

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

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New in Paperback from Georgia

An Education in Georgia

Charlayne Hunter, Hamilton Holmes, and the Integration of the University of Georgia

CALVIN TRILLIN; Foreword by Charlayne Hunter-Gault

Highly acclaimed when it was first published in 1964, *An Education in Georgia* offers an intimate glimpse of a key episode in the civil rights movement as it traces the college careers of the first two black students to enter the University of Georgia. "Brilliant. . . . A well-written and most valuable account."—*Times Literary Supplement* \$12.95 paper

The Making of a Southerner

KATHERINE DU PRE LUMPKIN; Foreword by Darlene Clark Hine

In *The Making of a Southerner*, Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin recreates the South of her childhood and records the journey she took from her early instruction as a daughter of the "Lost Cause" to the liberal viewpoints she championed as an adult. "We need to have this book around again to remind us what it took to be what Katherine Lumpkin was in her time. Her book is no longer fond prophecy and faint hope; it is a record of the route we had to travel."—Louis D. Rubin, Jr. \$14.95 paper

An Old Creed for the New South

Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865–1918

JOHN DAVID SMITH

In this study, John David Smith shows how proslavery rhetoric by historians, scientists, and "race thinkers" in the half-century following emancipation provided an intellectual basis for racial oppression and discrimination in the New South. "Not merely content to provide summaries and to chart changing interpretations, (Smith) places the subject within the broad context of contemporary racial attitudes and official policy."—*Journal of Southern History* \$17.95 paper

Night Riders in Black Folk History

GLADYS-MARIE FRY; Foreword by William Lynwood Montell

Tapping the black oral tradition, Gladys-Marie Fry has arrived at the "folk view" of the various supernatural and bogey figures used by whites over the years to terrorize and control blacks. "This book establishes (Fry) as a folklorist of the first order."—*Washington Post Book World* \$14.95 paper

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DATELINE: THE SOUTH

COLUMBIA, S.C. (Aug. 23) —

The Texas-based Boy Scouts of America agreed to stop displaying the Confederate flag during ceremonies after a local white Scout protested that its use was offensive to blacks. "The amount in which the Confederate flag is shown during these events is very prominent," said Paul Hudson, a Scout for 11 years. "No one's wearing hoods on their heads, but it almost looks like a resegregation rally or something."

ATLANTA, Ga. (Aug. 29) —

Legislators approved the biggest layoff of government workers in state history today, handing out pink slips to 2,189 public employees. The massive payroll cut was part of an effort to slash the state budget by \$415 million. Lawmakers also voted to delay welfare benefits and cut education spending by \$92 million.

ARLINGTON, Va. (Sept. 5)

— AIDS activists inflated a 15-foot replica of a condom on the roof of the suburban home of Senator Jesse Helms to protest the Republican lawmaker's support of mandatory AIDS testing. "They were just trying to get a little publicity," said police spokesman Tom Bell. "I guess it worked." Helms had no comment on the demonstration.

UTICA, Ky. (Sept. 9) —

Belinda Mason, the only AIDS-infected member of the National Commission on AIDS, died today of complications from the disease. A Kentucky native who founded the state's first group fighting for a cure, she contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion during childbirth. Mason was an outspoken opponent of President Bush,

whom she criticized for treating the AIDS crisis as a moral issue instead of a public health issue.

DALLAS, Texas (Sept. 9) —

Over 3,000 high school students marched on administration offices today to protest the layoffs of 270 teachers. Officials promised to rehire some instructors who fell victim to budget cuts. Student organizers said they will now press for a student seat on the school board. "Board members make decisions on the basis of paperwork and surveys," said sophomore Glenn Blumenstein. "We need members who know what's going on in the classroom."



FLORENCE, Ala. (Sept. 14) —

Die-hard college football fans can take their loyalty with them to the grave, thanks to a local firm selling caskets with the school colors of Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, or Georgia. For \$2,000, Loretto Casket Co. will fit a team logo of the deceased's school on a white velvet panel inside the lid of the coffin. "The reception has been tremendous," said company owner Ken Abercrombie. "Funeral directors immediately thought of instances where these would be appropriate."

NEW ORLEANS, La. (Sept. 25) —

Demonstrators occupied the offices of the city housing authority today to protest the hiring of a private firm to run their federally funded housing project. Mayor Sidney Barthelemy said federal officials have promised more money to improve conditions in the projects, but tenants refused to leave, saying they would not be satisfied until the city fires the private management firm and members of the housing authority.

MIAMI, Fla. (Sept. 28) — Farmers and conservationists won a victory against urban development today as county commissioners rejected a plan to turn 283 acres of prime farmland into a luxury home and golf course complex. "This would definitely have produced less farmland, fewer crops, and fewer hours for the workers," said Charlie McGarey, a member of Redland Citizens Association that organized opposition to the development. "And there's nowhere else to find this kind of land."

ATLANTA, Ga. (Oct. 2) —

The Georgia-Pacific Corp. pleaded guilty to tax evasion today and agreed to pay \$21 million — the largest corporate criminal fine ever handed down in the Georgia federal court district. The company admitted falsifying its 1984 tax return, taking a \$24 million deