigation by the Environmental Action Foundation (EAF) found that utility companies issued $4.8 billion worth of these bonds in 1984, providing more than 30 percent of the industry's external capital — and costing the federal treasury more than $1 billion in revenues that year.

Tax-exempt pollution control bonds were created to encourage environmental protection by providing investment incentive for the study and development of less polluting means of energy production and waste disposal. However, the revenue from these bonds — most of which have been issued by utilities — has been used not for the development of cleaner energy but, rather, to finance the construction of utility plants using conventional power sources such as coal and nuclear power, and thus has subsidized the most polluting methods of generating electricity.

The nuclear loophole appeared in March 1983, when the Internal Revenue Service ruled, at the utilities' request, that radioactive waste systems qualify as "pollution control facilities" and so are eligible for the tax-exempt financing. Georgia Power Company, found by a congressional study to be the most overbuilt electric company in the United States, issued the most pollution control bonds in 1984. With the bonds, Georgia Power plans to finance everything from radioactive waste handling systems and cooling systems to the air conditioning in its auxiliary building. EAF estimates that at least 27 percent of the utility's $3.9 billion share in the controversial Vogtle nuclear power plant will be financed this way.

EAF also says that the savings achieved with the misused bonds could make the difference between completion and abandonment for the numerous utility — and especially nuclear — construction projects that are on the verge of cancellation.

Southerners win the Right to Know

— by Robin Epstein

Groundbreaking legislation has been passed right in *Southern Exposure*'s backyard. The Durham, North Carolina, city council approved the first Right To Know (RTK) ordinance for a Southern city by a unanimous vote on May 6. The ordinance requires employers in the city to report the identity and hazards of all toxic chemicals used, handled, or emitted to the environment. This information must be available to workers, community residents, health care providers, and emergency response personnel. A few weeks later, Tennessee enacted similar legislation that applies statewide.

In Durham, a broad coalition including organized labor, neighborhood organizations, minority political groups, and environmental activists strongly supported the RTK bill. Mark Nielson, president of the Durham Central Labor Union says, "This bill's not everything we wanted. . . . But it is still one of the strongest bills we've seen. And it looks like the city is committed to vigorous enforcement, although that will undoubtedly be a battle over the next few years."

In Tennessee, the Right to Know campaign was also a broad-based effort that secured a vote of 92 to 0 in the House and subsequent passage in the Senate. Doug Gamble, labor coordinator for the campaign, also says the state's bill is not

perfect — but it's the best statewide law in the South.

The Tennessee campaign, working with the primary House sponsor of the legislation, organized five public hearings at which 140 people testified. The attendance of over 1,500 members of labor and community groups at these hearings across the state was a key to the victory. Gamble explains, "There hasn't been a turnout like that as long as anyone can remember. The business community caved in and said 'OK, let's talk.' We organized the hell out of them and overwhelmed them with numbers."

The next priority on the Tennessee RTK agenda is to monitor the rule-making procedure of the state Department of Labor, and to put on pressure to ensure that the legislation be enforced.

Efforts are underway for state legislation in North Carolina as well. The House has passed one of five Right to Know bills under consideration in the North Carolina legislature. In the Senate, the chair of the Human Resources Committee has appointed a subcommittee to devise a RTK bill to be voted on before the end of the session in mid-July. But because the subcommittee is stacked against Right to Know, the Senate bill is likely to be weaker than the House bill.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF) has drafted a strengthening amendment they hope to attach to previously introduced Right to Know legislation. Representative George Brown of Augusta has agreed to consider reworking his mediocre bill for the January session of the General Assembly, says LEAF spokesperson Vicki Bremen.

One of the major additions to the Georgia bill consists of extending coverage to the community rather than solely protecting workers. The amendment also includes toxic air pollutants. The OSHA environmental network in Georgia intends to do some community organizing and have informational meetings, Bremen says.

Those interested in developing a campaign to protect themselves from dangerous chemical exposures may purchase the Right To Know Handbook, *a 60-page resource guide, from the North Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Project for $5.00: P.O. Box 2514, Durham, NC 27705. Or call the Right to Know hotline: 800-358-6200.*

— thanks to Susan Lupton

Updates and short takes

TWO SOUTHERN STATES have recently seated the first black judges on their state supreme courts since Reconstruction, reports the Joint Center for Political Studies. To South Carolina's high court, the General Assembly elected Circuit Court Judge Ernest Finney, Jr. To Mississippi's, Governor Bill Allain appointed Circuit Court Judge Reuben V. Anderson.

THE CITY OF Birmingham, Alabama, has recently switched to a system of integrated pest management to control mosquitoes during the summer months, according to a letter from a city employee to the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides. Richard Izzi of the office of the city council wrote that until last year, Birmingham routinely relied extensively on malathion as an "adulticide," but that efforts now place greater emphasis on "larviciding." He said, "Aside from the obvious lack of wisdom, insofar as effectiveness is concerned, in relying exclusively on adulticiding with malathion, and the fact that we know that certain people with allergies and breathing disorders regularly suffer adverse reactions during the spraying, there seems to be little, if any, information on the long-term effects on the public health caused by spraying malathion generally."

Send us the news

If you see an article in your local paper, newsletter, or magazine that sheds light on what progressive Southerners are doing — or are up against — send it to us. Send us the complete item, with the date and name of the publication and any comments or analysis of your own you care to include. If we use it for Southern News Roundup, we'll send you a free one-year subscription to *Southern Exposure*. Write: Southern News Roundup, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

We'll send you a sub

WE MAY SOON be using tobacco as fuel for both our bodies and our cars — in the form of powdered protein and ethanol fuel. Bill Kavarik, writing in the *Rural Virginia Voice*, says the recently proposed phase-out of the tobacco stabilization program that would threaten the livelihood of tobacco farmers has heightened interest in finding alternative uses for this cash crop so important to the agricultural economies of several Southern states.

Research by the Floyd Agricultural Energy Co-op in Floyd, Virginia, indicates that about 750 gallons of ethanol, worth about $1,500, could be produced from an acre of intensively grown tobacco. Research at North Carolina State University (NCSU) indicates that a densely planted acre can produce several thousand pounds of high-grade powdered protein — four pounds of which are equivalent to the protein in 56 pounds of corn. Tobacco protein is not currently approved for human use by the Food and Drug Administration. But NCSU professor Sam Wildman, who has been working on this research for the past decade, says tobacco protein is more efficient and has better working properties than soy protein.

Luke Staengl of the Floyd Co-op talks hopefully of a combined protein-ethanol process profitable enough to allow tobacco farmers to donate protein powder to international relief. He also thinks the idea of finding industrial uses for other farm crops may be worth exploring in depth. While the cost of petroleum is rising again, advances in bio-technology are bringing the cost of biomass production down. Eventually, such processes "could mean not only survival for the family farm," Staengl says, "but a rather prosperous outlook."

FACING SOUTH

ATHENS, GEORGIA

A dream come true

— by Hugh Agee

Robbie Branscum is a successful author of books for young readers, but success has not come without a struggle. Hers is a story of a dream fulfilled, a dream rooted in a love of books and people.

"I went to the seventh grade in a small one-room schoolhouse deep in the Arkansas hills," she says. "I can still remember my mental hunger for books. A book was something to cherish, to be read over and over again."

If adversity builds character, then Branscum's early life enriched her. "I was four when Dad died, and we five children went to live on our grandparents' small dirt farm. We didn't have inside toilets or electricity. I reckon we couldn't have got much poorer, but there was so much work to do and so many things to see and explore that we didn't know we were poor."

By the time she was 15 she was married and off to California to the "promised land." In spite of 12-hour days picking cotton or grapes, she continued to dream of those books back in the hills. In the heat of this dream she forged her commitment to write.

"I started writing when I was about 16 or 17," she says. "Country-Western songs, poems, short stories — anything you can think of — and I graduated into children's literature."

Branscum's marriage ended, leaving her with the responsibility of providing for herself and her young daughter. She admits her lack of education bothered her, but that never hindered her pursuit of her dream.

"A sense of humor can keep you going when all else fails," she says. "I have a deep faith in God that lights up my life at its darkest hour. I have a love for people, and they return it double-fold. What more can a writer ask for?"

In her first novel, *Me and Jim Luke* (1971), the two boys of the title discover a dead man in a hollow tree while possum hunting. This opening incident is based on her grandfather's finding a dead revenuer, but the novel's plot and characters spring from Branscum's fertile imagination. Even after more than 15 published novels, this story remains her favorite. "My brothers were a lot like Sammy John and Jim Luke."

The ability to combine intrigue with an ample measure of humor characterizes many of her stories, as readers of *The Murder of Hound Dog Bates* (1982) will discover. Convinced that his aunts have poisoned his dog, Sassafras Bates sets out to prove his point, unaware of where his quest will lead him. This novel received a *New York Times* Best Book of the Year award.

Branscum's books for young readers capture the language and customs of the Arkansas hills of her childhood with clarity and honesty. Branscum went back to these hills recently to renew her vision. Chuckling at the term "poor Okies," she says, "It's true these people have little money and a lot of them live in old houses, but they know how to *live*. I love the people and the old, old houses. They still play and sing to entertain themselves and each other."

Back now in California, Branscum contemplates her future as a writer. "I'm trying to break into the adult field, but I would never give up writing for children and young adults because they are the neatest people on earth. Young people need someone who understands them, and I love telling them about a way of life that, alas, no longer exists."

Branscum has written several books for adults, but so far she has failed to place them with a publisher. Also, filmmakers have begun to express an interest in her novels, so she has prospects in that area. While success is now more a matter of degree for her, Branscum remains unchanged at heart.

Illustration by Frank Holyfield

ROBBIE BRANSCUM

"What I want as a person," she says, "is the freedom to do the things that I love, which are to write and fish and raise my garden."

At the moment these are viable goals. "We have a small cottage at the foot of tall mountains and a huge lake almost at the front door. I'll keep one eye on my writing and the other on my fishing."

Whatever the future holds for Robbie Branscum, she will always be close to her Southern traditions. She has said often, "I guess I will always dream of a small farm, a creek, a moon as big as a summer sky, the far-off bay of hounds running fox and coon, and my Arkansas hills." Readers young and old continue to share the fruits of her dream. □

Hugh Agee is a teacher and writer in Athens, Georgia.

*"Facing South" appears as a regular column in **Southern Exposure** presenting voices of tradition in a changing region. We welcome columns from readers. Write: Facing South, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.*

RESOURCES

Light Up Your Life

A rich store of audio-visual media has been created over the past decade or so with the financial support of the various state councils on humanities throughout the South, and the new 1985 guide describing them is a wealth of information. Twelve Southern state councils participated in the making of *Changing Perspectives*, which provides full-page, illustrated annotations on nearly a hundred films, videotapes, slide shows, audiocassettes, and exhibits on Southern life. Many rent for just the cost of postage, and nearly all can be rented for less than $15. Some randomly chosen samples we'd like to check out:

From West Virginia come explorations of the life in the coalfields. "The Ends of the Earth" portrays Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, and the passing of the Perez political kingdom there. "Fanny Kemble's Journal" brings to life this English actress's appalled look at antebellum plantation life and features a soundtrack of slave songs performed by the Sea Island Singers. There are film biographies, works of history, myth, arts and crafts, current events, religion, and much more to enrich understanding of our region.

For a copy of the guide, write the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, University of Virginia, 1939 Ivy Road, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Uncle Sam Wants Kids

For several years, many educators, especially guidance counselors, have expressed concern that military recruiters with quotas to fill regularly abuse the access they are given to high school students. They cite the widespread practice of deception — selling a prospect on the idea that he or she will be given a specific type of job or opportunity that will never materialize. They say recruiters pass on an inaccurate picture of what life in the military is like. And, more seriously, the American School Counselors Association has charged that recruiters have a practice of enticing high school students into dropping out of school to enlist.

Two years of discussions between the association and the heads of recruiting for the five armed services have now resulted in a pact recommending that schools adopt a defined set of guidelines to regulate recruitment activities. It will come as no surprise to most that the military got the better of the counselors in this exchange.

Under its terms, teachers and administrators are encouraged to display recruitment materials, to allow recruiters access to students individually and in groups during school time, to release information on students (names, addresses, phone numbers, grade levels, date of birth, and so forth), to assist the military in administering its aptitude tests. In return, recruiters are expected to encourage students to finish school and stop the deceptive practices.

The Militarism Resource Project has just published an analysis of the guidelines, suggesting amendments that make more sense, and strongly reminding us that the guidelines are not mandatory. As the authors say: "The new recruiting 'code of conduct' displays a complete misunderstanding of the reality of military recruitment. Officials who adopt this agreement are doing young people a real disservice. . . Local school officials are free to adopt more responsible policies."

Those who want to lobby their school officials can get a copy of this report, "High School Military Recruiting: Recent Developments," for 50 cents plus postage. Write the project at P.O. Box 13416, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Arms and the South

The Highlander Center continues its study of the social and economic impact of military spending in the South — see *S.E.*, March/April 1984 — with a set of research pieces for each of 12 Southern states. Maps, numbers, and pie charts demonstrate which counties get the most Defense Department money, which defense contractors get the most, where the most military personnel are, where the military-related toxic waste sites are, and so forth.

The researchers have found the South's military installations to present an emerging and serious environmental and public health problem: "Seventeen percent of the federal facilities recently placed on EPA's Superfund list are in the 12 survey states, as are 22 percent of the sites identified for the Pentagon's Installation Restoration program."

As for military spending, in most states it is quite concentrated, with the lion's share of all spending in a state going into a handful of counties, paid to a handful of contractors. But spending in the South differs materially from national trends. Contracts that flow here "tend to buy non-weapons items — food, tobacco, coal, oil, construction, services, etc." Spending for research and development (R&D) is also relatively small except in a few places, such as central Florida and Virginia's Washington suburbs. Finally, the Southern states get proportionately more payroll funds and proportionately fewer contract dollars than the national mix.

Overall, per capita military spending in most of the South is below the national average.

For copies, send $2.00 to Highlander Center, Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820; (615) 933-3443.

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

SILICON VALLEY

Technopeasants hit back with sabotage

— By Laura Fraser

Finished with her day's work at a large corporation here in the fertile crescent of computer technology, a young woman in a suit and sensible heels poured her last cup of coffee directly into her video display terminal.

"I just wanted to get back," she explained. "During my whole three-week stint as a word processor, they treated me as a dispensable part. Each day I'd work until my eyes felt like embossed Los Angeles County road maps, but no one cared. When they were done with me, they just tossed me out."

Like this temporary employee, word processors, clerks, and even computer programmers say the advertised benefits of the Information Age are not being delivered to lower-level office workers. And so they are now fighting "the system" from inside.

A leaflet circulated in Silicon Valley recently describes "Ten Ways to Wreck a Video Display Terminal." The suggestions for "technopeasants" range from damaging discs to cutting cables to details of programs that will delete computer files. The leaflet was copied from a San Francisco-based publication called *Processed World,* which describes itself as "the magazine with the Bad Attitude."

PW is a multi-colored quarterly digest of irreverent graphics, letters, and "Tales of Toil." Readers and contributors — "a separation we like to discourage," according to "Lucius Cabins," who, like many in the group, uses a pseudonym — include temporary clerical workers, clerks, bicycle messengers, systems analysts, a janitor, and an ex-prostitute who has written an article comparing clerical work to her former profession. Cabins says he feels "the Information Age is miserable for anyone on the low end of it. Most of the work you do is meaningless, and useless to humanity."

PW readers write in with suggestions on "stealing time" and acts of sabotage ranging from the simple — "It's so easy just to put an Out of Order sign on the Xerox machine" — to the sophisticated. One programmer, irate at being fired, explained that he had written a "time-release program which will erase company records two years after the dismissal date."

Cabins does not condone "mindlessly destructive" acts, but hopes information workers will "organize around a vision and share information to make subtle sabotage more effective." Such actions are described by "Melquiades," a frequent *PW* contributor who works as a technical writer and programmer. He says he is part of a network of professionals who are becoming alienated from their work, despite high pay and company perks. They often gather in the evening and gain access to large computer systems by "hacking." "Corporations who condemn the social responsibility of hacking," he writes, "but manufacture nuclear missile guidance systems richly deserve what hackers often give them — trashed discs, tapeworms, and nightmares."

Melquiades says he and his fellow programmers write "back doors" into their programs so they can get into them secretly, and create communication networks among employees at different companies.

PW, which is put out by a 15-person collective, began life in 1982 in the back room of a San Francisco apartment with $400, a typesetting machine, and "plenty of paper unknowingly supplied by local banks," according to Cabins. It now has nearly 1,500 subscribers. Some 3,000 more copies are distributed in bookstores in Silicon Valley, New York, Boston, and London, and sold by individuals at their offices.

To hawk their magazine, *PW* people frequently dress as human-sized Liquid Paper bottles, I.B.M.s ("Intensely Boring Machines"), and "supervisor shredders" and walk through San Francisco's financial district and Silicon Valley shopping malls.

PW has evoked some negative response, according to "Maxine Holz," a founder. Members of the collective have received death threats; their office doors were epoxyed shut once, broken another time; and the group was evicted because of building violations discovered after inspectors were tipped off by an informer. The magazine has also attracted the attention of some corporations — including three which have paid the special subscription rate for government agencies and corporations of $150 a year, compared to a sliding $5-$10 for regular subscribers.

Office workers often "write and say they are relieved they're not the only ones who think the world is crazy," says Holz. As Melquiades puts it,

"*Processed World* fights the despair of daily office life by being funny. We're dead serious about humor."□

To subscribe to PW, *write 55 Sutter St., No. 829, San Francisco, CA 94104*

— Pacific News Service

SPAIN

Picasso craze: the artist's revenge

— By John Ross

The work of Pablo Picasso, once barred, is sweeping this young democracy 10 years after the death of dictator Francisco Franco — and almost 50 years after Franco launched the rebellion that became Spain's Civil War in which a million people died. At the center of the craze is "Guernica," perhaps Picasso's most famous painting. It passionately condemns the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by the German Air Force in 1937 — the first aerial bombing of a civilian population in the history of warfare.

Since "Guernica" returned to Spain in 1981 after an exile of some 40 years, nearly two million visitors have filed past it in Madrid's Prado Museum, sometimes as many as 5,000 in a single day. Reproductions are proudly displayed in hundreds of thousands of homes. *El Pais*, the *New York Times* of Spain, recently ran a "style" piece suggesting ways to incorporate "Guernica" into the decor of one's apartment.

Franco must be doing a zarzuela in his grave. His edicts banning public homage to Picasso — which continued even after the painter's death in 1973 — worked so well that, despite his worldwide fame, only six of his 43,000 works were owned by Spanish collectors, apart from the one large private collection which has since become Barcelona's fine Picasso Museum. When the Prado dared to exhibit a 1905 canvas during the mid-1950s, viewers had to squint to read the nametag. "It was sort of our little secret," says Don Joaquin DeLaPuente, a sub-secretary of the Prado who now watches over "Guernica." Under Franco, reproductions of the painting often had to be smuggled into the country and hung secretly in closets.

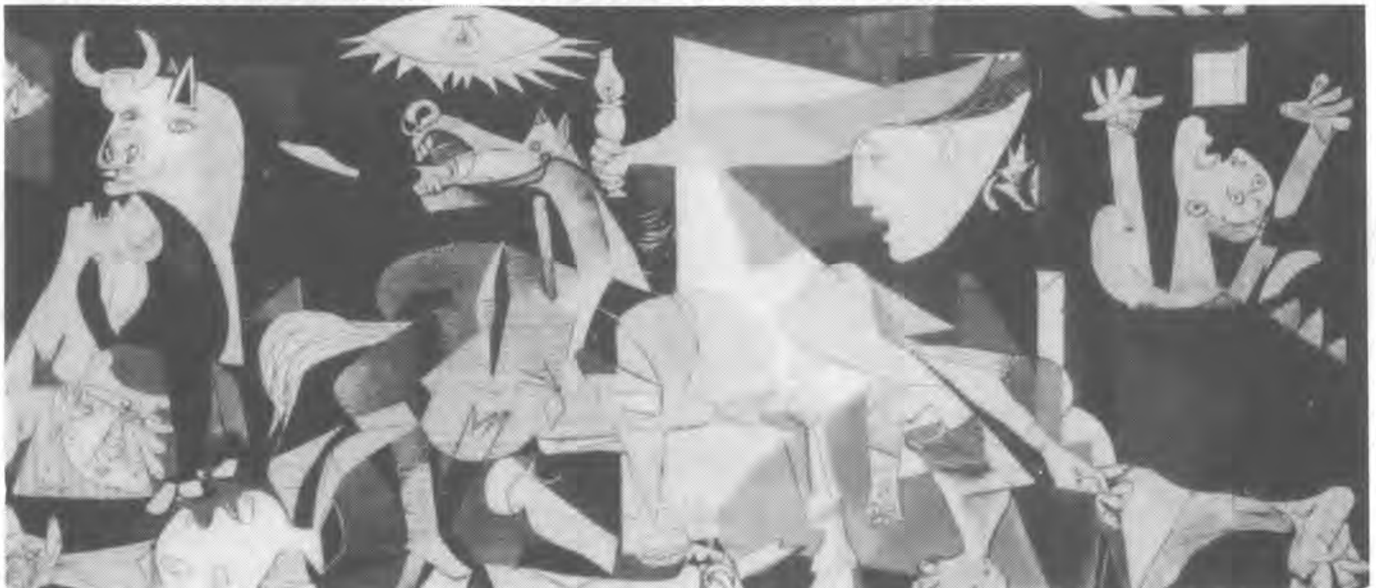
Picasso never set foot on his native Spanish soil after Franco came to power; the painter was "proscribed" — forbidden to enter the country and not recognized as a citizen — as an avowed Communist. (Awarded the Lenin Peace Prize twice by the USSR, Picasso was also lambasted by the French Communist Party for a caricature he drew on Stalin's death and was often taken to task by the Soviet press for avoiding socialist realism.)

Painted for the doomed Spanish Republic's pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exposition for a $7,000 stipend, the sombre black and white "Guernica" was far from a hit at first. When the Paris show closed, Spain's ambassador to France sent the painting on to England and the United States in an effort to raise funds for his threatened government, but it drew scant crowds and only paltry donations.

As the war spread across Europe, Picasso asked Albert Barr of New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) to hold the painting in safekeeping. There, partly because it was right under the noses of the art world's most influential critics, says DeLaPuente, "Guernica" soon became the star attraction. In one survey, eight of every 10 visitors said they had come to see the huge abstract. During its exile, "Guernica" brought MOMA millions in postcard and reproduction sales.

Then in 1977, two years after a constitutional monarchy had been restored, the Spanish government asked that "Guernica" be returned. MOMA was not enthusiastic and questioned whether Picasso's conditions — that the work only be returned when "republiliberties had been re-established" — would be met. A four-year legal tussle ensued, involving the Spanish and U.S. governments, the Prado and MOMA, Picasso's heirs, and several Spanish cities that wanted the painting — including Guernica, where the West German government had offered to build a cultural center as reparation.

"GUERNICA" BY PABLO PICASSO, *1937, OIL ON CANVAS, 11 FEET-6 INCHES BY 25 FEET-8 INCHES*



Eventually agreement was reached — then almost broken when a group of army officers tried to stage a coup early in 1981. The painting was finally crated and, with security of the sort generally reserved for world leaders, shipped back to Spain. "The last exile has returned," said the then-minister of culture, Ignacio Cavero.

Today, "Guernica" hangs inside an angular cage of bulletproof glass in an eighteenth-century room, the price of MOMA's agreement to return the painting only if it could be protected against terrorists. "I hate to see 'Guernica' in its jail of glass," wrote the Spanish painter Antonio Saura. DeLaPuente agrees. "There have been no incidents since the painting was installed. Indeed the only time 'Guernica' has ever been physically attacked was in New York by some demented artist." But, he adds, the caging has an advantage. Its controlled climate will let the work "endure for thousands of years and be seen by many millions. We have ensured Picasso's immortality."□

—Pacific News Service

PHILIPPINES

U.S. to Marcos: "Let us run army"

— By Walden Bello

A secret government report, obtained by this writer from State Department sources, calls for a vastly increased U.S. role in the internal military affairs of the Philippines. It may rank as the most explosive document in U.S.-Philippines relations in the last decade.

"N.S.S.D.: U.S. Policy Towards the Philippines" is the result of an 18-month-long study by an interagency task force including members of the CIA, the Pentagon, State Department, Treasury, Congressional Research Service, and private consulting firms. The task force was formed in the aftermath of the August 21, 1983, assassination of Benigno Aquino to monitor the unravelling situation in the Philippines and come up with a unified approach towards the Marcos regime.

The 22-page report outlines a comprehensive program to stabilize the political situation in the Philippines and prevent what its author describes as "the distinct possibility" of an insurgent takeover "in the mid- to long-term, and possibly sooner."

The key thrust of the document is a call for the U.S. to directly supervise upgrading the Philippine army as a counterinsurgency force. In this connection, U.S. officials have made known their preference for the acting head of the armed forces, General Fidel Ramos, a West Point graduate who is considered a "professional," to succeed General Fabien Ver, the former armed forces chief of staff who is currently on trial for complicity in the cover-up of the Aquino assassination.

The task, however, is viewed as formidable: "A major U.S. effort to halt any further deterioration . . . will be hampered by the Philippine military's structural weaknesses: poor, uninspiring leadership; corruption; mismanagement of resources." Given the growth of insurgency, military assistance is essential, the report notes: "A restoration of professional, apolitical military leadership could significantly alter the situation."

To upgrade the counterinsurgency capabilities of the Philippine army, the policy paper recommends what it describes as "a dramatic new measure" — converting aid from military credit sales to outright military grants which "would introduce a significant new element of U.S. leverage to reform the armed forces of the Philippines."

Other immediate measures laid out include assisting in reestablishing training programs throughout the armed forces; improving its civic action capabilities during joint exercises; improving its existing logistics system and transportation capabilities; expanding foreign military sales; and grant aid aimed at enabling it to fulfill its perimeter security responsibilities at U.S. bases.

The report does warn against "being saddled with the ultimate responsibility for winning the insurgency." But it also states that "to impress upon Pres. Marcos the seriousness with which we view the insurgency and the deplorable

state of his armed forces to deal with it, we may need to provide private briefings for Marcos, by a U.S. military intelligence team."

"The U.S.," the report asserts, "does not want to remove Marcos from power or to destabilize the government of the Philippines. . . . While Pres. Marcos at this stage is part of the problem, he is also necessarily part of the solution." The report continues, "We need to work with him, and to try to influence him through a well-orchestrated policy of incentives and disincentives to set the stage for peaceful and eventual transition to a successor government whenever that takes place. Marcos, for his part, will try to use us to remain in power indefinitely."

Underlying this approach is the assumption that "our interests in the Philippines are worth a high priority and costly effort to preserve." Foremost among those interests, the report says, are "continued unhampered access to our bases at Subic and Clark," and prevention of "a radicalized Philippines" which would "destabilize the whole region."

Marcos is expected to respond to U.S. pressure because "our support is one of Marcos's largest remaining strengths." But the report is bound to wound Marcos's pride and increase tensions between the U.S. and Philippines governments. Equally likely, given its heavy-handed approach, the report will cause Philippine moderate opposition leaders to distance themselves further from the U.S.□

Walden Bello is director of the Philippine Support Committee, a human rights group based in Washington, DC.

— Pacific News Service

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT

To Agitate The Dispossessed...

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ERNIE CORTES (LEFT) TALKING WITH SENATOR TATI SANTIESTEBAN IN THE SENATE CHAMBER, BEFORE A PAINTING OF "DAWN AT THE ALAMO."

In my memory, there's a freeze frame of Ernie Cortes in the center of a sweaty, roiling crowd of students at the University of Texas. The air is as heavy as damp velvet on this summer night. We are packed into the small courtyard of College House, where the free thinkers live. I don't remember what Ernie says, just the urgency with which he says it. He wants us to support *la huelga*, the doomed Texas strike by the United Farm Workers.

Ernie looked the part of the barrio revolutionary in 1966. Not to mince words, he was gross and angry, and I'm sure he was considered dangerous by *los rinches*, the Texas Rangers, whom Governor John Connally brought in to help the Valley growers break the strike. When Ernie urged us to support the UFW boycott, we gladly banished lettuce and melons from our shopping lists. We also collected food and money and drove south in caravans, the 300 miles from Austin to the Rio Grande Valley, to march with the farmworkers.

On the Road with Ernie Cortes

Other Ernie fragments come to mind. I'm sitting at a table in a massive chicano ballroom in Houston, trying, over the reverberations of a *conjunto* band, to follow a conversation he is having in Spanish. Years later, he's imploring me to cover the first convention of a community group he has organized in San Antonio. Friends tell me of calls they receive from Ernie in the middle of the night: he needs a phone number, he's looking for a tape recorder, he needs a ride to the airport. Always, stated or implied, is the appeal, "Follow me."

His unrelenting drive and his power to motivate people made the journalist in me uneasy. So many '60s radicals turned out to be snake oil salesmen. Others became War on Poverty bureaucrats or lost their vision. Today Cesar Chavez meditates in the mountains while the UFW hemorrhages. But Ernesto Cortes, Jr., is still going strong. Some say with awe that he is the new Saul Alinsky.

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COPS COMES TO AUSTIN TO CONFRONT THE LEGISLATURE.

When the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago decided last year to give Ernie one of its high-toned "genius grants," I decided it was time to follow him, at least for a while, because I had no clear idea of what a community organizer does. It turns out that Ernie has spent the last decade teaching people about self-interest politics, a skill which Americans, for the most part, have lost or abandoned. He believes that the traditional community fabric — family, church, political parties, labor unions, lodges — has come unraveled and must be rewoven into a new design.

"People have lost their taste for politics and the institutions in which politics are practiced," he says. Linking us together again is a colossal job, but the alternative is what we've got — Ronald Reagan and a public policy set by distant corporations, the mass media, pollsters, and political image experts. While all is gloom and darkness on the national front, the work being done by Cortes and others like him offers a glimmer of hope for our political future.

Ernie went to work for the UFW in 1966 primarily because Cesar Chavez had been trained by Saul Alinsky. Ernie's academic field was economics. After studying the various strategies for dealing with the poor, he came to the conclusion that Alinsky-style organizing of urban neighborhoods into self-sufficient power groups held greater promise for the underrepresented than did the government-financed War on Poverty or single-issue politics.

Alinsky's first book on organizing, *Reveille for Radicals*, was a best-seller in 1945. But Alinsky's real day in the sun came in the 1960s when college activists like Ernie adopted him as a hero. Alinsky was a brilliant agitator whose business card announced, "Have Trouble, Will Travel." A multicultural Jew from Chicago, he convinced the Catholic Church to finance many of his projects. Although trained as a sociologist, Alinsky grew to disdain social workers and government handouts. Uncomfortable with ideology, Alinsky simply wanted to teach

the poor and what he called the "have little, want mores" how to solve their own problems and participate in their own self-governance. His personal sources of inspiration were Thomas Jefferson, Tom Paine, and James Madison.

Alinsky had a dream of building a national network of organizers that was not fulfilled in his lifetime. But his Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) established a training school for future organizers that may yet result in the network Alinsky envisioned. Cortes was admitted to the school in 1971, shortly before Alinsky died. Ed Chambers, a brusque former Catholic seminarian who succeeded Alinsky as national director of the IAF, recognized all the components of a good organizer in Ernie — intelligence, a basic anger about the way people are treated, and an orientation toward action rather than just talk.

Cortes's goal was to get something going in his hometown of San Antonio, which was 50 percent Mexican-American yet firmly under the control of the white business establishment's Good Government League. From 1971 to 1973, under Chambers's tutelage, Cortes honed his organizing skills among Hispanics in Chicago and Milwaukee and Lake County, Indiana. In January of 1974, under IAF sponsorship, Ernie returned home to San Antonio and began organizing the Catholic, Hispanic west side into a group now well-known as COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service). He emphasized church and family values more strongly than Alinsky, whose dominant theme was the duty of citizenship in a democracy, but his political tactics were vintage Alinsky.

When Mayor Charles Becker refused early on to meet with a delegation from COPS, Cortes took aim at the establishment that supported the mayor — the owners of the big banks and department stores. Five hundred folks wearing COPS buttons advanced on the Joske's department store next door to the Alamo. They tried on dresses and furs, experimented at the make-up counter, tested the beds in the furniture department, commanding the assistance of virtually every salesperson in the store. Over at the Frost National Bank, they lined up to change dollars into nickels and nickels into pennies and then back into dollars. COPS not only got its meeting with the mayor, it extracted a $10,000 loan from the president of the bank.

Texas Monthly magazine has since dubbed the COPS-inspired political realignment of San Antonio "The Second Battle of the Alamo." The current mayor, Henry Cisneros, like Cortes a native of the west side, has likened the power shift, which brought Mexican-Americans into full political partnership in San Antonio, to "turning an ocean liner around." Now, at the ripe old age of 11, COPS is probably the most potent minority-controlled civic organization in the United States. That's because COPS is concerned with more than new street lights and drainage projects. Jan Jarboe, a journalist from San Antonio, told me, "This is a story you are not unaffected by. There is a fabric, a texture of faith and hope that is not to be believed. It's an extended family. There are west siders today who are buried wearing their COPS buttons."

Nationwide there are now 15 IAF projects, three in the New York metropolitan area, two in the mid-Atlantic area, three in California, and thanks to Cortes's extraordinary efforts, eight in Texas, with more on the drawing board. While much has been written about COPS, Ernie has been a peripheral figure in most of the stories. Alinsky aside, most IAF organizers try to remain in the shadows. I reached Ernie by phone in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, the semi-tropical borderland where he was working with Valley Interfaith, one of the groups he now oversees in his position as a senior cabinet member of the IAF. I was in luck. The IAF had recently loosened its restrictions regarding interviews, and Ernie agreed to cooperate. He said that he and his wife, Oralia, and their two young children were moving to Austin, where I live, so I presumed we would be able to talk at leisure. I soon discovered, however, that Ernie is in perpetual motion.

Over a two-month period, I traveled with him intermittently, snatching interviews on the run and watching him work. At the age of 41, Ernie dresses like a businessman. He is smoother around the edges than he used to be, although his manner is still abrupt and challenging. He has lost weight but still has enough bulk to intimidate. I was surprised at how religious he had become, a serious Catholic, and how much more teacher and strategist he is than rabble-rouser.

When I asked him what he was going to do with his $204,000 MacArthur grant, he said, "Buy books." Nobody can buy that many books, I told him. Now I'm not so sure. The Cortes house in Austin is a tumble of books and his Toyota is a library on wheels. He reads heavy-duty theology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, scripture, political biography, political theory, history, and economics. Christine Stephens, a crisp Catholic nun who serves as the IAF's lead organizer in Houston, told me, "I have known other brilliant people, but no one whose book knowledge is so useful as it is to Ernie. For him, it is a positive addiction."

Every time I dragged myself home from a trip with Ernie, I pulled from the high shelves in the study previously untouched volumes of Britannica's Great Books series. No more murder mysteries for me, I vowed. From now on I'll read only worthy stuff. Slowly, it dawned on me that I had been agitated by a master.

My usual reportorial technique is to lay low and listen hard, but Ernie insisted on constant feedback. On the telephone, he would ask the open-ended question, "What's going on?" When I traveled with him, he wanted to know, "What did you think of the meeting? Was I too abstract? Did I energize people?" At first I tried to deflect his questions, but his response was an angry, "Don't shut me out. I can handle anything except no communication."

One of our few uninterrupted interviews occurred the day I chauffeured him from San Antonio to a lodge perched at the edge of the Frio River in the Texas hill country. I met him at the San Antonio airport. As usual, he was the last person off the plane and he was dragging three satchels of new books. A female skycap and I loaded a tiny suitcase and all those books onto a dolly and hauled it to my Volkswagen as he made calls from a pay phone. On

the way out of town we stopped at a shopping center so Ernie could get a pair of reading glasses and some lozenges for a persistent cough. (Constant travel, too little sleep, and irregular eating habits seemed to leave him vulnerable to flus and bugs and respiratory problems.) It was like playing hooky, stolen minutes at the drug store while we were supposed to be on the road to his next gig.

It was a fine evening. We were well into the country now. To the north and west were the low, cedar-covered hills of central Texas. I was filled with contentment by the twilight, the soothing, empty land, and the highway ahead. It was a good time for intimate questions. I asked Ernie about his family.

Ernie's voice was hoarse, but the lozenges seemed to be helping. He cleared his throat and spoke into the tape recorder over the road sounds, "My father's father was the police chief of Mexico City. The family came to Texas in 1910, during the Mexican Revolution. My mother's family also came from Mexico, but she was born in Texas.

"Dad worked as the manager of a Payless drug store in San Antonio and for the Pepsi Cola Company. Then he lost his job in the recession of '53-'54, and the only reason we were able to keep ourselves on top was that we were an extended family. My mother's father had a little business and he took my father on. My family tried very hard to fit in, but I could identify as a Mexican more easily than as a Texan or an American. I saw a lot of discrimination against Mexican-Americans in San Antonio. . . . I had an invalid sister who lived with us until she was 12, when she died. Part of who I am has to do with my identification with her. Other people looked down on her. My mother said I had fights with my friends when they looked down on her."

"What makes a good organizer?" I asked him. "You don't have to be educated, but you have to be smart," he said. "One of the qualities that you can't teach is anger. I'm talking about anger that comes out of a concern for other people, not just yourself. If that isn't there then you don't have the patience to build an organization. It's a cold, calculating kind of anger. I equate it with the anger of Moses."

As an afterthought, he added, "You also have to have a sense of humor. If you take yourself too seriously, you get self-righteous, rigid, overly principled."

I tried to remember what made him laugh. He laughed at politicians a lot, but he had the good sense to put me off the record before doing an imitation of some sputtering councilman flailed by one of his groups. Earlier in the drive he had described a meeting with a delegation of right-wing Catholics and business people who are convinced that he and the IAF are Marxist revolutionaries or some such nonsense. Ernie, laughing and slapping his thighs, had recreated an exchange with one of them. "I know what you're up to, young fella," he mimicked one of his adversaries saying. "You're smart. You're very smart. How much do they pay you?" "About $45,000 a year," Ernie answered. (Senior IAF organizers no longer live on subsistence wages.) "Well, you're worth every penny of it," the fellow concluded.

The sun was behind the hills now, and I was on the lookout for deer on the highway. Ernie seemed oblivious to the scenery. His attention was always trained on his work or on information that could help him in his work or people who are involved in his work. I was curious about the price his family might be paying for his success. He obviously dotes on his two young children and his teenaged daughter from an earlier marriage. Was time with his family a problem? "It could become one," he said. "Oralia tells me, 'Come back before your children forget what you look like.' I have to set aside time for them. I try to take one day off a week." I knew from Oralia that after many years of effort she has convinced Ernie of the need for a yearly vacation, preferably to a foreign country where he has difficulty placing telephone calls.

I asked him what he hoped to be doing 10 years from now. "I'd like to see more of these organizations throughout the Southwest putting

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ERNIE CORTES, IMELDA MUNOZ OF VALLEY INTERFAITH, AND REBECCA FLORES HARRINGTON, TEXAS DIRECTOR OF THE UFW, CONFER OUTSIDE THE HOUSE CHAMBER.

together a regional strategy about water, energy, and employment," he said. "The chronic unemployment and economic stagnation along the U.S.-Mexico border is very significant. I'd like to be able to have some organizational relationship with the people across the border. Right now, I have no idea how to do that, but it's something I would like to figure out. And I'd like to have thought deeply enough about politics to be able to write and teach about it in a systematic way."

We pulled into the lodge 30 minutes late, meaning no time for dinner, as usual. About 50 employees of Texas Rural Legal Aid (TRLA), most dressed in jeans, T-shirts, and jogging shoes, were drinking beer in a meeting room filled with church pews and lumpy couches. The TRLA, a federally funded agency which provides legal assistance for the poor along the Texas-Mexico border, had invited Cortes to speak at their annual retreat.

Ernie was tired when he arrived and his sinuses were draining so profusely that he could hardly keep his throat cleared, but he slowly recharged as he paced across the front of the room like a bulky, short-legged bear, speaking very rapidly as he laid out the complexities and contradictions of his work.

Ernie emphasized that he wasn't building a movement. "Movements address a single issue and are built around charismatic leaders. When the leader dies, the movement dies. Okay?" he asked his listeners. Were they understanding? He explained that the IAF builds power groups based on Judeo-Christian values rather than issues. There are no individual memberships, only institutional memberships. They do not accept government grants, because too many restrictions come with the money. Today, he explained, the IAF relies on churches as the primary source of funds and troops. "I organized civic groups in Chicago and East Lake County, and after four or five years, they went out of existence because they had no source of continuing funding. All right?" Ernie asked the lawyers.

He ran through his points rapid fire, occasionally writing something on the chalk board for emphasis. "The churches give us stability," he said. "All of the sponsoring churches believe in making a preferential option for the poor, the people who in a biblical sense have not yet come to the table. Christ said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He was the good shepherd who brings his flock into the life of the community." Each of the Texas IAF groups, he said, has a different complexion and advocates different issues. Allied Communities of Tarrant in Fort Worth is primarily black and Baptist. The Metropolitan Organization in Houston is white working-class Catholics and Protestants. Valley Interfaith, which is Hispanic, is financed by 29 Catholic and two Protestant churches.

Ernie explained that his job is to train and counsel the IAF organizers who work with the Texas groups. He also conducts workshops on politics and power for the volunteer, unpaid leaders of the various groups, who regularly work 20 to 30 hours a week for the organizations. "They do it for a sense of power, recognition, and importance," he said.

"The people I organize tend to be poor or Hispanic or black and tend to be conservative about family, neighborhood, and church. I'm the radical," he said, arms out from the sides of his body, fists clenched, standing like a wrestler poised for an attack. "My job is to agitate the conservatives. I tell them that if they don't get organized, they will lose everything."

He explained that while the Texas groups registered 105,000 new voters in 1984, they are proscribed from endorsing political candidates because they are funded by charitable contributions. This is not a handicap, Cortes said. "Our political position is that neither party is addressing our issues. Our purpose is to frame the political debate by endorsing issues, not candidates. Okay? An organization like COPS can be the conscience of the politicians, who can lose their souls if someone doesn't hold them accountable."

He has said on another occasion, "We like to think that we are engaged in politics in the fullest sense. That means beyond electoral politics. We are trying to have a say in the everyday process of decision-making."

The lawyers, many of whom represent farmworkers in the Rio Grande Valley, wanted to talk about Valley Interfaith, which, since its inception three years ago, has emerged as the dominant unifying force for Hispanics, not simply for the poor but for the long-ignored Hispanic middle class along the Texas-Mexico border. The area has been financially wrenched by the double whammy of Mexico's economic collapse and by a devastating freeze in the winter of 1983-84. Unemployment rose as high as 35 percent in an area where a quarter of the population already lived in poverty. Ernie Cortes and Valley Interfaith responded with a proposal for $67 million in federal and state public works funds for local governments to improve roads and sewers and water lines throughout the Valley. While only a trickle of government money has been forthcoming, Valley Interfaith has achieved something unique. For the first time in memory, the Balkanized Valley towns, as well as church and civic leaders, joined in a common political cause. The mayors of 15 towns are now meeting regularly to work on a Valley-wide economic strategy.

Some of the lawyers seemed uncomfortable with or jealous of the clout already evidenced by Valley Interfaith. A willowy woman lawyer told Ernie, "When you get involved with a project, you want to run with it. Don't you ever take a second-place role?"

Cortes pointed out that the group had taken second chair in lobbying with the UFW and other groups in a successful effort finally to get farmworkers insured under workers' compensation. But, he added, "We don't like to get involved where we are supposed to be the troops for someone else's expertise. All right? We don't usually work for losing causes. We are not here to do good. We can't right every wrong, but we can teach people how to be effective and organized. The most important thing we do is locate and train a sophisticated collective of leaders."

"How can we lawyers work with you?" came a question from the back of the room.

"We don't like to go into court as a last resort," Ernie said. "Only lawyers can have fun in court. What we want to do is to train our own people to participate, to argue, to negotiate, to bargain, to make decisions. We're wary of the

tyranny of the expert."

It was obvious that some of the lawyers, young and idealistic, didn't get it.

"But what's your ideology?" somebody asked.

"I don't know," Cortes said.

If I could have broken in then, I would have made the point that Ernie invests in people rather than issues. He agitates the dispossessed to anger and then shows them how to channel that anger into the public dialogue. "If we are about anything," Ernie had told me, "we teach people not to be fatalistic. I like teaching so-called uneducated people fairly sophisticated political concepts."

He frequently must play the heavy, agitating people to learn political lessons. He told me about a confrontation with one of his closest friends, Father Albert Benavides, who was a leader in COPS. Benavides led 300 COPS people to a San Antonio city council meeting to talk about protection of the Edwards Aquifer, the city's underground water supply. Then-Mayor Lila Cockrell had told Benavides by phone that COPS representatives would not be allowed to speak until very late in the day, meaning after the news reporters had written their stories. Benavides knew that he would lose his troops if they had to cool their heels all day long.

Cortes told Benavides that he had two alternatives: he could seize the microphone and demand that Cockrell hear them or he could send everybody home. Benavides said, "I'm not gonna do it. She'll throw us out or worse." "Father," Cortes shouted, "you don't need an organizer, you need a baby sitter." Ernie angrily signaled the COPS leaders to come out in the hall for a caucus. Then he heard an amplified voice from the council chamber. "Father Benavides was busting up the meeting," Ernie recounted, laughing with delight.

To Cortes, the victory that day had more to do with Benavides getting up the gumption to challenge authority than with clean water. In his mind the issue is never as important as what people learn through dealing with it. When COPS was first getting started, its members had to use confrontational techniques to gain attention. Today, with the urbane Henry Cisneros in the San Antonio mayor's office, COPS plays a much more sophisticated political game.

photo by Nancy Maniscalco

THE 1984 FREEZE LEFT THE VALLEY'S CITRUS INDUSTRY IN SHAMBLES AND PUT THE PEOPLE OUT OF WORK.

During the summer of 1984, the Texas groups were part of an unlikely coalition that successfully lobbied in Austin for legislation that will allocate more state money to poor school districts. The coalition put Interfaith in alliance with Governor Mark White, Dallas billionaire Ross Perot, and conservatives Bill Hobby, the lieutenant governor, and Gib Lewis, the speaker of the House. It was not unusual for 15 to 30 IAF leaders to attend a strategy session with the governor or the lieutenant governor. Ernie viewed the sessions as a graduate program in lobbying and political power. After every meeting there would be a rigorous evaluation of the effort. Exactly what had the governor promised? Was there a better way to have made that point? Why had Mrs. X's presentation gone nine minutes rather than five? COPS leaders used to videotape their appearances at city council meetings and later critique them, like a football team after a game. "People will naturally make a lot of mistakes," Ernie says, "but we use the mistakes to teach people something." When the school finance program passed, the legislature was applauded by a gallery packed with Interfaith members.

When Governor White went to McAllen last summer to meet with Valley Interfaith about school finance, health care, jobs, and other issues important to the economically depressed area, 6,000 people attended the meeting. Six thousand organized voters command a governor's undivided attention.

While they were allied with White on the issue of school finance, the

Texas Interfaith groups have held the governor's feet to the fire on other matters. There is nothing a Texas politician dislikes more than an IAF "accountability session." The sessions are carefully staged public forums in which designated hitters — housewives, priests, nurse's aides, and other big-time wheeler-dealers — question an elected official or candidate unmercifully until he or she is forced into an actual commitment on an issue of concern to the group.

photo copyright © 1983 by Alan Pogue

COPS TAKES ON THE POLITICIANS; SEATED, LEFT TO RIGHT, STATE REP. FRANK TEJEDA, HOUSE SPEAKER GIB LEWIS, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BILL HOBBY, AND GOVERNOR MARK WHITE.

The Interfaith groups are dedicated to the proposition that politics should take place in public. Hundreds of COPS people may attend a meeting with a city council member. COPS controls the meeting. The public official will be allowed only a short general pitch and then is asked to respond to specific questions on issues. Anyone who has tried to get a yes or no commitment out of a planning commissioner or city councillor will appreciate the dynamics of an accountability session. Cortes says, "I've seen professional lobbyists get firm commitments out of politicians, but the public usually can't."

The sessions, which are very formal, teach average citizens how to deal effectively with powerful people. Many politicians come away from these carefully staged political dramas feeling they have been treated rudely. Ernie says, "Politicians are past masters at seduction. It's important for my groups to learn about boundaries. You must come into a negotiating session with the attitude, 'You are not my buddy, at least not at this moment, so don't ask about my grandmother and my family.' People in business learn this right away, but when poor people do this they are being rude."

Austin attorney Pike Powers, who is a key player in the local power structure, got acquainted with Ernie and the Texas Interfaith network while he was executive assistant to Governor White. Powers is savvy enough to realize that the new group Ernie has moved to Austin to organize could become a fly in the ointment, or worse, a rattlesnake in the bathtub. When San Antonio mayor Cisneros was in town last September, Powers got him to speak to a group of Austin businesspeople about Ernie and his organization. "Ernie is always more effective than the people who have been here before him," Cisneros says he told them, "because he comes in and asks people what their problems are, rather than telling people what their problems are. He has a grassroots certainty about his methods and his information."

At that meeting, someone asked Cisneros, "What is he [Cortes] after?" "I tried to describe a vision that is not radical but is rather a vision of democracy," Cisneros remembers. The mayor added that Austin Interfaith will have to be dealt with, that it will not be a flash in the pan, that its research will be first-rate, and that even if Austin Interfaith adopts a strident tone at first, it will be playing real-world politics and will be willing to compromise.

Cortes's work is really an ambitious adult education project. I was encouraged by the fact that people seem so receptive to the training. Frank del Olmo of the *Los Angeles Times* apparently reacted similarly when he wrote a series of articles on UNO, the United Neighborhood Organization in Los Angeles. This is a group that Ernie organized after COPS. Del Olmo wrote, "Time and time again in talking with UNO leaders, an outsider is struck by how often they cite their own personal growth and the growth of their friends as one of the benefits UNO has brought to their community." In the same vein, Mayor Cisneros told me of watching San Antonio housewives transformed via COPS into formidable leaders.

Ernie encourages his people who can read (and some can't, either in English or Spanish) to keep up with the local newspapers. And for those who are willing to do more, Ernie the insatiable reader recommends books — Bernard Crick's *In Defense of Politics*; Robert Caro's study of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*; T. Harry Williams's *Huey Long*; Ronnie Dugger's LBJ book, *The Politician*; *The Human Condition*, by Hannah Arendt; Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses*; *The Efficient Executive*, by Peter Drucker; Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* and *Reveille for Radicals* — the list goes on.

Most of the current COPS officers are women, and Cortes describes them proudly as "barracudas." Three of the IAF organizers in Texas are talented nuns, who have a better opportunity

for leadership in the IAF than in the Catholic Church. Why are so many of his star pupils women? "Saul Alinsky's goal was to teach have-nots how to negotiate themselves into the system," he said. "As soon as you're successful, you go agitate somewhere else. It's an endless process. Alinsky said men think in terms of projects with fixed points. Women are more circular. They are the ones with the patience."

The church's role in IAF organizing at first perturbed me. But this is far removed from the Jerry Falwell/Moral Majority brand of politics. In the meeting room of a Catholic Church in El Paso, I watched Ernie teach the concept of pluralism. "There's a religious undergirding to our political beliefs," he said. "But the church teaches you to work with atheists and agnostics who share your goals. The founding fathers were religious and agnostic at the same time." At a training session for leaders in San Antonio, he said, "Once you have a single view of something, you are no longer in politics, you are in anti-politics."

While many of the Catholic bishops in the North tried to claim abortion as the pivotal issue for Catholics during last year's presidential campaign, the IAF organizations homed in on jobs as the issue. Indeed, their refusal to get hung up on the question of abortion has resulted in red-baiting of the IAF groups in El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley. The *Wanderer*, a right-wing Catholic newspaper based in St. Paul, Minnesota, has been responsible for some of the attacks.

If I can fault Ernie for anything, it is that his sense of mission sometimes makes him intolerant and overbearing. I saw him attempt to lead IAF leaders to certain political or organizational conclusions. At an El Paso meeting, he asked a question to which a priest replied, "I know what you want me to say but I'm not sure I want to." What about that exchange, I asked Ernie. He said, "It's not supposed to be like that. It's not supposed to be fill-in-the-blank." I heard him deliver some very harsh judgments on gays, feminists, environmentalists, and others who pursue the kind of single-issue politics he thinks has crippled the Democratic Party. A feminist, an admirer of Ernie's, told me she approached him in an airport and introduced herself. "I know who you are," he answered, and walked off. Here is a man whom Christine Stephens says showed endless patience as her teacher. Perhaps he expends all his patience within the circle of the IAF.

photo by Mickey Torres

VALLEY INTERFAITH CONVENES IN BROWNSVILLLE

Whatever personal flaws Ernie has, he's still the real thing. Stephens pointed out, "The stereotype of the organizer is that they are manipulative, uncaring, brash, rude people, but underneath it all Ernie has a real commitment to unlocking people's hidden resources." Traveling with him, I found myself wondering, "How is his health? How many people can he organize in a lifetime?" Fortunately, this work is designed to be self-perpetuating. So let a thousand Ernies bloom. □

Kaye Northcott is a journalist whose work has appeared in numerous publications, including ***Mother Jones, Texas Monthly*** *and many others. She was editor of the* ***Texas Observer*** *from 1968 to 1976.*

Soapstone

By Gary D. Mawyer

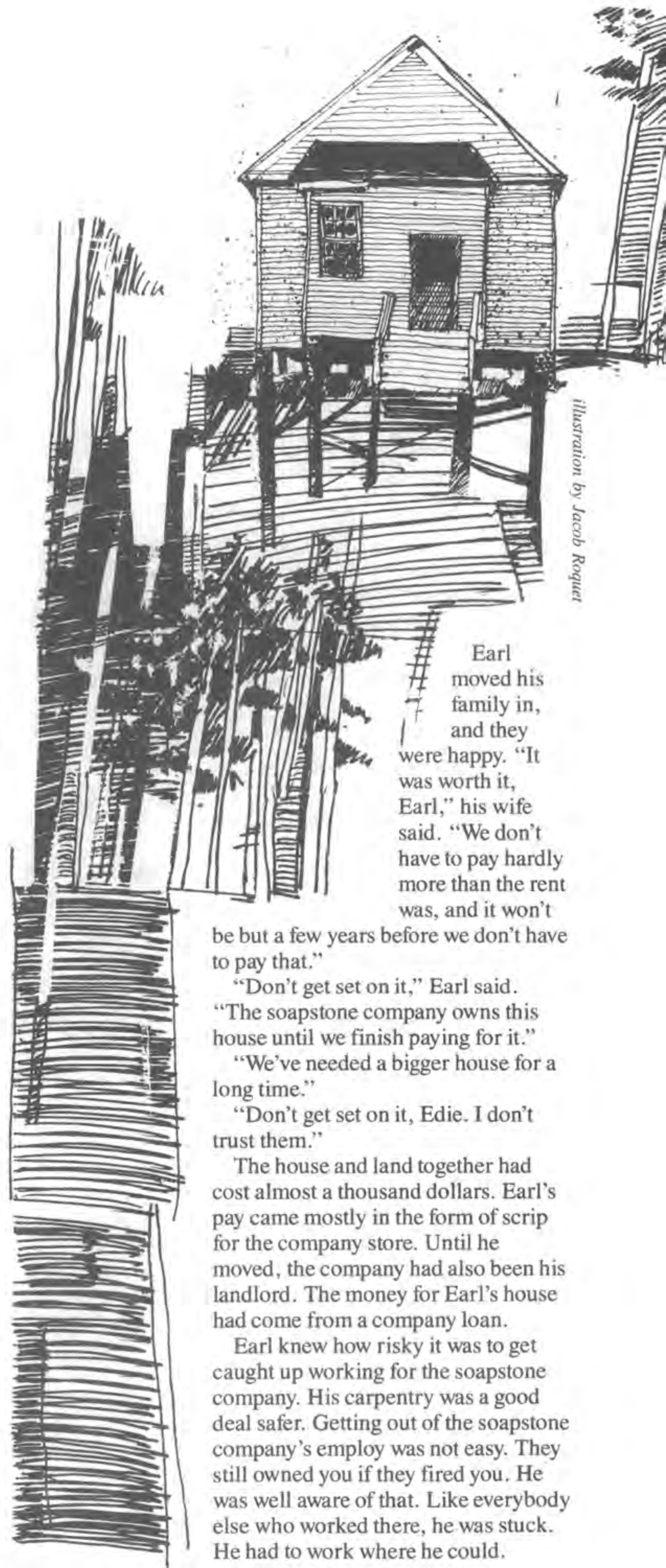


illustration by Jacob Roquet

Earl built the house. His two brothers-in-law helped him as much as he needed. He built it on a quarter-acre of near-vertical hillside. The house was tricky to build. The whole structure hung out from the mountain, beneath a steeply cut road.

The five rooms were supported on a trestle of beams anchored in rock. The whole time Earl was hammering it together, he could look below and see the fall the house might take into the creek. He drove every spike and nail with the anxiety of a craftsman out on a limb. He was unconcerned with the beauty of it. If it held together it would be beautiful enough.

Earl was a carpenter. He built the house one summer, evenings after work. At work he ran a rock saw, slicing blocks of soapstone into slabs. He left for the quarry before dawn. He would walk to the railroad spur and ride a flatcar to the quarry. The soapstone was an amorphous gray rock that cut easily into flagstones, powdering into talc beneath the great saw-toothed blades. At the end of the day he returned home and cleaned up, and then walked over the mountain and sawed and hammered wood until the light failed. Then he went to dinner.

The finished house was extremely solid. Earl could barely feel it vibrate when all five of his kids pranced up and down on it at once. His wife could walk on it without fear. The trestle could have held a much heavier house and still been secure.

Earl moved his family in, and they were happy. "It was worth it, Earl," his wife said. "We don't have to pay hardly more than the rent was, and it won't be but a few years before we don't have to pay that."

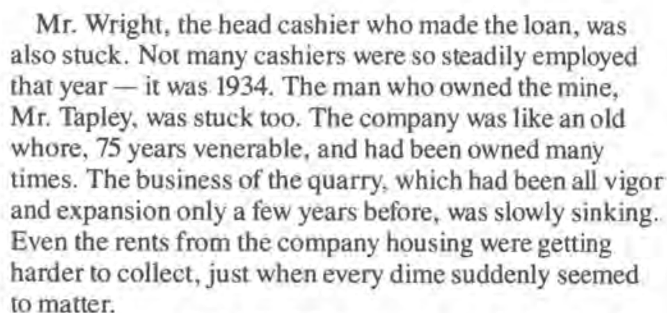
"Don't get set on it," Earl said. "The soapstone company owns this house until we finish paying for it."

"We've needed a bigger house for a long time."

"Don't get set on it, Edie. I don't trust them."

The house and land together had cost almost a thousand dollars. Earl's pay came mostly in the form of scrip for the company store. Until he moved, the company had also been his landlord. The money for Earl's house had come from a company loan.

Earl knew how risky it was to get caught up working for the soapstone company. His carpentry was a good deal safer. Getting out of the soapstone company's employ was not easy. They still owned you if they fired you. He was well aware of that. Like everybody else who worked there, he was stuck. He had to work where he could.



Mr. Wright, the head cashier who made the loan, was also stuck. Not many cashiers were so steadily employed that year — it was 1934. The man who owned the mine, Mr. Tapley, was stuck too. The company was like an old whore, 75 years venerable, and had been owned many times. The business of the quarry, which had been all vigor and expansion only a few years before, was slowly sinking. Even the rents from the company housing were getting harder to collect, just when every dime suddenly seemed to matter.

Wright came to think of the loan in a new light when he transferred Earl's name from the column in which the rents were entered. The loans were finite; the rents weren't. Still, it all seemed to balance out; there were plenty of people to rent to, and the loan held Earl as tightly to his job as rent would do. But something in the idea nagged at him.

"What are you so lost in thought for, Jim?" Mr. Tapley asked.

"I was just looking at these books."

"Did you find anything?"

"I just think there ought to be a few more dollars in here than there are."

They were both always aware — sometimes vaguely — of the iron safe in the corner. Taller than a man, the massive metal doors enclosed much of what the company was worth in titles and contracts and payrolls. The combined mass of wrought iron and paper wealth, so intricately locked up, was too much to forget.

"I agree," Tapley said. "There ought to be some way to milk those numbers up another decimal somewhere."

Wright went to bed thinking of that problem. He smelt a four-figure increase somewhere, and he would have been derelict in his duty if he rested comfortably before he found it.

The next day he drove over the mountain and looked at the house Earl had built with the company's money. Then he drove back to his books.

Earl was already suspicious when he came home from work. He could feel things going wrong.

"I saw Mr. Wright drive up the road today," Edie said.

"Mr. Wright drove up the road?"

"And back."

"Looking at the house," Earl said. "Son of a bitch." The shrill cry and thunder of the children trying to dismantle the place from the inside distracted him. "Shut the hell up in there," he shouted.

"Does it mean anything, Earl?"

"It means we're living in a fool's paradise, that's all."

Edie took the water buckets and went down to the spring to fill them.

Earl slept very little that night, and he went to work uneasily in the morning. The loud whine of the rock saw did nothing to soothe his nerves.

Within distant earshot of the saw, Wright and Tapley were discussing Earl. The brass handles and gilt curlicues of the black iron safe resembled the mouth-parts of a giant crab, in the corner behind their backs.

"I think we should reconsider that loan," Wright said. "It wasn't a good loan."

"I don't see what we stand to lose," said Tapley. "We've done it before. This kind of loan works out just as well as anything else."

"Usually. But usually what these people do is throw together some flimsy shack that might not last out the terms of the note. That's why it works out so well. By rights a place like that ought to have slid into the creek before he was finished building it, and that's what's different here."

"What are you trying to tell me, Jim?"

"He didn't build a shack. He built a damned solid house, and it's worth at least twice as much as the nine hundred dollars plus interest that we'll get back out it, as things stand now."

"Well, maybe that's his good fortune," Tapley said. "We made him an honest loan, and he honestly did what he said he was going to do with it."

"I don't think it was necessarily so honest as that. What he did was take our thousand and build himself a two-thousand-dollar house with it. He might sell the thing and pay us off, and skip out tomorrow with a thousand-dollar profit scalped right off the top of our books."

A little light of irritation sparked up in Tapley's eyes. "I think I do see what you mean," he said.

"Earl's not so innocent. We're the ones that are being innocent. A thousand dollars is a lot of money."

"It sure is. We do have clear title to that piece of property, don't we?"

"It's right there in the safe."

"Call Earl's foreman in here a minute."

Earl went home from work early that day. He walked in the door and sat down in the rocking chair without cleaning the morning's stone dust off himself.

"I was right," he said. "The company let me go."

Half the kids were in school. The baby was asleep. The house was almost quiet. Earl's face was calm and unemotional — graven in soapstone. "Well, we had a chance," he said. "I guess it didn't work out."

Edie was not as calm. Her voice was frightened. "What are we going to do?"

"Look for a place to live."

"Maybe they'll hire you back."

"They will. In two months."

"You reckon they'll take the house?"

"That's what it's all for. Was all along. Building this house was a mistake."

There was little for Earl to do but wait for the end of the month. He couldn't stay in the house all day. He walked here and there along the river, down to the station, back up to the mill. Everyone knew his story. He knew their stories too. He was looking for work. The work was over the mountain, in the quarry. There was no other work. The played-out fields didn't need any more wasted effort. The

station, the store, the mill had what hands they needed. They, too, were stuck. Good a carpenter as Earl was, nobody was building anything.

Earl went to see old man White, because White had an empty shack down below his springhouse. "They're going to hire me back," Earl said.

"I know they will."

"Why don't you rent me that house down there by the creek until I can get something fixed up better. I'll work on the place; the roof and the porch both need some work. The only thing is that damn first month's rent."

"Earl, that's fine with me," White said. "The place is empty. Take it and fix it up and I'll let you have it for five dollars a month, long as you want it. I got it wired for electricity. It's not so bad." White kicked an empty whiskey bottle off the porch.

"Well, at least I can listen to the radio at night."

"They're fucking you over right and left, Earl."

"I know it. I could kill the bastards with my bare hands, and it wouldn't be murder. I'd enjoy that, but what would become of my kids then?"

"You could break them in half, Earl. I remember when you were a fighting man. That time you fought old Aubrey was probably the best damn fight there was in these parts."

"There wasn't anything to Aubrey. He had a glass jaw. That fight didn't last six seconds."

"His jaw? You busted every tooth out of his head. He was the last man ever pulled a pistol out and called you a shrimp."

"I never did like to be called a shrimp. It was the pistol that did it, though. I don't care for guns. But I feel real bad about all those teeth of his."

"Hell, Earl, everybody in Rockfish was grateful to you. Old Aubrey was an asshole up to then, and it was just a matter of time before his pistol went off and hurt somebody. You improved his manners right sharp. Now he's so easy-going, sweet-tempered, and polite that you wouldn't imagine it was the same man. Even his gold teeth are prettier than the originals. You did everybody a favor when you busted Aubrey in the head — him too."

"That was ten years ago. I haven't got any pride left. I've got too many children."

"Yes, it's true, a family can slow you down considerably," White said.

At the end of the month Earl borrowed a cart and moved his family into the bushes down White's creek. A week later he heard that the soapstone company was hiring again.

"Are you really going to go, Earl?" Edie asked.

Earl's face was itself as hard as a stone. "I'm no happier about it than you are, but do you plan to eat next week or not? I already owe White five dollars, and I'm going to owe him five more in a couple of weeks. What else can I do? I don't want to talk about it."

Earl missed the train on his first day back to work, and had to walk the full five miles along the railroad track to the quarry. The day's first load of cut stone passed him on the way to the station, and he couldn't bring himself to wave back at the men on board. He regretted each step. He meant to kill the first man that showed any pity for him. The waiting saw seemed to grin at him. He worked. He cut stone. Clouds of talc flew up around him.

Late in the day he saw Mr. Wright watching him from the office door.

"I saw old Wright eyeballing me today," he said to Edie that night.

"Was it because you were late?"

"Hell no, it wasn't. They own my house."

"I swear, Earl. It's like there's no end."

"I don't believe there is an end. They're going to drive me into the ground like a railroad spike. Well, they won't break me. I'll draw my pay while I can."

"While you can?"

"They won't keep me long. Just long enough to make them feel decent."

"Maybe you're wrong."

"I'm not wrong."

"Maybe they won't feel decent too soon."

Edie didn't trust her husband's bosses at the quarry any more than he did, but she believed Earl would somehow handle them. She thought so because Earl was a hard and careful worker, and hard careful work was the system for doing good. She thought of Wright and Tapley as rascals who randomly did wrong, careless things. She didn't know they had a system too.

Earl didn't miss the train next morning. He kept telling himself that he was little worse off than he had been six months before. It was a lie he told himself, as he knew. He was worse off, because he would be fired, this time permanently. He would be fired because they had stolen from him. As the days went by, he could tell when they were talking about him up in the office. The concern they had for him moved him greatly.

"We can't hang onto him forever," Wright said. "He isn't moving back into a company house. That's ten dollars a month we lose out of his pay. It's not efficient."

"I wonder if it's good to let him go," Tapley replied. "We made twice the amount of his salary off of him this year. It seems cruel to fire him on top of that."

"He still wants to skin us. Look, he's down there with a mighty expensive saw. He broke a blade already since he came back. These people don't understand business. He thinks this is personal. He holds it against us."

"How can you tell?"

"He comes in and goes right to work. He doesn't talk to anybody. He doesn't look around. He doesn't even look up. His attitude is bad, and he's going to try to get even as soon as he can."

"We can't have it, then," Tapley said.

"We can't, that's true. Even this business of the lost rent. Our books don't look so good any more. That stack of orders over there is shorter every week. This is one hell of a blight we're in."

"Sometimes I think we're going down," Tapley said.

"We will if we don't dance fast and pick up every loose dime we can. It's that bad. And people like Earl don't understand that. They think it's personal. We've got to have loyalty."

"Next blade he breaks, let him go."

Down in the cutting room, Earl saw the piece of nickel pyrite. Half the size of his thumb, embedded in the slab like a walnut, it flew down the track toward the saw. By the time his hand hit the switch, the nickel splintered with a bang. The saw seemed to spin backward as it slowed and stopped, three teeth broken off and two more bent sideways.

Earl was very late coming home that night. He stopped by White's house after dark, on the hill above his rented shack, and paid White the ten dollars he owed him. White took the money anxiously. Time for another case of whiskey, thought Earl. Then he went home.

"What happened? I was worried half to death."

"Oh, I've been clear to Lovingston and back," Earl said. "Fired for good this time."

"Have you been drinking? I smell bourbon."

"I was just up to White's. No, I didn't drink. He's rolling on the floor with the bottles up there."

"What were you doing in Lovingston?"

"I've gone on relief, Edie. I'm reporting for work in the morning."

"What work?"

"The CCC. Tomorrow the truck takes me away."

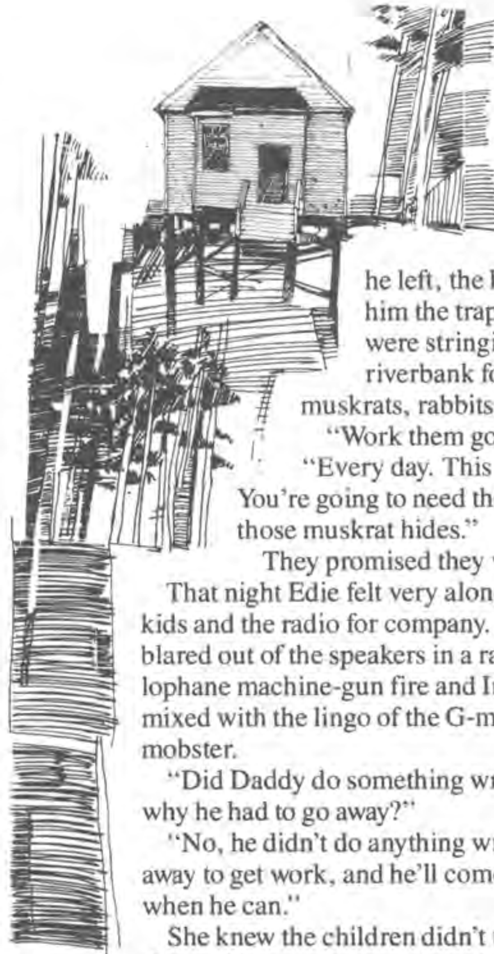
"Truck, Earl? Do you have to do that?"

"Yes, I'm going away. That's what I have to do. I'll be gone for a few weeks. They'll send you the money. Then I'll come back, and then I'll be gone again, I reckon. The work's up way the hell away from this place. It's up in the mountains somewhere. So I'll be living in a CCC camp until things get better. It's the best I could do."

She felt angry, but there was no point to letting it out. She could tell Earl was angry too, but he wasn't letting it out either.

That night they could hear bottles breaking up the hill at White's. "Lord, that man will drink himself to death," Edie said.

The morning was cold. Earl packed his clothes. Before he left, the kids showed him the trap-lines they were stringing along the riverbank for catching muskrats, rabbits, and birds.



"Work them good," Earl said. "Every day. This isn't for sport. You're going to need those rabbits and those muskrat hides."

They promised they would.

That night Edie felt very alone, with just the kids and the radio for company. "Gangbusters" blared out of the speakers in a rattle of cellophane machine-gun fire and Irish brogue mixed with the lingo of the G-man and the mobster.

"Did Daddy do something wrong? Is that why he had to go away?"

"No, he didn't do anything wrong. He went away to get work, and he'll come back again when he can."

She knew the children didn't understand things. She wasn't sure she understood either. Her husband had built a house with his own hands, and somehow that act was destroying them all. It had even driven Earl away from here, as sudden as death. Earl's leaving was a shock, like a broken promise, and left her hurting inside. She did not want to have to manage her family alone.

When the radio program ended, her second-oldest looked up at her with shining eyes. "I want to be like Machine-Gun Kelly when I grow up," he said. "Then we'd be rich, and wouldn't have to kill rabbits for supper."

"You do and I'll whip the hide right off of you. You're going to be an honest man."

"Ma, I was just pulling your leg."

"I'll throw the noisebox in the creek if it gives you ideas like that. I want Earl to be proud of you when he comes home."□

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GULF COAST TENANTS FIGHT FOR HOUSING, PEACE

By Richard Boyd

On a cold November night late last year, Beverly Epps made history. As her fellow tenants looked on, Epps became the nation's first black woman resident of a public housing project to be named executive director of a local housing authority. "It feels very good to be part of history, but will it buy my Christmas presents?" Epps responded, in typical low-key fashion, to the appointment. During the same meeting of Louisiana's Jefferson Parish Housing Authority, tenants of Marrero's Acre Road housing project also celebrated the selection of Patricia Landry, another Acre Road resident, as its manager.

The two appointments, made by an all-male, mostly white, politically appointed housing authority, capped a string of victories won by the Marrero Tenants Organization (MTO) in 1984. Forceful protest, dramatic organizing, and attention-grabbing tactics are helping Marrero tenants roll back a decade of corrosive neglect of their housing project and win sweeping gains in their battle to secure decent housing. Throughout much of the organizing effort in 1984 a nucleus of tenants active in MTO, mostly black women, maintained as a priority their insistence that women who live in the project be afforded positions of leadership in managing their own living conditions.

Their unrelenting pressure on the white-controlled and male-dominated parish and HUD political establishments cracked the veneer at least enough for racist and sexist barriers to slip. Today, the four white and three black housing authority members interrupt each other at their monthly meetings to heap praise on the work being done by Epps and Landry to upgrade conditions in the Marrero project.

The parish authority is appointed by the seven-member elected parish council, and blacks account for less than 20 percent of the registered voters in the parish, which experienced substantial growth in the 1960s and 1970s as young whites fled to the suburbs mainly hoping to avoid school desegregation in New Orleans. About 1,000 residents live in the 200 units of the Marrero project, less than 30 minutes from downtown New Orleans.

One month before the historic November meeting these same tenants, joined by a New Orleans area cross-section of social-justice activists, grabbed the media's attention by marching across the Greater New Orleans Mississippi River Bridge — the first political march ever made across the bridge (see *SE*, Nov./Dec., 1984). That walk climaxed a three-day protest march by Acre Road tenants from their project on the west bank of the Mississippi River to the front door

photo by Chris Loff/Times-Picayune

GULF COAST TENANTS AND ALLIES MARCH ACROSS THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE

of the regional office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on Canal Street in downtown New Orleans.

The three-day march for "Housing and Peace," the most spectacular MTO project of the year, was made possible by months of intense, skillful organizing and protest against a multitude of inefficiencies and alleged illegalities in the management of public housing in Jefferson Parish. From the early part of 1984 on, the Marrero tenants were in the news almost daily — vocalizing demands, formulating charges of mismanagement, uncovering examples of horrendous neglect, and winning victories on the streets, in the courts, or with parish authorities and HUD officials.

After almost a decade of crying in the wilderness, Marrero tenant leaders are as suspicious of HUD as of the local housing authority. "I don't trust those HUD folks any more than I trust the white political establishment that makes up our local authority," MTO leader Rose Mary Smith tells her group time and again.

Until early 1984, the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority's monthly meetings were usually conducted in the law offices of former authority attorney Nathan Greenberg of Gretna. Council members routinely made appointments to the authority more to fulfill patronage obligations than because of candidates' qualifications or because of their dedication to bettering the plight of the less fortunate in the community.

For years Rose Mary Smith and her small band of tenant activists usually didn't know about the authority meetings until they were over. And if they attended, the authority went into executive session.

As far back as 1976, HUD, responding to tenant complaints, chided the authority for not having an organized maintenance program. In August 1984, when a damaging tenant-prompted management analysis was released by HUD, the authority was still being scolded for lack of an organized maintenance program.

Last year, tenants began chanting their litany of past and accumulated needs: lack of maintenance, leaky roofs, doors that wouldn't close, broken window panes they couldn't get replaced, insect infestation despite the fact the authority for years had illegally collected a pest control fee, worn out appliances, court-ordered evictions obtained by the housing authority to pressure tenants for back rent, poor exterior lighting, lack of concern on the part of authorities for unsightly junked automobiles, trashy streets and overgrown vacant lots, erratic and often changing rent calculations, a nonexistent waiting list for vacancies, the inability to find key authority workers such as the executive director and project manager and maintenance staff, and, still unresolved, the contention of tenants that utility charges are excessive and illegal.

With the exception of a still lingering battle over the utility charges and adoption of an acceptable utility allowance schedule, nearly all of the complaints outlined by tenants in early 1984 have been resolved or are on the way to being resolved.

Rose Mary Smith, Patricia Landry, and Beverly Epps see HUD's years of silence and the authority's legacy of inefficiency as part of a greater, more deeply rooted problem of a male dominated, sexist approach to governing. "As long as many of the tenants of Acre Road were poor black women with children, and single parents, there wasn't much reason for the male-dominated HUD regional office, the male-dominated council, and the male-dominated housing authority to

TRAINER RON CHISOM AT GULF COAST TENANT WORKSHOP

pay any attention," Smith says. "They figured we might come out on occasion to an authority meeting and try to reason and they would smile and be nice to us and we would go home and they could get on with their little club."

By 1984 Smith and the others had had enough. Eager for change, they were quick learners when Pat Bryant of the Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership Development Project came along to share his organizational and protest skills. "It didn't take much to turn that spark we had into a big old fire," Smith says. "We were ready to take to the streets and march and protest and make a presence at the authority meetings. And I'm proud of the fact it was still the women in the project with the children; only now, in 1984, we had some skills and we were fed up with being nice and being smiled at. We were not smiling back and it didn't take HUD and the parish very long to figure that out and when they figured that out a whole lot of things suddenly started to change."

In August 1984 — before the march — HUD released the lengthy management review of the Acre Road Housing Project. The damning document cited 38 major deficiencies in parish housing management, some that had remained uncorrected for 10 years. The review also recommended that, "Unless positive changes are made within the next six months, action should be taken to replace executive staff and the board of commissioners [the housing authority] as necessary."

The impetus for that management review came out of a stormy two-and-a-half hour faceoff in April 1984 between tenants and some top assistants of HUD regional director Richard Franco at the authority's offices in Marrero. But almost four months of unrelenting pressure by tenants — aided by veteran tenant organizer Pat Bryant — had been necessary to coax Franco's people out of the New Orleans office and into the project.

Once there, Franco's lieutenants were bombarded by an angry litany of past and present ills in the area of public housing management in Jefferson Parish. "We have been remiss in not being attentive to your problems in the past," John Warrick, a general engineer for the HUD regional office, told the tenants during that milestone April showdown. "I personally feel HUD has been negligent, but this is a new day and the ball is now in our court and it is our responsibility to help you," he said.

When the management review was finally released it revealed, among other things, that HUD had allowed the parish authority to be more than four years late in submitting a revised utility schedule as required by federal regulations.

This battle, by one relatively small group of tenants in one housing project in the Deep South, takes on national significance given what is happening to the country's public housing. The Marrero tenants say the very existence of public housing is endangered. Funds for housing have suffered greater cuts than those of any other program under the Reagan budgets. According to tenants, Reagan came into office planning to abolish public housing entirely, either by selling it to private landlords or demolishing it to make room for commercial investments. Protests by tenants nationwide forced the administration to back off these plans, and now Reagan has proposed selling public housing to the tenants themselves.

The Marrero tenants say what is happening in their community provides the real answer to housing problems — keep the government in the business of financing housing, but let the tenants run it.

"We can manage our housing better, more economically, more efficiently than the bureaucrats who have been messing up things for so long," Smith says.

In contrast to their attitude in years past, the local media have become perhaps obsessively fascinated with the small Marrero project, the tenant leaders, the housing authority, and the larger symbolic implications of what the media see as a classic struggle between poor, powerless, largely disenfranchised tenants and the white-dominated, insensitive parish political structure. Since March 1984, 56 stories about Marrero tenant struggles have appeared in *The Times-Picayune/The States-Item*, published in New Orleans and the state's major daily newspaper. The vast majority of those stories have been lengthy and prominently displayed, spread across the top of major metro news pages, carrying six-column headlines. That constitutes a lot of ink in a major daily newspaper for a housing project of about 1,000 tenants in a parish with a minority black population and where no blacks hold locally elected office (with the exception of one black state court judge sitting in Gretna, the parish seat).

Central to public and media awareness of the tenants and authority has been Pat Bryant, a former staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies. Bryant now directs the

Southeast Project on Human Needs and Peace, an endeavor sponsored by the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC), War Resisters League Southeast, and the SOC Education Fund, to help develop grassroots movements for social change that join local and global issues. Beginning in early 1983, Bryant, Rose Mary Smith, and others in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama formed the Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership and Development Project, which provides support, technical and legal assistance, information, and leadership training for tenant councils along the Gulf coast. A veteran organizer, Bryant is articulate, intense, and capable of finding and nurturing would-be tenant leaders and helping them develop the self-confidence to press demands for reform.

Bryant rankles many officials from HUD on down. He also gets arrested from time to time — twice in recent months: once as part of a South Africa demonstration in New Orleans and more recently at a housing protest march in St. Charles Parish, upriver from New Orleans. He is supremely confident of his positions, more knowledgable of HUD rules and state laws governing public housing than most officials, and possesses a country-preacher oratory zeal when needed.

Smith, Landry, and others had been laboring with the MTO for more than 10 years when they joined forces with Bryant and two other long-time New Orleans organizers who helped form the Gulf Coast Project — Jim Hayes, now president of the National Tenant Organization (NTO), and Ron Chisom. After getting the Gulf Coast Project launched, at the coaxing of Smith and Landry Bryant directed his organizing energies at the Marrero Project. "I quickly grasped that conditions there were deplorable; that neglect was rampant and that tenants there had been crying in the wilderness for a decade with no one listening," Bryant said. "They needed long-overdue help and they needed it fast and I felt if we could score some successes there, those successes could galvanize tenants in other projects along the Gulf Coast to start organizing and start asserting their rights,

photo by Pat Bryant

FROM LEFT: ROSE MARY SMITH, BEVERLY EPPS, AND PAT LANDRY

especially in New Orleans with its 90,000 long-neglected tenants."

By the end of 1983, the MTO began mapping its strategy to score quick victories, using a full arsenal of weapons including petitions, marches, pickets, and boycotts. The pressure the MTO was able to exert was enhanced by Bryant's ability to convince the media that the situation was worth their attention. And so, like a slumbering giant rudely awakened from a long hibernation, the Marrero housing authority suddenly found itself in early 1984 under serious seige.

In March 1984, tenants stormed a meeting of the housing authority and top HUD officials at the federal agency's Canal Street offices to demonstrate their anger at being consistently excluded from housing authority decision-making sessions. Tenants wanted to press demands in front of HUD and local authority members for new management, correct billing for rent and utilities, and badly needed repairs. As federal guards showed up to oust the demonstrators, HUD called off the meeting. Two days later tenants stormed a second meeting and left shortly before the arrival of federal guards, again summoned by HUD.

Those two meetings quickly resulted in tenant lawsuits in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, alleging violations of the state's open meetings law. The suits were filed by tenant organization lawyers Yvonne Hughes and Clare Jupiter. Jefferson Parish judge Floyd Newlin and New Orleans judge Revius Ortigue, Jr., came down on the side of the tenants in April and May, ordering the housing authority and HUD to open all their sessions to the tenants and the public.

Judge Newlin ruled that tenants clearly have the right to picket, threaten a rent strike, and press for reform in housing management. He also told the authority it could not avoid the open meeting law simply by taking the Jefferson body to Orleans Parish to meet with HUD. In addition, he threw out a countersuit by the authority's former lawyer, Nathan Greenberg, who had sought an injunction to stop tenants from picketing the housing authority offices in Marrero and publicly threatening a rent strike.

Also in March, after several picketing sessions at the authority's office, white executive director Joseph Werner bowed to insistent tenant demands and resigned. "Beautiful," said Rose Mary Smith. "We are very happy." Tenants maintained that they could hardly ever find Werner and that when they did he was insensitive to their needs. In a parting salvo, Werner said, "If the tenants would take care of the appliances and contents of their homes, without abusing them, we would not have the problems which they complain about today." According to the HUD management review, most of the 38 major deficiencies in management occurred while Werner

was at the helm.

In April, over the intense objections of tenants, the housing authority named Joseph Jones as the new executive director. Jones, who is black, had been project manager for years under Werner; tenants said that he, too, was rarely available because of his full-time job as a parish deputy. Rose Mary Smith tried to unseat Jones immediately, alleging that his choice had been made illegally by the board while meeting in executive session in Greenberg's law office, a meeting from which tenants were barred.

A week later, then-authority chair Pascal Scanio confirmed to this reporter that Jones was hired during a closed meeting, a violation of the state's open meetings law. But the authority went back into a special meeting a week later and rehired Jones. By July, Jones was in hot water with HUD for failing to furnish data needed to unravel the tenant allegations of utility overcharges. John Warrick, HUD's resident engineer, said that what Jones had provided amounted only to "mumbo jumbo." Parish district attorney John M. Mamoulides, angered by Scanio's admission of a blatant violation of the open meetings law in the initial selection of Jones, subpoenaed authority records. After reviewing the records he declined to prosecute, but in a sharply worded letter told the housing authority to get its house in order.

Also in April, HUD acknowledged the seething unrest in Marrero and Franco sent his top lieutenants into the project. That landmark session led to the comprehensive management review released later in the year.

By the end of August, tenants were given an audience with Franco and his top chiefs at the HUD offices. This session was a far cry from the previous occasions when Franco had called out the federal guards to oust them. It was at this meeting that Franco said, on the record, he would go to bat for them in Washington if they proved their case for utility rebates.

August also marked the release of the damning management review, which reads as a chilling litany to the years of accumulated abuse. One section of the report shows that for years the authority had illegally charged tenants one dollar a month for pest control, a service which HUD rules require to be provided free of charge. Rose Mary Smith says that she and others had known for years that the pest control fee was illegal and time and again their complaints fell on deaf ears. The authority is now awaiting HUD approval of a $48,000 item in its new budget to rebate tenants for the overcharges.

Meanwhile, tenants in Marrero and elsewhere on the Gulf Coast were turning their attention to national housing policies and priorities. They launched a petition drive calling on Congress to authorize the building of 10 million new housing units over the next 10 years. The petition said that this could be done for $60 billion a year and asked that the funds be obtained by cutting this amount from the military budget. They also asked that $40 billion be spent over two years to upgrade existing housing, with the jobs this would create going to unemployed people in the housing projects. In September, fresh from his election in Miami as head of the National Tenant Organization (of which MTO is a charter member), Jim Hayes addressed tenants on the Gretna courthouse steps, telling them he had appealed to HUD secretary Samuel Pierce for help in correcting utility overcharge problems in Marrero. He also announced that NTO had voted to conduct a national petition drive asking for funds for housing instead of bombs.

During September and October, tenants kept up the pressure for the removal of Jones through pickets and demands at housing authority meetings. On October 15, the authority fired not only Jones but also its attorney, Nathan Greenberg, and its accounting firm, replacing it with one of the area's few all-black accounting firms. Earlier in the year, during the court fights over the closed meetings, Greenberg had confided to this reporter that for almost a decade he had been successful in maintaining tight control over the housing authority, maintaining for it such a low profile that few in the parish even knew it existed. But he ruefully acknowledged then that Bryant had ignited a long-smouldering spark of dissent among tenants, had captured the media's attention, and that as a result he himself was losing control. Several months after his departure, Greenberg informed the new authority lawyer that he personally owned old authority records and legal documents and that the authority would have to pay him a fee if its staff wanted to see these papers.

By October, with Jones and Greenberg gone, tenants began a serious push to get Beverly Epps named executive director. HUD regional director Franco sent a letter to parish officials defining a position of interim director that was clearly tailored for only one man in the parish: Community Development director Emanuel Brown. In an angry showdown, tenants charged that an interim director was not needed, and that Epps, who had served as project manager during the short and stormy tenure of Jones, was more than capable and more than ready to take on the duties of executive director.

Franco would not back down. Shortly after that meeting, Jefferson Parish President Joseph Yenni "loaned" Emanuel Brown to the housing authority (at the request, he said, of both HUD and the authority), mainly to tackle the awesome task of responding point by point to the management review within 30 days. Tenants vowed to stage a dramatic protest. That vow quickly was translated into plans for the historic three-day, 15-mile "March for Peace and Housing."

With their lawyers poised to rush into federal court in an instant to raise constitutional questions, Smith, Patricia Landry, MTO vice president Verna Brown, Bryant, and other organizers took a positive public stance that the march would take place. The executive director of the Mississippi River Bridge Authority, Thomas Short, went on record as saying that if tenants got parade permits from the Jefferson Parish sheriff's office as well as the Gretna and New Orleans police departments, he would give them permission to walk across the bridge beginning at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, August 29, 1984.

Several local councilmen later told reporters privately that Short made the commitment in print after Bryant and Smith met with him and bombarded him with constitutional issues which they were prepared to raise in federal court if he tried to stop them. But, the councilmembers said, Short also made

the commitment fully expecting tenants to fail in obtaining the other specified permits. "He walked right into a trap and didn't know it. He just wasn't sure on those constitutional issues if he had a solid position, but after he went public first, everybody else got scared and fell over themselves to grant permits," noted one councilman who refused to be identified.

The major disappointment in the march was the small turnout of only 110 marchers. Bryant had hoped that at least 1,000 people would join in, including tenants from Texas, Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. That did not materialize, but a group did come from Chattanooga, Tennessee, a city where blacks are pushing for public housing reform.

Bryant says part of the problem was that in the final days before the march, too much of his energy was diverted to the negotiations and away from organizing participants. "I think that was part of their strategy," he commented. "I think stumbling over each other and granting all the permits so easily, they felt the next best weapon they had was to hold down the number so they could say, 'Look, all this fuss over 100 or so people.' So I think they decided to keep us tied up in meetings over the route right up to the eve of the march, knowing we wouldn't have time left to get out the troops."

The march was precedent setting, both because previously powerless people had forced authorities to let them cross an attention-getting major bridge that had not been used by social-justice marchers before, and because the action joined tenants' local demands with national issues. Responding to a television reporter's question about how the issues of housing and peace were related, Rose Mary Smith responded, "What we are saying is that poor tenants in public housing cannot have repairs made to our homes or have enough public housing built as long as our government throws away billions of dollars on war."

The march attracted enormous publicity. *The Times-Picayune/The States-Item*, besides assigning this reporter to cover the whole march on foot, printed maps showing the route for each day's segment. On October 29, 110 tenants, singing "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Us Around," walked off the

photo courtesy Times-Picayune

1984 TENANT DEMONSTRATION IN MARRERO, LOUISIANA

bridge about 12:15 p.m. onto Camp Street in New Orleans. Except for a charity jogging race the two previous years, this was the first time the span had been partially closed for pedestrian use and the first time ever for political protest. At the foot of the bridge about 50 New Orleans project tenants were waiting with banners held high, and they joined the protesters for the final leg of the march and the hour-long rally.

Not quite a month later, on November 28, the Marrero tenants rejoiced as Beverly Epps was named executive director, replacing Brown who had been on loan as interim director. At 42, widowed and the mother of five children, she has lived in the Acre Road Project since 1966.

Reaction from the regional HUD office was swift and punitive: on December 3, five days after the appointment, HUD chief Franco notified parish officials and the housing authority that he was withholding federal rent subsidies to the housing project to protest the naming of Epps.

In a December 3 letter to Jefferson Parish president Joseph Yenni, Franco said: ". . . the recent decisions of your appointed housing authority board of commissioners to hire three inexperienced persons or firms to administer the public housing program does not appear realistic nor in the best interest of all the parties concerned . . . we are dismayed that the board has chosen to take the same type of irresponsible action which was the basis of our comprehensive review, therefore we are at this time withholding payment of operating subsidy to the low rent housing program."

It couldn't have been much clearer. Franco was saying he wasn't going to let HUD money flow into a housing project being managed by two black women and with its accounts being administered by a black CPA firm.

In the end, Epps and Landry stayed; the black CPA firm has a contract and now the authority is thinking of suing the white CPA firm it hired because they are refusing to turn over records showing how HUD modernization money was spent in 1982 when Joe Werner, a white, was executive director, Greenberg was lawyer, and the authority was all white.

"After the dismal record of the past two executive directors which has created serious problems for this authority and HUD, how can anyone suggest that I am not capable of handling all the duties?" Epps commented.

Authority member Victor Gabriel, a white Marrero investment counselor, was working on a compromise that would keep Epps on as executive director. But at an authority meeting on December 12, amid charges of racism and sexism from the tenants, Gabriel's plan foundered, failing to get support from other housing authority members and further eroding his own

THE SOUTHEAST PROJECT ON HUMAN NEEDS AND PEACE

The Southeast Project on Human Needs and Peace, which has served as a catalyst for the victorious organizing by tenants in Marrero, Louisiana, was initiated in 1982 by the Institute for Southern Studies.

The Institute launched the project to complement its publication of *Waging Peace*, and then, as is its practice with organizing efforts — spun off the Southeast Project as an independent entity. The Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC), and War Resisters League Southeast, which work to link the issues of peace and human needs, joined as co-sponsors of the original project and have continued its work.

The initial strategy behind the project called for building a stronger peace and justice movement in the South by creating coalitions between existing grassroots economic-survival groups and peace groups. In 1982, veteran journalist and organizer Pat Bryant left his job as an editor at *Southern Exposure* to direct the project. For the better part of a year, Bryant traveled the South and worked intensively in six communities to put diverse groups in touch with each other and build working relationships. Some tenuous coalitions emerged but did not last.

"We soon realized that this was not the way to build a lasting movement," Bryant says. "It's the way people have usually tried to build coalitions, and it has usually failed. It's going at things backward."

Bryant notes that such coalitions necessarily involve bridging formidable chasms. "Most organized groups of poor people are black; most existing peace organizations are white," he says, "so that means you've got to bridge the black-white chasm. And then there's the barrier of class."

Such coalitions, Bryant maintains, *are* possible. But unless they start with grassroots groups that have developed their own strength to the point where they can provide leadership, the white middle-class groups become the central force and the needs of poor people get lost in the shuffle. Then the coalition falls apart, says Bryant, not because anybody gets mad and goes home, but because poor people lose interest.

So the Southeast Project on Human Needs and Peace decided to start at the other end: to build the strength of grassroots groups first, with the expectation that these groups would then reach out to form coalitions.

The project chose the tenant movement as a starting point, according to Bryant, because tenants in public and federally subsidized housing are literally struggling to survive today and desperately need organization. They also have a proud heritage of struggle in the South; tenants formed one of the strongest and most lasting movements that grew out of the civil-rights upsurge. Furthermore, Bryant notes, the housing issue should be a great unifier: everybody needs decent housing, and a massive program of housing construction could solve the nation's unemployment problem.

With limited resources, Southeast Project strategists knew they could not work everywhere. They picked the Gulf Coast, because by 1982 tenants were beginning to organize anew there and were asking for the project's help. "We felt that if we could build a good model it could be replicated in many places," Bryant notes. "And that is what we have done."

Bryant says the thrust of the project's work is a training program that helps grassroots leaders develop and become effective organizers. He also says the project operates on the assumption that some important victories can be won right now, things that will improve the lives of tenants, as has happened in Marrero.

"But we also know the basic problems of poor people cannot be solved until national priorities change from war to the meeting of human needs," he says. "Local organizers are being dishonest if they don't tell people that. So we link up the local and global issues."

The Southeast Project is *not* trying to recruit troops from among the poor for the peace movement that exists, Bryant stresses. Rather, it envisions a *new* peace movement — a peace and justice movement, led by poor people, mainly people of color, with the needs of the grassroots at its center.

"In Marrero and elsewhere on the Gulf Coast," he says, "we've taken a giant step toward our objective of building at the grassroots. People in these organizations are now asking others — peace activists, church folk, union members, students — to join *them* in a new coalition. We hope the response of other groups will be positive. If it is, we'll have the kind of coalition that can turn the country around."

— *by Anne Braden*

PAT BRYANT AT BIMONTHLY WORKSHOP OF GULF COAST TENANTS

standing with tenants.

There were several reasons for the tenants' anger. Gabriel wanted to cut Epps's salary from $21,156 — the amount paid the two previous male directors, one of whom resigned under fire and one of whom was fired — to $16,800. He proposed also to restrict her management responsibility to only the Marrero project of 200 housing units and not all the units in the parish. Gabriel suggested further that the authority hire a chief administrative officer — at a salary of $18,156 — who would have authority over Epps and who also would be in charge of managing the approximately 1,500 units of privately owned, federally subsidized housing in the parish.

On December 13, Franco announced he was restoring the subsidy because he had received assurances that the authority would vote to demote Epps and hire a chief administrative officer. But on December 16, this reporter quoted high-ranking HUD legal staffers in Washington as saying that Franco did not have authority to cut or threaten to cut subsidies and was exceeding his authority in interfering in the local authority's choice of an executive director.

In numerous directives and statements, HUD has long encouraged local government officials to name tenants to positions on housing authorities and also to name tenants as project managers. HUD Washington attorney Joe Gelletich also said Franco did not have authority to withhold the rent subsidy because the local authority was late in submitting answers to the 38 management deficiencies listed in the review. At the same time authority member Eugene Fitchue, a black, said he would fight Gabriel on the HUD-backed compromise intended to demote Epps.

Meanwhile, the tenants were reaching out to seek support from a broad range of groups in the New Orleans area. The day after Gelletich's opinions became public, there was a march in front of the HUD offices in New Orleans to demand that Franco be fired and replaced by Crystal Jones, a young New Orleans black woman active in tenant protests and a specialist in urban studies. Joining the tenants on the march were labor organizers, members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the local Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), organizers for the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), members of the Socialist Workers Party, and others. In Washington, lawyers specializing in housing issues contacted by Bryant huddled with top ranking HUD officials, threatening them with federal lawsuits.

Against that emotional backdrop, the local authority met on the night of December 19 in the parish council chambers in Gretna to try to resolve the Epps issue. Some 30 uniformed and plainclothes police officers ringed the meeting room. Chief Deputy Wallace Moll said they came because Gabriel had warned there might be demonstrations. Two parish councilmembers, Lloyd Giardina and James Lawson — who both said later that they were afraid the ill-timed Gabriel compromise would touch off a protest firestorm in the parish — intervened with Franco. With a subdued Gabriel conceding defeat, the housing authority in swift action rejected the compromise, restored Epps to her full authority at full salary, and agreed to advertise for a comptroller who would serve under her at slightly less pay.

At the helm for more than six months, Epps has reduced delinquent tenant rents by more than 30 percent, a fact that brings smiles to authority members who know those figures look good at HUD offices. New street lights have been installed at the project with the help of revenue-sharing money obtained by councilmember Lawson. New maintenance director Robert Drake, a young black man who works closely with Epps and Landry, found many gas dryers had dangerous connections that could explode, took them out, and got emergency HUD money to replace them. Epps made arrangements with Sheriff Harry Lee, the nation's first popularly elected Chinese-American sheriff, to borrow inmates under guard to come to the project to cut grass and pick up trash. She also persuaded parish officials to tow away junk cars that tenants had complained of for years.

Most importantly, earlier this year, for the first time in four years, HUD approved modernization money for the project. "That is nothing short of a strong vote of confidence for the job that Beverly Epps is doing as executive director," George Kelmell, the white chair of the local authority, said at a recent meeting.

The transition of local project power from the insensitive leaders of the past, who didn't live in and seldom visited the project, to tenant activists in leadership roles was symbolized at a recent workshop. Epps, Drake, and Landry hosted a one-day seminar at Acre Road on proper installation and maintenance of heaters and dryers. The workshop was attended by housing authority directors and maintenance directors from five parishes and HUD's regional office.

Midway through 1985, the long-overdue revised utility schedule still has not been adopted. Time and again, HUD has rejected proposed schedules submitted by the local authority in response to the management review. HUD has rejected the schedules mainly because tenants want electric dryers and air conditioners included in the utility schedule portion for which HUD provides payment subsidy. Tenants take a pragmatic position: dryers are essential to clean, well-kept families; air conditioners are essential in an area largely developed over swamps, below sea level, and in one of the most humid regions in the country.

HUD maintains that such appliances are not allowable, as they are not standard features of apartments. Marrero tenant leaders refuse to back off on that issue and the local authority — challenged at almost every turn for much of 1984, publicly embarrassed over the management review, and under fire from HUD, parish officials, and tenants — continues to submit for HUD approval utility schedules including the questioned appliances.

Another major unresolved issue which the Marrero tenants refuse to abandon is their claim that at least since 1980 — in the absence of a revised utility schedule as ordered by HUD — they have been systematically overcharged by about $2 million for utilities by the local housing authority. In late 1984, however, HUD released

its own utility analysis of the Acre Road Project for the same period and asserted that tenants collectively owe the housing authority $100,000 and that the authority owes the tenants less than $100. Tenants, as expected, loudly rejected those findings and indications are that eventually the issue will wind up in federal court.

While the issue of utility charges lingers unresolved, tenants are still pushing for what they consider another vital unfinished item on their 1984 agenda: the appointment by the parish council of a tenant to the local housing authority. Rose Mary Smith, with the backing of MTO, has openly campaigned for her appointment, and Franco is on record in correspondence with Jefferson Parish President Joseph Yenni urging the appointment of a tenant to the seven-member authority.

Smith and her followers vow to keep up the fight to get her placed on the housing authority and prove their case for utility rebates. Despite Gabriel's appointment to the housing authority board, tenants hope their cause may be aided by the recent addition of a comptroller to the executive staff of the housing authority. He is William Offricht of Metairie, Louisiana, a retired regional HUD official who spent much of his public career in the assisted management housing branch of the federal housing program. Working closely with Epps and Landry, Offricht and the tenants hope that after establishing a routine he will be able to find time to tackle the long and tedious job of analyzing past records to answer, once and for all, the lingering utility overcharge issue.

In the meantime, Smith and other MTO leaders are sharing the stories of their victories with other tenant groups throughout the South and are urging peace groups, church activists, and others to join them in their demands that national resources be used to build housing and meet human needs instead of preparing for war. Tenants from all three states served by the Gulf Coast Project provided leadership at two regional workshops sponsored by SOC that brought together diverse groupings of peace and justice activists, both black and white. In the spring of this year, Rose Mary Smith was a featured speaker at the April Actions for Jobs, Peace, and Justice in Washington. She urged those assembled to oppose further cuts in federal funds for housing and to support the tenants' demands for 10 million new housing units. "There is no shortage of resources," she said. "All that has to be done is take it from the Pentagon."

Meanwhile, Bryant, Smith, and other MTO leaders have turned their immediate attention to aiding the protests of other tenants, in three small projects in St. Charles Parish, about 30 miles away from New Orleans. A recent protest march against the dilapidated conditions of the houses resulted in the arrests of 34 people, including children, on charges of obstructing traffic on River Road in Hahnville. Some of the protesters spent the night in jail. Those arrests prompted Kristin Gilger, bureau chief of the River Parishes Bureau of *The Times-Picayune/The States-Item*, to criticize local police sharply in her weekly column. She remarked that public housing problems in St. Charles Parish go beyond rats and roaches in apartments, holes in ceilings, water faucets that don't work, and the unfair ways in which rents are calculated and utilities assessed. "The real issue is dignity. The tenants want a say in the way the housing projects are run and they want to feel that their views are respected and valued," Gilger said.

St. Charles Parish tenants were frightened and angered by the controversial mass arrests, but they have bounced back and claimed a major victory when parish housing authority director Jaynard Peychaud resigned on May 28. Peychaud gave no reason for his sudden resignation, but he has been under fire from HUD — as well as tenants — for unfair rent calculations, neglect of basic maintenance of the units, excessive utility charges, and a general lack of sensitivity on the part of him and his staff.

Patricia Batiste, president of the St. Charles Parish Tenants' Organization, says, "This is a victory. We have been misused long enough." She says tenants are also demanding the firing of housing authority employee Nancy Carter and will urge that a tenant be named to replace Peychaud.

Surprised by the sudden resignation, St. Charles Parish tenants rejoiced and then pressed on with plans for a protest march on June 1. As a response to the earlier arrests, the march took on importance. Says Pat Bryant, "We had to press forward because we had some folks down there who were intimidated by the arrests. We had to organize this march quickly and make it bigger and more historic to show them that we have right on our side and the cops, who they have feared all their lives, don't have the power to stop a legal freedom of expression."

The idea for the march quickly took shape. It would begin at the point of the earlier arrests and include a walk across the Hale Boggs Bridge, the newest span across the Mississippi River, upriver from New Orleans. This time, the parish sheriff's office promised protection and nò more arrests. But soon there was a new obstacle: a state transportation official who said they couldn't cross the bridge because of federal laws forbidding pedestrian activity on any part of the interstate system — the bridge is the only completed portion of new spur I-310. The state said it risked millions in federal highway funds, even though the bridge isn't yet connected to the interstate system.

Thursday, with the march two days away, Clare Jupiter sued for a federal injunction to stop the state from denying access, alleging a denial of freedom of expression. On Friday a compromise was arranged, and Saturday morning saw about a hundred activists, with state police escorts, make the five-and-a-half mile walk from Hahnville to the Destrehan Plantation.

"It was beautiful," says Patricia Batiste. "We feel like we made history. We have won a victory they will never forget."

Rose Mary Smith agrees: "That is what we wanted in Marrero and by hard work and determination we got it," she says. "We will prevail in St. Charles Parish and eventually in every project along the Gulf Coast because we have right and we have God on our side." □

Richard Boyd, 42, is a native of Gulfport, Mississippi, and has been a staff writer for ***The Times-Picayune/The States-Item*** *since 1975 as an education writer, investigative reporter, and, more recently, Jefferson Parish court, council, and housing authority reporter.*

Loss of Power

The noon news chokes off, war in a man's throat.
The fan's blade quietly spins to a stop.
The bulb over a full sink fails. All this
happens at once, and a child shouts
"Hey" from the next room, comes
running to a man who is not surprised,
but oddly shocked, at the loss.
A mill worker,
a laid-off doffer in the card room who worked
sixteen hours routinely, he looks up
powerless to change this, and he thinks,
for the first time in his life, of the shape
the .38 would make in his pocket,
how no one would know him far away,
at a small bank in Ellijay
or a liquor store in Hartwell.
But tonight,
when his wife has laid out her tips on the steps,
far short of what Georgia Power wants,
he only walks, hands in his pockets, to the mill,
where he leans his forehead on the warm brick,
placing his palms on the trembling wall, feels
the power work through him like prayer.
For a long time, he stands like this.

— *Judson Mitcham*

Judson Mitcham teaches psychology at Fort Valley State College, and lives in Macon, Ga. His poems have appeared widely in literary magazines and he has a new work appearing in the Summer, 1985, ***Georgia Review.***

P. H. POLK:

BY LYNN DUVALL

He was called Mister Polk, even by people who had known him for many of his 85 years. It seemed, in these casual times, an odd formality. But it was an indication of the respect many residents of Tuskegee, Alabama, shared for the photographer who documented nearly seven decades of their history.

Picking Cotton

Portraits of great Americans hang in Polk's studio. Dr. George Washington Carver, Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Ford, Martin Luther King, Jr., W.C. Handy, Paul Robeson, Eubie Blake, and Will Rogers are among the history-makers who posed in front of the view camera that Polk said was "as big as a piano."

Carry Me Home

George Washington Carver, 1930

Among the celebrated were others, equally important for the pages of history written on their faces, the faces of the common folk Polk fondly referred to as his "characters." In photographs taken "just for myself," *The Cotton Pickers* toil under a sky filled with clouds as plump and white as cotton bolls; the grinning, snaggle-toothed *Trash Man* poses proudly with his shabby mule; *The Boss*, a formidable woman in threadbare clothes, glares defiantly, hands on hips, wearing her awesome hauteur and dignity like a battle shield.

Polk's modest studio, little used after cataracts began to cloud his vision several years ago, once attracted a steady stream of middle-class blacks from the Macon County area where he was the only black photographer for 35 years. A rosewood bench, its floral fabric now faded and dusty, once held graceful young women in delicate dresses, and restless children squirming in their Sunday best. A plywood panel painted with stately oaks once stood behind dapper, self-conscious young men and solemn patriarchs.

Of Polk's bread-and-butter portraiture, Lee Fleming wrote, in an *Art in America* review: "When we take into account the society of which he was a part and from which he drew, a society restrained by convention, [Polk's] talents for converting mundane family pictures into records of mood and personality is all the more startling. His is a style generated from gentle attempts to discover his sitters. . . ." *New York Times* photography critic Gene Thornton added, "Polk shows the descendants of slaves to be as refined and accomplished as the descendants of their masters."

Three years ago Prentice Herman Polk sat in a worn armchair in his Tuskegeee living room, surrounded by hundred of photographs, all 8 X 10 silver prints. Piled on a long couch, propped against tables and chairs, packed into cardboard boxes on the floor — the products of 66 years of work.

Leaning forward in his chair, his brown eyes made enormous by thick-lensed glasses, he spoke in a soft, halting voice: "I came to Tuskegee [Institute] in 1916 to become an artist, a painter, but they didn't have art classes then. I was afraid I'd wind up painting houses. Then, one day at a meeting in 1917, a man stood up and said that any young man who thought he had an artistic tempermant should come see him in his office."

The man was C.M. Battey. Battey had been summoned from New York to serve as personal photographer to the Institute's founder Booker T. Washington and, more importantly for the young Polk, to teach photography. Polk enrolled in Battey's class.

"I knew right away I'd found the thing I wanted to do," he recalled. "After that first day in Battey's class, I never drew another picture. I made all my pictures with a camera."

Polk, however, described his teacher as a selfish man, adding, "He didn't want to teach us all he knew. His dream was to be remembered as the greatest Negro photographer who ever lived and maybe he was afraid if we knew all he knew we'd be better."

Only a handful of Battey's glass-plate negatives survive. The hundreds he took at Tuskegee were accidentally destroyed, an event Polk believed was the elder photographer's due for withholding information from his students. "Now," Polk said, shaking his head, "no one will ever know if he was great or not."

Eager to learn what he suspected Battey was omitting from his lectures and demonstrations, Polk supplemented his classroom education with a five-dollar correspondence course. Through it he was exposed for the first time to the works of Rembrandt. Fascinated by the painter's skillful use of light and shadow, he began trying to duplicate the effect in his photographs.

"The shadow's the thing," he said, moving one hand over a portrait of Dr. Carver amid gleaming glass beakers and test tubes in his cramped Tuskegee

Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Washington, 1934

Mr. and Mrs. T.M. Campbell and children, 1932

laboratory. "Without it, every face is just another face. The fellow who put together that correspondence course may not have been a photographer. He may just have been a researcher. But he gave me a greater understanding of photography and made me want to go on."

His experiments with light and shadow produced portraits far removed from the slick, homogeneous works of most commercial studios. In a portrait of son Theodore, taken in 1952, the young man's handsome profile is separated from surrounding shadow only by a shallow light curving along the edges of his forehead, nose, and faintly smiling lips. He holds a cigarette in an attitude that should seem theatrical but which seems instead completely artless. The pose is diagonal, starkly formal, and yet Polk's ability to create an almost palpable atmosphere conveys the impression that the viewer is intruding on this young man in an intensely personal moment of reverie.

After a two-year apprenticeship in Chicago and an unsuccessful attempt to set up a studio in Atlanta, Polk returned to Tuskegee. In 1928 he became Tuskegee Institute's chief photographer, a position he would hold for more than 50 years. There he photographed thousands of students, faculty members, administrators, and distinguished visitors. In his own studio, he made portraits of the Tuskegee elite — debutantes, prom queens, brides, businessmen — charging three dollars for each 8 X 10 silver print, the same price Dorothea Lange was then being paid for her negatives by the Farm Security Administration.

Like Lange, Polk's preference was for photographing "characters." "You don't have to search for character in these faces," he explained, pointing to the lined, weary faces of two elderly men who posed for him in the 1940s. "It's staring right at you. That's why I call them my 'characters'. They're not worried about how they look like

Graduating Nurses

The Boss, 1932

younger or wealthier men and women are. They know who they are and it shows in their faces."

In 1974, 61 years after Polk enrolled in C.M. Battey's class, his work began to attract national attention. Exhibitions were organized at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Museum of American History in New York, and at galleries and museums in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Birmingham. *Life* magazine published a two-page photo essay. Articles in other magazines and newspapers followed. In a 1980 ceremony in New York City, photographer Gordon Parks presented Polk with the International Black Photographers Award.

Polk recognized that his work might have received attention long ago if he were not black, but he refused to dwell on what might have been. Back then, he said matter-of-factly, blacks weren't allowed to do anything.

"Oh, there were a few doctors and then there was Carver," he continued. "But he was a genius. The ordinary Negro was ignored. Now our chances of doing rewarding things are better."

This odyssey is well-documented in Polk's work. He did not set out to record the Southern black's long, bitter journey from the cotton fields and the white man's kitchen to Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge and beyond. Nevertheless, that is an important part of what his work has to offer present and future generations.

Polk's photographs reveal too his ability to communicate with his subjects, to put them at ease with his mischievous wit, to find in each the particular quality that is theirs alone. Polk seems to understand his subjects just as far as they want to be understood, to believe in them as they would like to believe in themselves. As a result, the radiant elegance of affluent young brides, the careworn pride of impoverished rural folk, the uninhibited grace of children are enhanced rather than diminished by the intervening camera.

Author Pearl Cleage Lomax, in her book *P.H. Polk* (Nexus Press, 1980), describes the humanity of his art: "His photographs give us a look inside his heart, a look in the mirror, a glance over our shoulders. His photographs give us a look through his inner eye and let us see that yes, oh yes, we're just who we thought we were. Who we hoped we were."

Polk rarely took photographs after 1980. He joked that he already had enough to last a lifetime. A book about Dr. Carver and one about what he called "the vanishing Negro" were to be his final contributions to history. But thoughts of retirement were far from his mind. A reporter once asked him when he planned to stop working. Polk, then 83, responded: "When I'm 93 I'll stop and wait until they carry me home."

P.H. Polk died in January 1985, at age 85, leaving a photographic legacy that will enlighten generations seeking insight into the human spirit. □

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Prentice H. Polk, Jr., 1929

Theodore Polk

DEATH WATCH

photo by Doug Magee

A JOURNAL BY DOUG McCRAY

edited by Marcia Grann Schwen
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Friday, May 27

Here it is — a beautiful, sunny, warm breezy day in Florida — 9:30 a.m. Such a day breathes — smells — epitomizes life; it blesses joy of living.

Governor Bob Graham, by mere stroke of pen (I so wonder what it cost) has ordered my execution a second time. As a result I am awash with tears, frightened, angry, but determined to struggle.

Last night, unaware of what was to come, I read until eyes ached, then prayed before hauling shattered frame upon bunk. Restful sleep arrived in the early morning and lasted until breakfast came at the regimented hour of 5:30. Then, because sleep's quiet beauty visits the condemned only sparingly, I gladly returned to deathlike peace.

Groggily, I awakened to hear Sergeant N. and Officer R. say, "They want you up front."

"Okay," I muttered. "Give me a few minutes to get dressed."

"No. They want you now. And I have to watch you get dressed."

At that moment I knew. And oh, how knowledge reminded self of inferiority. I was — once more — expendable to a society which holds one's frailties as cause for extermination.

Brushing teeth meticulously, and combing hair for what seemed hours, I lingered from doom as long as I could. Trembling, I managed to inform two inmates of the warrant. Their response, choreographed in unison: "Things gonna be all right, Doug."

In the throes of anxiety and disbelief, I was handcuffed (behind) and led to the corridor, where two escorts "greeted" me. Moving through the wings, I was struck by the disproportionate number of black faces, and by the city-like setting: filled with people, rushing, loud. The prison "girls" with painted faces and high falsettos offered propositions — all to the guards' delight.

Inside Assistant Superintendent Barton's office, with Superintendent

Dugger and death row classification Officer D. present, I was treated with "kindness." Superintendent Dugger asked that the handcuffs be moved to the front, asked if I preferred to sit, asked — in pleasant tone — if I knew reason for my presence there. He asked of all and everything, yet the question of questions was noticeably absent: the question of whether I wanted life, God's precious and priceless gift to fallible beings — his children.

With tears streaming, and fighting, literally, for breath, I heard Mr. Dugger say, "The Governor signed your death warrant this morning."

Then he read the warrant, looked at a calendar and said, "Let's see. . . . I've set your execution date for June 21 at 7 a.m."

Mr. Dugger left quickly, and Mr. Barton made final preparations prior to my being taken to death watch.

Mr. Barton wanted to go over the names of family and friends on my visiting list and provide me with rules and regulations regarding telephone calls. Alarmingly, he asked what clergyman I desired. Poverty-stricken family would visit, of course. And Tony — the gentlest and brightest sort — would be my only visitor as friend. Thinking of such wonderful people, I became aware of renewed strength and vibrancy; determination rose, and with it the will for life.

Someone had to be notified of the death warrant, I was told. With family and Tony at work, I gave Marcia's name to Mr. Barton. The request met with much resistance, of course; but the "kindness" factor had not perished. Staring at me, looking at my pitiable state, Mr. Barton said I could call "one time only."

Within the space of 30 minutes, Mr. Barton's secretary phoned three times. No response. I then called Bob [Dillinger, his attorney] but, accentuating luck, he too could not be reached. He would not return from court until afternoon.

Authorities could not — would not? — await response, and the dread ritual was consummated. Once more I was handcuffed from behind and led toward the infamous "Q" wing — horror house where incorrigibles are kept and where society condones the frying of bodies with 2,000 volts of electricity.

"With tears streaming, and fighting, literally, for breath, I heard Mr. Dugger say, "The Governor signed your death warrant this morning."

I had an overwhelming urge to shout "No!" to this archaic, medieval madness. Breath quickened and step slowed.

But how fight? And whom? And what? Black male I am. From womb to hunger to ghetto, to arrest, jail, conviction and sentence of death — are they not all man-made graves? Are they not interchangeable?

Then why fight? Willingly I tred corridor once more. Politely I thanked Mr. Barton and headed to "Q" wing. I knew immediately from the faces of other prisoners that the pipeline had excelled as usual. Seemingly thousands of black faces reflected helplessness and hopelessness.

The "girls" no longer called or threw kisses and propositions. They, as well, were truly concerned.

As prisoners, we are all seen by society as dirty things — untouchable, callous, violent. Yet murderers, rapists, thieves, and all manner of men from Pandora's Box stood silent, knowing the guards were carrying me off to be officially murdered. Bless them all — and yet I had a flicker of desire that they intervene. Quite the study of contrasts.

We stopped briefly upon arrival at "Q" wing. The guard tapped on a small plexiglass window. The door opened, and one of my escorts yelled, "One for death watch!" The door slammed, was locked securely. Then — only then — did reality materialize.

Macabre ritual continued. Down flight of stairs (I am forever descending, always journeying, to life's pit.)

And here I sit, stripped of property, gazing at bunk and pillow. Sheets and pillowcases are stamped in black: "Death Watch."

11:30 a.m.

Almost three hours have elapsed since being told of the death warrant, yet I've reached no one. Does God reside here? I beg so, for with no word from any human being, only His presence can transform debilitating pain to hope.

Sergeant T. just asked if I wanted a tray; I refused. Who could possibly think of eating now? He also asked if I need writing paper. Envelopes. Cup of coffee. No one ever asks if I want to live. They never will.

1:05 p.m.

Bob just called. He is disturbed by this second [death] warrant. He stressed that he's appealing first to trial court for a stay of execution, then onward to the Florida Supreme Court, 11th Circuit Court, and U.S. Supreme Court if need be.

"I don't understand, Bob," I said. "I've gone from being granted a brand new trial by the Florida Supreme Court and then back to death watch without such a trial ever taking place."

When Graham signed my first death warrant on March 4, 1982, I had no lawyer. How is it possible to order the execution of an individual who has no legal representation? Yet after seemingly a lifetime without counsel, Bob volunteered to represent me. Thank you, Bob. You are the epitome of morality and ethics. Your being speaks of humanity — I love you, regardless of the outcome.

4:30 p.m.

Against all will, sleep visited. . . . I am miserable.

"Death watch" is comprised of six cells — three on the east side, three on the west, where I am located. The middle cell on each side is never occupied; it is used for clothing and linen storage.

Four of us currently await death in that inanimate object that is securely locked behind the door marked "Exit."

Wardell Riley and Paul Scott reside on the east side, *the* side where all men must make their "last walk." So as of now I am considered "safe." But should their executions not occur June 7 at 7 a.m., I will promptly be moved.

8:35 p.m.

The sergeant just made "check," a process repeated every 15 minutes to ensure one doesn't commit suicide. Death by execution, only. He will then log whatever I was doing at that particular moment.

Saturday night, May 28

This pacing must cease, at least temporarily.

Midnight. Changing of the guard has taken place. I am so conscious of their eyes. . . . So closes day two. . . . Saturday, Saturday — calendar's sixth friend — whittled speedily and roughly by — vision may not see date again, ever. I love you — farewell — May 28, 1983.

Sunday night, May 29

After a long and tedious day, I'm gradually adjusting to June 21st execution date.

Mother lacks all things, yet from the depths of her caring soul there springs confidence that all will be well.

I've hurt you, Mother, with hurts unknown to any but a mother. I kiss you now, and forever.

One seldom gets even a hello from guards. But God, are they talkative "down here." With sensibilities sharpened by knowledge of scheduled fate, guards become congenial and are helpful in obtaining legal materials and the like. And because they feel we will not escape death, they divulge many secrets.

As I talked with a sergeant today, he pulled out a photo of himself, standing with a prized fish, beer in hand.

"Nice catch," I said.

"I prayed for ya'll in church."

"I don't believe in that stuff," replied Levi Aldrich. (He shares this side with me.)

"Are there any black members in your congregation?" I asked.

"No. But it's open to everybody."

Marcia has probably contacted Myra and Donny [his wife and son] by now . . . and they are disbelieving.

Many things caused our parting, Myra — but my love has remained.

And Donny, my child of 12 years . . . I've not seen you since November, 1972. You were a mere 18 months old then, and the cutest of kids. I was both your dad and your "horsey." Now, many years passed, what am I to do?

I remember your first birthday vividly. Throughout that week your mother talked about buying books to read to you on a daily basis. And she did just that, staggering through the door with your very own library!!! How horrified she was when I filled your lap with plastic balls — one for every sport!

Tuesday, May 31, 1:10 p.m.

Mother and Dad looked exceptionally well. Sadly, my oldest brother Mack was denied entrance because he lacked proper identification. He would have been thoroughly searched, and I saw them only through a glass partition. Yet officials did not allow him in. Incredible. What happened to the "kindness" factor?

Tuesday night

God, am I ever tired. But earlier I found joys in being a child — one loved very, very much.

Mother and Dad only mentioned the execution date once, choosing to ignore the dread because otherwise it would destroy what little time God grants.

They are certainly not old, but work, weariness, and worries have decimated youth.

We laughed, sometimes uproariously, talked of yesteryear and simply

photo by Doug Magee

forgot scheduled execution. But I so wished to hug them both. . . . Mother placed her palm upon the glass partition, also wanting to touch. I placed my palm there too, and became tearful at our strong sense of love.

Dad stood in the background, far yet close — unsure of his child's future. . . . They will return next week.

Sunday, June 5

Aren't Sundays supposed to be tranquil? It ain't necessarily so.

Skipped lunch once again. Am I gearing up to protect officials from having to scrape my body wastes from the electric chair?

I've just lain about this lengthy day — though I'm not complaining — doing very little other than thinking. . . .

This beats all. There's Aldrich, in the same predicament, exchanging ethnic jokes with the sergeant. Naive of me to be surprised; I've seen this camaraderie between white guards and white prisoners for years.

I'm trusting you can feel vibes, Scharlette [Holdmann, director of the Florida Clearinghouse on Criminal Justice]. You've suffered and worried much these many years. Even as I write, you are fighting for my life. I'm in Tallahassee with you, Scharlette — I am always there.

I must write Lorrie. She is dearest friend. It looks like I'll never have the opportunity to give her the greatest of hugs. I thank you, Lorrie; and I particularly cherish now your special kindness and warmth.

Time for prayer and more pacing, I guess. I have traveled miles on this floor, consuming cigarettes and suppressing the urge to shout, "Let's get on with it!"

Monday, June 6, 7:05 p.m.

In rare occurrence I lay upon the bunk and drifted off into sleep. Prayer, sleep . . . delectable, both.

I want to do something now. But what? Pore over legal documents? Perform calisthenics? Masturbate til I go blind? (But I convinced myself I had a "headache" upon discovering instant impotency.)

"Brightly our hearts will ever shine upon us day by day. . . ." Wonderful lyrics from my alma mater — but after years of pain, they are the only words I remember. I wonder, what success have my classmates found? I know of those who found their graves with: needle in arm, bottle in hand, childbirth, police bullet. And those killed by others in the suffocating atmosphere of the Dunbar community.

"Mother placed her palm upon the glass partition, wanting to touch. I placed my palm there, too, and became tearful at our strong sense of love."

And I wonder of buddies who, though living, are but shadows of life: lounging in pool halls, standing "fly" on Anderson Avenue waiting for the opportunity to rob the pitiful and the elderly. I wonder of the future of their children.

I wonder of those incarcerated — warehoused and deteriorating. Or sweeping floors and washing windows until a parole board frees them to wreak further havoc. . . .

I wonder of you, Noah, best friend and joyful companion. You kidded me senseless, fellow, about our divergent views on college and the military. Why, why did you abandon Busch beer and turn to drugs? Only God knows the condition you were in before your fatal overdose. And I must wonder if my death sentence caused your death. I pray now that, if executed June 21, I will see you once more. Perhaps we'll resume our escapades, and I'll get around to introducing you to the ABCs. You were poorest student I have ever known.

And what happened to Snapper, Chip, Larry? Snapper was my closest buddy at Edison [Community College.] And with his being 6'8" and weighing 230 pounds, contrasting with my puny 5'11", 175-pound frame — white students joked at our being Mutt and Jeff. There were so few blacks at the school that Snapper and I were inseparable.

I wonder of Tolstoi (Tolstoy? You will die a non-speller, McCray) and his philosophy that when wealth is the basis of power, progress will ever go backwards. Are the wealthy able to understand meekness and humility? Violence — whether individual violence or state-sanctioned violence of execution — annihilates the only norm of life: love.

I shan't weep more tonight. I shall not — I simply will not. . . .

What time is it? With the first shift on at midnight, it must be nearing 3 a.m.

America, America, in teeth of your brutality I have nonetheless been fond of living in this land. Yet I am merely "nigger," without history, a thing upon the auction block. I am tempted to hate you, but hatred is a sickness, my friend. Thus, before each of your hands pulls the switch, though terrified and powerless, I will echo, "I love you." Thus will I remain Doug.

Had completely forgotten that Marcia arrives tomorrow. That I could forget is shattering.

Dear Roy [Marcia Schwen's husband], the strain of defeat weighs heavily now . . . sad, so very sad . . . but your Marcia has fought the state time and again and won. And she has done so, I know, with your marvelous approval. Deepest thanks, admiration, respect, and love I have for you.

It is 3:27 a.m. Aldrich is blasting the telly. Loneliness and fear reside there, for certain. . . . I've not strength to object.

Tuesday, June 7, 8:26 p.m.

"I closed my eyes and all that tangled theme was instantly transformed into a dream."

If only mind could write life's history. . . .

Damn, I'm laughing for a change! When finally meeting my good friend [Marcia] — God, did we laugh! And she will remain until my death or my stay of execution. Thanks, my friend, for redeeming what would have been a lonesome wait.

This cell. Quote number of men you have held. Weigh water that has soaked floor and walls. Speak of your satisfaction in holding unfortunates within bars of wrath. Tell of blackest and poorest cries for help. Describe officers as they drag frail frames to the electric chair. I am the Governor's 54th death warrant, so you have much to reveal. Tell!!

But none will hear you, box of concrete and bars, just as none hear the cries of black and poor, trapped and readied since birth for death.

Wednesday morning, June 8

Got very little sleep. What else is new? I can't seem to shake thoughts of John Spenkelink. . . . John was not permitted to make a final statement before his execution. Why? Oh, I pray I am allowed that simple request. I must speak of my love for Mother and all humans before the final cruel act occurs.

I have heard that John struggled and fought, screaming "This is murder!" to guards, to society, and to a God of love and forgiveness. Witnesses said that unlike other executions, where viewers watched men enter the death house, the curtains weren't opened until John already sat, gagged, in the chair.

I am so nervous, so afraid, and so, so defeated.

Thursday, June 9, 9:20 a.m.

Oh, Myra — what setting your Doug occupies.

We loved — oh, how we loved. I sit and dream of you. . . . Then Donny, our bright and lovely child, was born. We were three — but one.

Do you sing, still? That beautiful voice I'd hear, so soft and pleasant. I'll bet Dionne Warwick is yet your favorite.

I am compounding pain by reminiscing in this way. But you were — are — so wonderful, Myra Pooky. What went wrong? I take all blame for the end of something dreamed of since childhood — a happy marriage. I had no chance for survival without you.

Why bother fighting my death? Why bother fighting my death? God, forward strength my way.

Donny graduates tomorrow night. He will look so handsome and studious. So proud. And so without his father, as I am without a son. Few children graduate from elementary school — or any school — while their fathers languish on death row. And for Donny it is even worse; I have only 12 more days of life.

Saturday, June 11, 12:06 a.m.

The judge's denial of motions for a stay must tear apart Mother and friends. But more so Mother. And there's nothing within my power to even soften assault. What does a poor black woman do while her child awaits death?

She prays — she prays — prays — prays.

2:32 p.m.

I've slept for a time and now must find strength to get through the rest of this day. Aldrich is teasing me about writing "too goddam much." But I must keep busy to abort depression. Yet it is difficult to maintain thought — so I shall return in mind to athletics. . .

During track season I recall rising early, trotting the few blocks to the field and there challenging track's surface until exhausted. Then I would lie on the 50-yard line and dream, and dream, and dream. . . .

Oh, hell. . . . The cemetery is adjacent to the field — just beyond the east-end goalposts. Often I took a shortcut through that cemetery, walk-

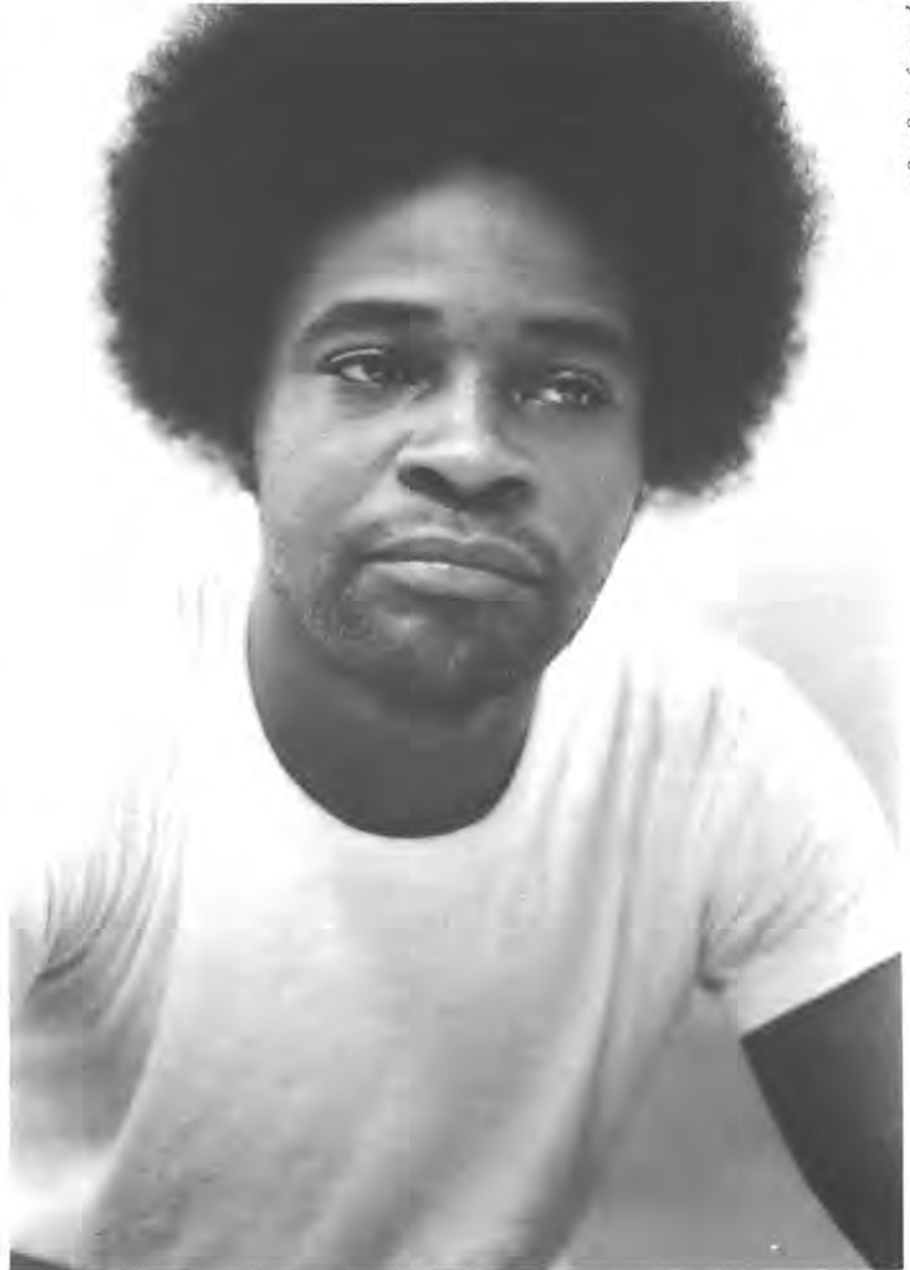


photo by Doug Magee

Sunday, June 12

More tears — but in crying I know I am yet Doug.

What is the time? I've done push-ups, and am getting quite good at them, even clapping hands in process. Now I so desire something to read . . . but there is nothing available to my liking.

ing hurriedly. . . . Uncle Ernest is buried there, in unkempt grave that is rarely visited.

How McCrays have weathered defeats is a recipe I do not know — but society is in dire need of it.

Mother and family will hurt forever with my execution, yet these beautiful, loving, witty people will rebound without a trace of anger. Love is never conquered; perhaps this is our forte.

I'll now study Bob's petition for a stay of execution and new trial.

7:01 p.m.

I'm settled, finally, after laughing non-stop for 20 minutes. Aldrich too participated in my morbid sense of humor. But hell, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!" (I'll wager the only thing the guard has logged is, "They're crazy!")

11:54 p.m.

I have written three letters, completed calisthenics, and now I am back with self. The day has quickly passed — again — and I am stretched on floor amidst clouds of smoke. I just now opened my third pack of cigarettes today.

I would love to have witnessed Governor Graham's youth had he grown up under Mother's roof. He would realize what difficulties she now endures, and her love he would surely know.

As a tot he'd experience kisses and tosses into the air from sunrise to bedtime. And when three or four years old, he'd wait and watch for Mother to come home with milk and wieners.

He would weep when Dad staggered into the house, feigning robbery, opening pockets for all to see. The Governor would not eat that weekend.

He would cry as Dad assaulted Mother — all of us huddling and touching in our room, drifting off to sleep as "Y'all help me!" continued.

And he'd awaken with Mother's "Y'all git up n'eat" — cornbread only. And God, would he hurt and cry upon seeing her face. "I can't wait to grow up," he'd tell her.

But there would also be years of laughter. First he'd have to be swift afoot, and then learn tricks of the table: never start up a game after 5 p.m. Always stay near or inside the house at 5:30. (My secret was to read forever

"I am finally leaving — finally take deep breaths, glance at the door marked "Exit," look about cell. This is insanity.

on the couch, or volunteer to help out with cooking.) Then, eat quickly if expecting a second helping!

There'd be bedtime rules too, like getting in early to find a dry spot on the floor. And by being early, he'd have his own mat.

There'd be pain, too, when Mother's limited education prevented her from helping with homework or writing to teachers. I wrote so many letters for her.

Hell, wishing these things is purest fantasy. But I know that experiencing the life of the poor is something few who are rich and powerful would care to do.

Now I am closely guarded. With death approaching, all has been arranged to create the impression that my life is worthless.

But life knows better; its pulse is greater than the whims of fallible beings. I will survive, however this insanity ends.

Monday, June 13, 12:56 p.m.

Seven days of breath remain.

Life — others' lives, my life — are but a single entity.

Thinking is impossible — Aldrich complains of my popping gum — I am sapped of all strength.

Have just asked Sergeant T. for the time. He responded with "So you gotta voice after all, huh?" He did, however, tell me it's 1:29 p.m.

The goddam phone is ringing! Nothing. But something: the control room calling to inquire if all's well on death watch. "They quiet — everything's okay."

Okay? My good Lord, doesn't he have heart?

Rest seems appropriate now, but last week's occurrence slaps me awake. It is harm I shall never, ever forget.

As Southern expression goes, nothing kills quicker than dogs chasing pickup trucks and "niggers" in chase of white women. That such racism would follow me to death watch. . . .

Few dare enter the world of the condemned — those of us declared unfit to live. Poverty-stricken families can visit seldom, and few are letters and visits. This makes it so, so simple and acceptable to kill us.

When magic wand presents a friend, one feels prayerful gratitude. I have such a friend in Marcia. And with financial difficulties preventing family from visiting as life slips away, seeing her takes away dread of moments.

At the close of her first day of visit, not wanting her to depart this fortress of death, I could have embraced her. But instead, I kissed her.

This kiss implied love and care for her presence which gave strength and endurance. I knew that though the world might shout "Execute!" I would not die alone.

That night, for the first time since signing of my death warrant, sleep visited. Imagine my state when I was awakened by the rattling of my cell door, to be informed that should any touch occur during Marcia's next visit, termination of all future visits would occur.

Could such touch embody the delusions of Southern "gentlemen" and their inferior thoughts of miscegenation? Their reason has absolutely no connection to security measures. It is far simpler: Marcia is white; I am black. That is enough. It is wonder she has not been tarred and feathered, barred from entrance. But this is a new time, a new era. She is permitted to visit, but not to "touch." Race — forever — controls patterns of human thought.

2:05 p.m.

Great!

"You can relax, Doug; you have a stay of execution." Susan [Cary, a Gainesville attorney] just called with news of life.

The Florida Supreme Court, in a 6-1 decision, has granted a stay.

Rags to riches. From depths of darkness to glow of light. Call me Day. I am Beauty; I am Breath; I have life. What can I not do? Thank you God.

Thanks, thanks, thanks. Joy for all —

Peals upon peals of laughter. And I weep constantly, praising existence and realizing that Mother and family are filled with glee. (Blacks in Ft. Myers will party tonight — how wonderful!)

Are you for *real*, Bob? It is beyond finite comprehension that you have so diligently worked, so expertly won me a stay of execution. I love you so greatly.

Scharlette and the gang must be beside themselves. You all know of my love and thanks. Hugs and kisses to everyone!

Marcia, you are on your way back here from Atlanta. Sister, dear, dear friend, so very much I wish to say to you tomorrow. You gave me my willingness to challenge this death warrant.

Heart beats, mind functions! I look for my bird friend. He is not about, but the earth's agleam and I so feel his care. More than ever before, I now appreciate the inter-relatedness of all things upon this soil.

I will not die June 21!! I will not die! What does one say at such a time? Surely I make sense none.

Margaret [Vandiver, a paralegal worker], I know no phrase to express thanks to you. You are a special breed of human.

3:15 p.m.

Still upon cloud — so soft and delicate its texture.

Grinning — giggles, popping fingers, thinking, praying — my movement now has life!

Laughter rings still — with stay I feel capable of anything. I am author, statesman, lawyer, doctor, philanthropist, painter, sculptor.

Well, well — I am no longer impotent. Fabulous!

I am all things but "unfit to live." Thanks — thanks — thanks.

8:20 p.m.

I have been speaking with Aldrich, apologizing for my selfishness and encouraging him that he too will receive a stay soon.

And I have stood at bars, gazing into darkness and finding light.

Many, so very many humans I owe for their needed presence — Pamela, Tony, Mike, sweet Lorrie and family, Marcia and her family and others in Stony Brook I don't even know of. So, so many joyful and loving humans. Jacque and Gina. Mother and family.

But of all involved in my struggle for life, there are two individuals who have meant most. Even as I write, there is freshness of spirit when thinking of their worth to me in this ordeal.

Vanessa Leah Schwen and Elizabeth Dillinger — both nine-year-old daughters of ones closest and dearest.

Vanessa and Beth, while adults planned my death, you "visited" me in this setting, each of you sending drawings of earth and sky — clouds, rainbows, trees, flowers — all life-sustaining necessities. I thank you, and I love you unendingly.

You are tomorrow's promise, echoing the change of times. Yet you are today as well, bringing vision of life. You, Vanessa and Beth, have given me hope for what would come after my death. In each hand, now, you exist — in this suffocating environment — and I present to you this world as it is: one you must challenge in order to end state-sanctioned murder.

Much to ask of two nine-year-olds, true. But your hearts I have seen; society's heart I have lived for decade. It is your turn — our turn — now.

That you — one in New York, the other in Florida, and not knowing each other — could forward the same drawings is incredible, a miracle. It is life.

9:51 p.m.

"McCray, you goin' back ta 'R' wing in five minutes; git ready."

I am finally leaving — finally take deep breaths, glance at door marked "Exit," look about cell. This is insanity. . . . Will now say good-bye to Aldrich. God, how he must feel. God, how I feel as well.

10:16 p.m.

Back to "safety" of death row. I am remembering leaving death watch — shaking hands with Aldrich (grasp with hands cuffed behind back) and pausing to look at the phones: one black, connected; and the red phone, hooked up to the Governor's mansion, unconnected. What a system —

Climbing stairs, I almost tripped from exhaustion. Now here — returning to an ovation from the men. They clapped, yelled, joked.

"Doug, are your knees sore?" (from praying) they kid as I write. One of the jubilant will probably be taken off to death watch soon —

I think of Mother and Marcia and their visiting tomorrow. I will not sleep, choosing to stand at bars and weep, kissing early dawn.

Sleep well, Vanessa and Beth — Your love truly sustained me —

In October 1983 the Florida Supreme Court remanded McCray's case back to circuit court in Fort Myers, where Judge Thomas S. Reese ruled that an evidentiary hearing be held on the issues of ineffective assistance of counsel and conflict of interest stemming from McCray's trial in 1974. The hearing, slated for June 1984, was twice postponed at the request of the district attorney's office before finally taking place in January of this year. As of this writing, no decision has been handed down. If McCray is not granted relief, his case will move into federal court for the first time.

Levi Aldrich, Wardell Riley, and Paul Scott also received stays of execution which are still in effect. As of May 1985, Governor Bob Graham had signed a total of 106 death warrants, Florida's death row population had swelled to 227, and 12 men had been executed — 11 of them since McCray's stay on death watch.

The Florida Clearinghouse on Criminal Justice continues to search for attorneys willing to defend condemned inmates who cannot afford to pay for legal representation. □

Marcia Grann Schwen is a reporter and columnist for ***The Three Village Herald****, a weekly newspaper in New York. She is volunteer anti-death penalty coordinator for Amnesty International in New York state and coordinator of the Long Island Coalition Against the Death Penalty. With McCray, she is writing a book on his experiences. Portions of the Death Watch Journal previously appeared in* ***The St. Petersburg Times****.*

An interview with Doug McCray appears in ***Southern Exposure****, volume VIII, no. 4 (1980).*

WAREHOUSED

photo by Bruce Jackson

by Evans D. Hopkins

'Hard Times' is now a nightclub

in The Streets and an old song

on my new radio

as I notice my view

for the first time this year:

It is nearly spring, March blowing
winter away
in blustery wisps discernible on
threadbare branch.

Under the bridge are centuries-old
warehouses
where slaves or Union soldiers and
spies
were perhaps housed with the tobacco.

I realize anew the wide river that is
there
still for me to marvel at the motion
of simple brown water crested with
shallow white water going — which
way?
I know, but still there seems to be
some rolling, raging force in its midst,
drawn strongly upstream.

I look away quickly, eyes resting on
the blue flag of this fortress prison,
and notice the flesh tones of the
antagonists
on the seal. Pale cousin conquering
cousin, in color. . . .

On the far bridge a yellow bus is out
early,
and I remember the gauntlet I braved
to reach the sanctity
of the back of the bus, pushed there
by the overwhelming might
of Majority.

A pioneer in pride, certain my
desegregation mattered,
I am shamed by capture before being
humbled by servitude.

My warehousing evinces such a design
as to put you in mind
of the mouth of this James
where we were first swallowed,
way down-river from these
warehouses
on the bank, here.

March 1984

THE KEY TO MARIE

PROFILE OF A PRISONER ADVOCATE

by Evans D. Hopkins

Marie Deans is having another nightmare. She is sleeping solidly after a marathon weekend of writing a late proposal to keep the Virginia Coalition on Jails and Prisons alive — thereby keeping alive the appeals of most of the men on the state's death row. The worst nightmares, the ones that trigger the migraines, are those in which people she knows (or knew), among the hundreds she's tried to save on death rows across the country, are electrocuted. In this particular dream she seems safe in her bedroom, until the death squad arrives with the electrodes. They want the keys, the ring of keys she is gripping with the intensity of the damned clinging to a last hope. The death squad keeps demanding that she let go of the keys — "Give us the keys and we won't kill you" — but she fears the trick of the old lie worse than death, and clutches them ever more tightly to her breast. The members of the squad remove the insignia from their uniforms, solemnly attach electrodes to her bed, throw some unseen switch, and she is shocked from her sleep.

"I wouldn't let go of the keys," she recounts later to me. "Those keys must represent the struggle, the lives of the men on The Row, you men inside. They wanted me to give them up, but I just couldn't let go," she says, as if it is hard even for her to comprehend such tenacity.

A frequent visitor to the death rows at Mecklenburg Prison and here at the State Penitentiary in Richmond, the tall, thin woman is a figure of national stature in a city unenamored of her, a crusader for an unpopular cause, one of a select group of professional anti-death penalty prisoner advocates in the United States. She has served on the national board of directors and the executive committee of Amnesty International, investigating conditions of death rows across the country, and doing public education on apartheid in South Africa. She is the founder of the nationwide Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation and of Virginians Against the Death Penalty.

After Virginia resumed executions in 1982, Joe Ingle, director of the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons, asked Deans to move from South Carolina to Richmond and do battle with a legal system that did not formally recognize the right of convicted felons to appeal, and which provides no legal counsel to indigent defendants. I have found Virginia to be a humbling experience," she concedes. "The lack of due process in this state is abominable, worse than any other state in the entire country."

Most of her time is spent recruiting attorneys and serving as a paralegal counsellor in the interviewing and preparing and filing of the numerous appeals involved in the capital murder cases of 16 of the 28 men on Virginia's death row. Deans is a self-taught legal expert and, according to noted Charlottesville attorney J. Lloyd Snook, III, "makes it her practice to keep up with case law. She is bright, she understands people, and makes a better lawyer than many lawyers I know."

Marie Deans is about as relaxed as she gets right now, cooking dinner for herself and Robert, her precocious 12-year-old son. She talks to me on a phone held to ear by a shoulder. "I'muh *real* good cook," she says proudly, hitting five different musical notes in the one phrase. It is her only meal of the day. After the phone is quiet she will work well into the night on her clients' cases, on letters to edi-

tors or public officials as a one-woman prison reform lobbyist, or perhaps writing an article or two. I get her to tell about the time she crashed Elaine's, the ultra-posh New York restaurant, in jeans and t-shirt as a guest of good friend Rose Styron and cornered Norman Mailer to tell him off for abandoning his convict protege Jack Henry Abbott.

Did she have a happy childhood in South Carolina? "Well, no," she says, her tone turning serious once more. "Let's see. . . . I did have a wonderful year living in a convent when I was very young." It seems this was the beginning of commitment to Christian good works. Why had she been in a convent? "My mother was mentally ill," she says, "and I was, well, badly mistreated. I got intensely involved with the human rights struggle in the sixties," she remembers. For that, her parents "totally disinherited me, and kidnapped my son and raised him to be a good upper-class Scottish-American Lutheran businessman." Her tone is now sad, but not bitter.

How can you make it on $11,500 a year, with no funding for your small organization, I ask? "I often wonder," she says, looking around the small apartment at the stacks of books, legal papers, and magazines scattered all about. "But I'm doing a lot better than you men are in those cages. You see, I'm a radical Christian. I really *feel* like you men inside are my brothers, so I'll do what I have to do to make sure the work gets done. Somebody just *has* to try to stop the killing."

"I don't get tired," she continues, "because I am constantly inspired by prisoners, by their ability to cope and reach out and comfort others while enduring misery and facing death. It is a great testimony to the human spirit."

It is now early January, and Deans is preparing to go to South Carolina to be with J.C. Shaw, one of the men she helped convince to resume his appeals — before he became the first man to be executed in that state in more than 20 years. It has been a rough day. She has found out that men who were supposed to be allies have been trying to get part of her proposed grant, causing her to get riled and do some serious cussing in defense of her plans to use the money exclusively for the legal appeals of condemned men. She gets a phone call from her son in Charleston informing her that her father has been hospitalized and is due to undergo open-heart surgery in three days. She doesn't hesitate to plan to go to his bedside. On top of all this she finds out that an attorney has filed an appeal for one of her clients without informing either her or the prisoner. She blames herself for not staying on top of the case. But it does not enter her mind that she can only do so much.

photo by Bruce Jackson

DOYLE SKILLERN, EXECUTED IN TEXAS IN 1985. DOYLE WAS IN ANOTHER CAR WHILE HIS PARTNER WAS NEGOTIATING A DRUG DEAL WITH AN UNDERCOVER POLICEMAN. THERE WAS A FIGHT, AND DOYLE'S PARTNER KILLED THE POLICEMAN. THE PARTNER COPPED OUT AND GOT LIFE, AND DOYLE GOT LETHAL INJECTION.

Herein lies the deeper key to Marie. She looks upon her activism as only natural, the way an ingenue thinks that the sharing of love — in Marie's case the sharing of the talent, care, and concern — is quite simply the natural thing to do.☐

Evans D. Hopkins of Danville, Virginia, is serving time for armed robbery. He has written for ***The Washington Post*** *and* ***Chess Life*** *and is a former member of the editorial staff of the Black Panther Party newspaper.*

COUNTING THE DEAD

photo by Bruce Jackson

A PROFILE OF M. WATT ESPY, JR.

by Richard Blake Dent

Through the cool, air-conditioned corridors of the library at the University of Alabama School of Law, stuck behind a door away from everyone and everything, M. Watt Espy, Jr. sits in his cubbyhole, thumbing through his death ledger.

Framed photos of executed criminals cover the walls. There is a snapshot of John Spenkelink, whose execution in Florida in 1979 set off the current wave of executions. There is a picture of an unidentified bailiff holding two of the hanging ropes used in the Jefferson County, Alabama jail. Several other photographs show men strangling at the end of a rope.

Watt Espy, 50, a salesman turned researcher, counts the dead — 14 hours a day, five, six, and sometimes seven days a week. His task is simple in its method, monumental in its impact: to analyze and document every legal execution in U.S. history. His attitude has shifted from ambivalence to steadfast opposition during these 15 years.

When Espy began his task as a hobby, most experts said a project of such magnitude was not possible. At that time, historians and scholars estimated that 7,000 men, women, and children had been judicially executed in this country. At this time, 15 years down a long road of financial sacrifices, of searching old newspapers, tracking local historians and scratching for bits and pieces to so many puzzles, Espy has confirmed 14,500 executions. He expects the count to surpass 22,500 when work is complete.

In 1608 Virginia's George Kendall assured his place in history. Convicted of spying for the Spanish, Kendall was the first man executed in America. Fourteen years later, Daniel Frank followed Kendall to the gallows. His crime: stealing a hog and a cow. Espy explains, "There have been so many executions for horse-stealing, it is pathetic. We know that rape, where the victim was not killed, was a capital offense right up to the 1960s. Burglary of a home or residence where a person slept during the night was a capital offense in virtually every Southern state. Here in Alabama we have an execution for the theft of something valued at a quarter."

Even children have died at the hands of the law. Details are sketchy, but Espy's research shows the youngest person executed was a 12-year-old Indian girl in New Haven, Connecticut in 1786. Two 12-year-old slaves were executed for murder in Virginia in 1787 and 1791.

Espy says, "We have 10 people here in the state of Alabama — out of 681 executed — that we have every reason in the world to believe were innocent. The great proponents of capital punishment will say that's not a bad record at all: we executed 671 guilty people. One of the differences in our form of government and that of a totalitarian system is that we believe it is better that 680 guilty people go free than an innocent one be executed. There is virtually no state in this country — where you've had a number of executions — that didn't execute innocent people."

R. Meade Shumway is but one of many sad examples. Shumway moved from Illinois to Nebraska in 1907 and soon accepted employment on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Martin. On September 3, 1907, while Mr. Martin was away on business, his wife was bludgeoned and her throat cut. Shumway was arrested and found guilty of the murder. As Shumway walked to the gallows of the Nebraska State Penitentiary, he told those present, "I am innocent. May God forgive everyone who has said anything against me." Three years later, Jacob Martin, on his

deathbed, confessed to the murder of his wife. He expressed remorse for permitting the execution of R. Meade Shumway.

Undiscovered evidence and deathbed confessions are crucial to Espy's findings of innocence. He gathers background on witnesses, accomplices, jurors, judges. He paints a picture that, in most cases, was not available during the trial of the condemned.

Perhaps no other charge has sent as many wrongly convicted men to their death as that of rape. Although rapists were executed in many parts of the United States up until 1965, rape was primarily a Southern capital offense after the early part of the nineteenth century. Blacks were the targets. Of the 455 men executed for rape since 1930, 89 percent were black. Espy points out that no white man has ever been executed in Alabama for raping a black woman, and that only two white men have been executed for rape in that state's history.

"It was the idea we carried here in the South that every black man has wanted to go to bed with our white women," Espy explains. "We've always tended to picture our women as flowery, pure, and if a black man was accused of rape there wasn't much he could do about it. Even if he had an iron-clad alibi, many times the jury would say, 'Well, that's just a bunch of niggers lying to save a bunch of niggers.' It is fairly clear that the death penalty was a racial weapon used by the white power structure and a great number of blacks were systematically eliminated."

Throughout the history of the American death penalty there have been debates over the effects of the punishment on our criminals, our children, our society. "The death penalty," says Espy, "is not a deterrence. I'm convinced of that. Those people that claim it is have never studied it. They've never had the empirical data on which to base their assumptions, and this is the first time that an effort has been made to collect the data upon which accurate assumptions can be made."

In fact, the trend away from public executions began in the nineteenth century as it became evident that the impact of the executions was quite the opposite of the desired sobering effect. The last public hanging in this country was that of Rainey Bethea, a 19-year-old black man who died in Owensboro, Kentucky, in 1936, for the rape and murder of an elderly woman. More than 20,000 spectators gathered to watch. The platform was jammed with dignitaries. Alcohol was in abundance. Many people staggered around, jeering at Bethea. The scene was so repulsive, the criticism so scathing, that the Kentucky legislature banned further public executions.

photo by Doug Magee

M. WATT ESPY, JR.

Espy does not expect public executions to become a reality in the near future, but he is convinced that private ones will continue for quite some time. Inmates, litigating for years, have simply exhausted their appeals. That fact, coupled with the conservative trend sweeping the nation and the judiciary, will lead to increasing numbers of executions.

In July 1983, the United States Supreme Court, acting in the case of Thomas Barefoot, sent a loud and clear message to the nation's condemned: cut the delays. The justices ruled that when an execution is imminent, a federal appeals court may compress the time it usually takes to consider legal claims, give a quick decision, and allow the execution to proceed. "This is going to accelerate many death cases," Espy says. "It could be that if they are going to be executed in the future, they will be killed within a year of their conviction. It's going to be boom-boom, bang-bang, you're dead."

"Not every murderer is going to be executed." He points to the 1982 execution of Texas inmate Charlie Brooks as a prime example of selective prosecution. Brooks is dead, while his accomplice is alive with a few years between him and freedom. "It is selective revenge. You're picking one person to atone for the sins of many."

Some of Espy's most meaningful findings are hidden — even from him — in a morass of compiled data. But this problem may soon be solved. During the summer of 1984, the National Science Foundation awarded the University of Alabama a two-year, $200,000 grant to computerize Espy's extensive research compiled in notebooks and ledgers. A team of six students is now rummaging through the lives of those executed with the hope of uncovering, for the first time, some of the most important findings in capital punishment research.

When the grant money runs out, Espy will again face financial limbo. He is currently paid as a clerk by the law school; his job is to research capital punishment. Prior to the grant, almost all expenses were paid out of his pocket, with a little help from the law school. After the grant runs out, Espy will have to renegotiate with the school and could be dropped because of budget problems.

Despite financial difficulty, Espy is not deterred. "The work will go on," he promises. "The work will go on."□

Richard Blake Dent is a freelance writer based in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

REVIEWS

The Bittersweet War Against Bigotry

William Hastie: Grace Under Pressure by Gilbert Ware. Oxford University Press, 1984. 305 pp. $25.00.

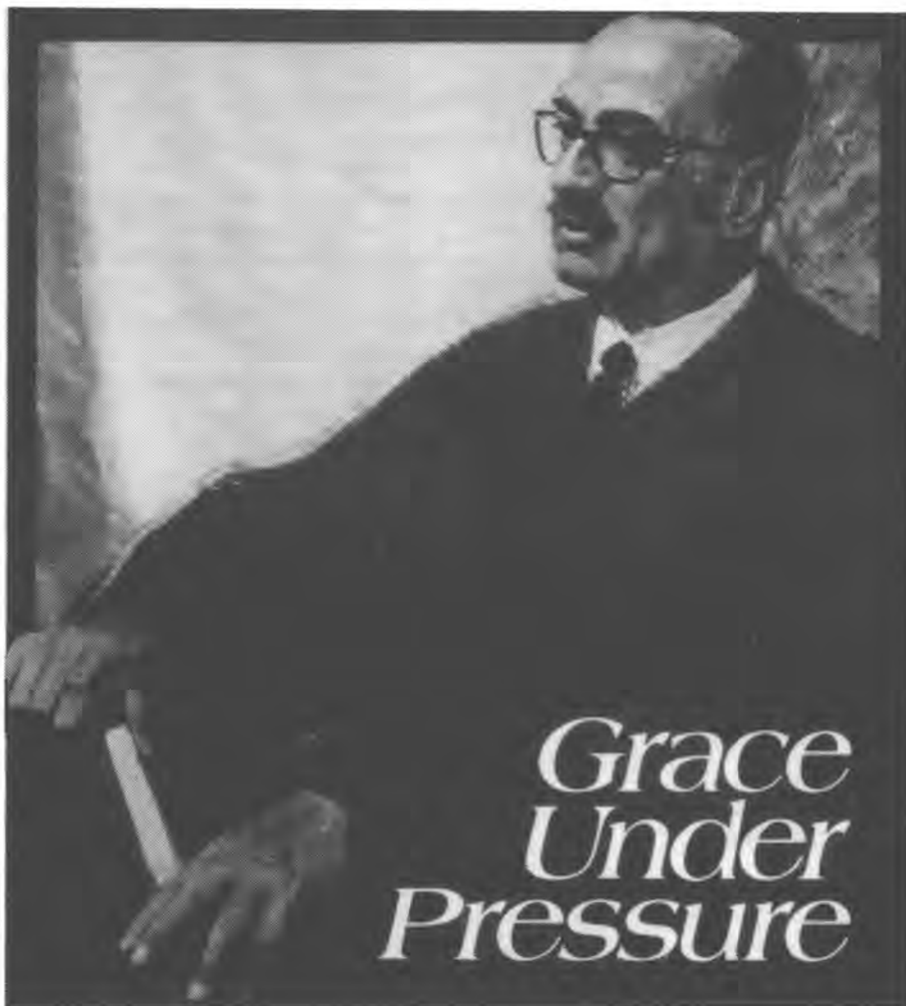
— by Kim Lacy Rogers

If we are to believe the pronouncements of certain elected officials, the generation that witnessed the sit-ins, the March on Washington, and Freedom Summer has chosen to forget that the Civil Rights Movement ever occurred. Affirmative action is attacked as reverse discrimination, basic welfare programs are gutted, and an American president visits a Nazi cemetery. The last is an ironic commentary on the racism that Americans supposedly fought — with a segregated military — on the battlefields of Europe.

In this official age of forgetting, it is especially important to remember the men and women who fought the legal battles that ended legal discrimination in the United States. Of special note are a group of black social justice lawyers who launched the NAACP's attack on segregation between the 1930s and the 1950s. They included William Henry Hastie, Charles Hamilton Houston, and their students Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, and others. Hastie and Houston graduated from Harvard Law School; while professors and deans at Howard University's Law School, they trained a generation of black civil rights lawyers as "social engineers" of racial equality.

Hastie himself argued and won cases that prohibited segregation on interstate carriers, equalized black and white teachers' salaries, and eliminated the white primary in Southern states.

These cases were some of the most important in the raft of NAACP-sponsored legal actions that led to the historic *Brown* decision of 1954, ending legalized segregation in the nation's public schools. NAACP litigation, conducted in state, federal, and Supreme courts, eventually produced the "judge-made law" of the Warren Court of the 1950s and '60s — mandates that eviscerated the racist legal system institutionalized by generations of legislatures and elected officials in Southern states. The attorneys of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (colloquially known as the "Inc. Fund") provided the legal underpinnings for the "Second Reconstruction" — and changed black and American history in the process.



Gilbert Ware's *William Hastie: Grace Under Pressure* chronicles the public life of one of the most important figures in the "bittersweet war against bigotry" that Inc. Fund lawyers fought in the nation's courts. This biography is a model of research and documentation. Ware's smooth, unobtrusive prose vividly portrays the discrepancies between the black experience in segregated America and the delicate and abstract legal strategies that the black bar used to change that experience. Ware's writing floats between incidents of violence and brutality, such as the lynching of black soldiers during World War II, and the elegance of legal argument and presidential protocol. This is the story of a black achiever who succeeded in a system that had consigned his race to invisibility, servitude, and exclusion. It is also the story of the often intricate workings of racism in America's recent past — in the New Deal administration, in state education, in the wartime mili-

tary, in the ignorant McCarthy-era convulsions that linked any black advocacy to a Stalinist red menace.

William Hastie was born in 1904 in Knoxville, Tennessee, the only child of William Henry Hastie and Roberta Childs Hastie. For Mrs. Hastie, motherhood was "a calling," and she left the teaching profession when her son was born, devoting her life to his development. In 1916 the Hasties moved to Washington, D.C., where William Hastie attended Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School, a black institution known for its excellent teaching staff and its tradition of instilling pride and self-confidence in its graduates.

From Dunbar, Hastie went to Amherst College, where he experienced "crosscurrents of systematic racism and academic excellence" — and excelled. Next came a brief tenure on the faculty of a black high school in Bordentown, New Jersey, followed by a stunning academic career at Harvard Law School. When Hastie graduated from Harvard in 1930, he began to work on the NAACP's legal attack on segregation. This group of blacks and whites, whom Hastie called "Gideon's band," had a formidable task.

Although few now recall the segregated world of the 1930s, it was a harsh, nasty, and brutish environment for blacks. As Ware writes, "Jim Crow had a death grip on equality. As Hastie explained, in the South blacks were not allowed to vote in the Democratic party's primaries, in which victory was tantamount to election inasmuch as Democrats controlled Southern politics. Schools were segregated in half of the states, and black schools were grossly neglected in financial and other aspects. Hotels, motels, restaurants, parks, theaters and many other public places were closed to blacks. Trains and other public carriers were segregated. In Oklahoma blacks violated the law if they used public telephones. . . . Segregated housing was commonplace throughout the nation. Adding the final touches to this grim picture, Hastie asserted that whites advocated or acquiesced in the legally segregated social order, while blacks accepted it as their essentially unalterable fate."

The NAACP chose to contest this order of things through the courts. Ware asserts, "The economic, political, and social well-being of blacks would depend on the NAACP's success in laying an adequate legal foundation for equality." And so began Hastie's involvement in a number of cases that led to *Brown*: salary equalization for black teachers, the elimination of the white primary in *Smith v. Allwright*, and the prohibition of legal segregation on interstate carriers in *Morgan v. Virginia*. In these cases, Hastie was known for his cool courtroom conduct, his meticulous research and writing, and for the precision of his arguments.

Hastie was also instrumental in many more cases than those he argued personally. According to Ware, "Judge [Constance Baker] Motley recalls that of the nineteen cases that Thurgood Marshall, representing the NAACP or the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., argued before the Supreme Court between 1939 and 1949, Hastie figured as co-counsel or consultant in twelve."

Hastie also taught as a tough and demanding dean of Howard University's Law School, where he insisted that his students become "social engineers" of racial equality through rigorous study and disciplined performance. Additionally, he served as governor of the Virgin Islands during a tumultuous period of transition. And with great frustration, he was civilian adviser to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson during World War II.

He eventually resigned his position as Stimson's aide due to the obtuse racism of the American military. Hastie's recommendations concerning the treatment of black troops went unheeded as the Army, Navy, and the fledgling Air Corps segregated units, military assignments, and even blood banks in the interest of "national defense." Hastie's relationship with Stimson might be symbolized by the exchanges between the two men over the issue of allowing blacks to serve as pilots in fighter units — which the Tuskegee Airmen, trained in segregated facilities in Alabama, admirably did. Hastie promoted the use of blacks in fighter squadrons and opposed the segregation of training units. Stimson, he remembered, said, "Mr. Hastie, is it not true that your people are basically agriculturalists?"

Ware's volume ends with chapters describing Hastie's campaign for Harry S. Truman in the election of 1948 and his subsequent appointment to the U.S. appellate bench in 1950. That appointment was bitterly contested by congressional Southerners and professional red-hunters who refused to acknowledge a difference between constitutional guarantees for black Americans and an international communist conspiracy. Throughout that battle, Hastie behaved with the composure and coolness that marked his long public career, a quality Ware likens to the "grace under pressure" that novelist Ernest Hemingway described as courage.

William Hastie is a fascinating, somewhat frustrating biography of a black hero. It is very much the story of a public life; Hastie's wives and children appear as shadowy figures, and the man's temper, his insecurities, and his fears never become known to the reader. Clearly an individual of enormous per-

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sonal strength, Ware's Hastie is a black man of marble — smoother and cooler than life allows. In part, this seems a function of evidence. Public figures such as Hastie, especially those engaged in controversial and sometimes dangerous issues, often choose to leave scant personal information in the files that fill archives as records of lives. But while the private Hastie remains an invisible man, Ware has recreated a fascinating portrait of an age and a legal movement: of the development of the black bar and the NAACP's strategy in the courts, and of one man's meticulous efforts to erase discrimination from American law.

Ware's biography bears the flaws of legal history: descriptions of courtroom strategies and precedents are not entertaining reading. Also, he is often less than critical of his subject. Even the public Hastie appears as a man without flaws — no rages, no bad habits, no human failures. When writing of exemplary lives, biographers too often give us the lives of saints. This may be good for inspirational purposes, but it inhibits understanding at both personal and historical levels. Yet the book succeeds well as a portrait of a figure within a remarkable legal age, and reminds us of the patient, painstaking, deliberate work that a small group of black attorneys undertook to make legal equality an American reality for blacks and other minority-status populations. Ware's book is beautifully researched, clearly written, and important. It allows us to remember the possibilities of legal and political change in contrast to the clear and present dangers of the national temper. □

Kim Lacy Rogers, assistant professor of history at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, writes on power relations and collective biography within social movements. Her dissertation concerned civil rights leaders and the desegregation of New Orleans.

Past Knowledge, Future Liberation

Social Origins of the New South, by Jonathan Wiener. Louisiana State University Press, 1978. $22.50/ $6.95.

Planters and the Making of a "New South," by Dwight Billings. University of North Carolina Press, 1979. 284 pages. $25.00.

Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers, by Ronald D. Eller. University of Tennessee Press, 1982. 272 pages. $23.50/$12.50.

— By Joe McDonald

Rather than review a single book, I want to take notice of a body of literature that has been very important to me. Represented by three books I will describe shortly, this literature, I think, is crucial for theory, research, and progressive social change in the Southern region.

Those of us who labor in an academic setting and are also committed to the principle of progressive social change often wrestle with the question of what we are doing to put this principle into practice. What can we do in an academic setting to democratize our states and local communities? One answer is that we can serve as disseminators, and sometimes sources, of ideas and information that can stimulate students and the concerned public to become knowledgeable activists committed to helping themselves and others. We can also translate what is sometimes very abstract theory into workable plans of action. This kind of role does not always seem important enough for us, but we plow ahead, hoping that we are contributing in some way to a more humane world. In my own moments of doubt and when faced with obstacles and intransigency, I think of the words of Simone Weil: "Life achieves meaning in simply stopping the wheels of oppression from grinding as hard as they would otherwise." At times this seems all that is possible.

At other times I am a bit more optimistic, believing that the wheels can

Soil Fuel Administration photo

be reversed. In the last six years there have been many books which have given me hope for the future of the region. Several have touched on the same important issue — the specification of a framework or perspective best suited for analyzing issues and problems of concern to Southern progressives. Such a framework — we could even call it a theory of society — is important because it directs our attention to certain areas, guides our questions, and points to plans for change. I mention in particular the three books listed above. What unifies them is the similarity of the perspective adopted for analysis. For each author, the pathway to understanding is sought through placing the Southern region into a larger context of nation and world and tying the development of the South and its problems to its relationship with larger economic and political developments. Additionally, each emphasizes the utility of the concept of class and demonstrates that class analysis is not just an academic exercise. In all, these works lead us to a better understanding of Southern history and how the past has led to present problems.

Each focuses on a specific area of the South: Billings on North Carolina, Wiener on Alabama, Eller on Appalachia. All describe conditions of uneven development and class formation which resulted in a powerful elite that exploited workers, resources, and minorities in the name of profit and progress. Billings and Wiener, in opposition to an earlier thesis of C. Vann Woodward, found great continuity in the pre- and post-Civil War power structure which resulted in the "Prussian Road" to industrialization. As described by Wiener, "The South's characteristic poverty and political oppression arose out of the same social relations: the Prussian Road, with its dominant planter class and its labor-repressive system of agricultural production, which posed a major obstacle not only to economic development, but also to democracy, to the political freedoms present in the North and so glaringly absent from the South." And Billings shows clearly how the planter-industrialists exploited blacks and labor to meet the needs of emerging capitalist industrialization.

All three works tell us that we must look at regional political and economic developments within the context of a world economy. For example, in looking at the textile industry and union problems, we find that knowledge of the historical pattern of textile industry, when placed within the context of uneven industrialization among regions in the world economy, leads to an understanding of the characteristics of class relations and the sources of and constraints on worker activism in the South today. Instead of citing worker attitudes or union organizers as the primary cause of the low percentage of workers organized, we direct our gaze to historical circumstances of class formation and exploitation, a more accurate and more satisfying direction. All of us need to realize that we are part of a series of events, dating back to the cotton mills of England, that have meant continued exploitation of textile workers. The struggles of workers and progressives from all areas today are thus linked to those of workers in England and also New England as the industry continued to move to more peripheral areas within the world economy. This is a depressing connection in the sense that the battles seem never-ending but an encouraging one in the sense that others have shared one's experiences and struggles. A sense of history, a sense of personal identification with people and events in the past, a sense of hope that using knowledge of the past can lead us to liberation in the future — all of these are important to me and are stressed by utilizing the framework of these three books.

If we turn our focus to public education, currently a "hot topic," we see the imprint of Southern industrialization as directed by a powerful elite who wanted to exclude blacks from mills and create a large working class of poor whites *for* the mills. Education was used as a mechanism to instill obedience and punctuality. Later education was considered necessary to inculcate workers with a middle-class view of life so that

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they would not become disruptive. Nowhere do we see signs that education was ever considered as a way to stimulate thinking, critical discourse, or political and economic awareness. Instead, it was an arena for class conflict in the context of Southern industrialization. We conclude, under the influence of this kind of class perspective, that education in Southern states has been poor by design, with limited goals favorable to the region's economic and political elites. Change comes only under pressure from those disadvantaged by the educational system or when mandated by changes in the political and economic interests.

As a concluding comment, I will simply add that these books point to a theory of society which can sharpen our sight, our questions, our criticisms, and our plans for progressive change. These books can help us make sense of what is happening to us. That is a valuable gift.□

Joe McDonald is assistant professor of sociology at Newberry College in Newberry, South Carolina.

Books on the South

This list consists of books published through July 1985. All books were published in 1985 unless otherwise noted. Dissertations appeared in Dissertation Abstracts in November and December, 1984, and January, 1985. All dissertations are dated 1984 unless otherwise noted.

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 Southern interest are welcome, recent works being preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: University Microfilms International, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106; (800) 521-3042.

HISTORY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS — BEFORE 1865

"Abolition and Republican Thought: History, Religion, Politics," by Daniel John McInerney. Purdue Univ.

"The American Invasion of Texas, 1820-1845: Patterns of Conflict Between Settlers and Indians," by William Brattle Gannett. Cornell Univ.

The Black Abolitionist Papers: Vol. I: The British Isles, 1830-1865, ed. by C. Peter Ripley *et al.* UNC Press, $55.00.

Black Slave Woman: Protagonist for Freedom, by A. Faulkner Watts. Blyden Press. Price not set.

The Cherokee Ghost Dance: Essays on the Southeastern Indians, 1789-1861, by William G. McLaughlin. Mercer Univ. Press, 1984. $34.95.

The Economics of U.S. Slave and Southern White Fertility, by Richard H. Steckel. Garland Publ. $35.00.

"'The Good Creatures': Drinking Law and Custom in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts and Virginia," by Karen R. Stubaus. Rutgers Univ.

"Military Executions of the Union Army, 1861-1866," by Robert Ignatius Alotta. Temple Univ.

The North Reports the Civil War, by J. Cutler Andrews. Univ. of Pittsburgh Press. $19.95.

"Patrician Culture, Public Ritual, and Political Authority in Virginia, 1680-1740," by Carter Lee Hudgins. William and Mary.

"The Quakers of Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1807," by Jo Anne McCormick. Univ. of South Carolina.

Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606, by David Beers Quinn. UNC Press. $19.95/9.95.

Shadow on the Church: Southwestern Evangelical Religion and the Issues of Slavery, 1783-1860, by David T. Bailey. Cornell Univ. Press. $24.95.

Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century, by Barbara J. Fields. Yale Univ. Press. $27.50.

Sound of Drums, by Spencer B. King. Mercer Univ. Press, 1984. $32.95.

The South Reports the Civil War, by J. Cutler Andrews. Univ. of Pittsburgh Press. $19.95.

Southerners All, by F. Nash Baney. Mercer Univ. Press, 1984. $16.95.

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To Rescue the South

– by William R. Amberson

In 1936, members of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) founded the Delta Cooperative Farm in Hillside, Mississippi. "Cooperative agricultural communities," writes Donald Grubbs in Cry from the Cotton, *"the union leaders decided, were the answer." The farm moved to Holmes County in the 1940s, changed its name to Providence Farms, and lasted until the mid-'50s, when leaders of the farm were put on trial "for their 'strange racial views,'" says H. L. Mitchell, a founder of the STFU. William Amberson, a Memphis doctor, was a prominent socialist and STFU supporter; he took every opportunity to publicize the advantages of cooperatives. The following is excerpted from an article which appeared in* The Christian Register, *March 18, 1937; Amberson's papers are on deposit in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.*

At the very moment when interest in the Southern scene is at its peak, there is grave danger that the nation may fail once more to meet the problem with a real solution. The tenancy commissions which have been set up by the governors of Arkansas and Oklahoma, and, most recently, by President Roosevelt himself, have shown a marked tendency to favor a small individual subsistence homestead. Tenancy legislation now under discussion will almost certainly adopt such a program.

All present proposals are utterly inadequate to meet the situation. It must be remembered that at least 3,000,000 tenant families throughout America are potential candidates for rehabilitation. Of these, half live in the Southern states. A yearly appropriation of $100,000,000 will finance about 25,000 families to get possession of a small farm. This is less than one percent of the total. Meanwhile present owners are losing their farms at an even faster rate. According to a recent statement of Secretary [of Agriculture Henry] Wallace, the present rate of increase in tenant families is about 200,000 a year. All the reforms introduced under the New Deal have been unable to terminate this trend toward tenancy. The H.O.L.C. [Home Owners Loan Corporation] is now foreclosing thousands of farms and dwellings. We may shortly witness the spectacle of Resettlement Administration rehabilitating some of those dispossessed by this other branch of government. . . .

The members and trustees of the Delta Cooperative Farm are seeking to explore another way of life. We start with the recognition that, particularly in the cotton country, the small farmer is at a tremendous disadvantage in the production and marketing of his crop. We believe that powerful economic forces have been responsible for the aggregation of farm lands into larger and larger holdings. We hold that the large plantation has definite advantages which must not be lost. We seek to secure for our members every financial advantage which large operations make possible. Our land is held in trust by the trustees, who receive no part of the income. Our members are building an equity in the property through their own labors, and they will ultimately own the farm, as a co-operative group, together with all improvements which they make upon it. In their first year equity and improvements have amounted to more than $5,000 for the thirty-three families of both races already on the farm, and the average income was slightly more than $300 per family. This is a very low income, but somewhat better than the average cropper family has been getting in the past five years. As more land is cleared the productivity will of course rise.

We believe in the establishment of small villages with every house near to the store, the school, the church, and the community center. In our newly-erected community building we have radios, pianos, a medical clinic, and now a library. Night schools are open to all adult members of the co-operative. . . . The people are organized in both producers' and consumers' co-operatives. As producers, they grow the principal field crops, now cotton and alfalfa, in large fields with group operation. So far as possible we are using tractors in plowing and cultivation. A large community garden, now about to be irrigated, furnishes vegetables for the whole farm.

As consumers, the people operate a co-operative store on the Rochdale principle. In its first months it has greatly increased its stock, and paid a patronage dividend of nine percent. Our people are accustomed to dealing at commissary stores where they have often been charged as much as twenty-five cents on the dollar for credit. We pay cash wages and advance dividends, and the store runs largely on a cash basis. A co-operative council of five members directs most of the details of operation. It is elected by the whole group, every three months.

Such, in barest outline, is the Delta Co-operative Farm at the moment. . . . It stands as a challenge to the old plantation system, seeking to conserve every value which that system has developed, yet to make a fairer division of its benefits, and to release the human energies latent in even the poorest of these people when they realize that the products of their labor will not be stripped from them, but will build for them an ever richer and fuller life. □

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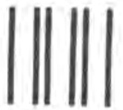

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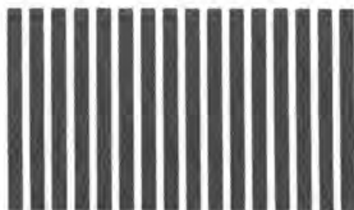

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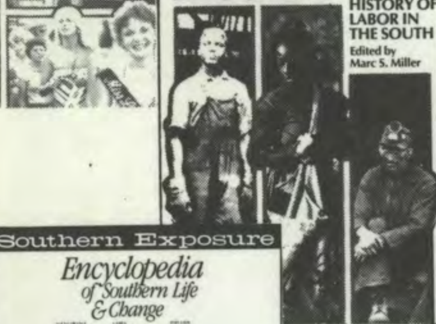

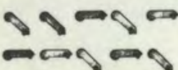

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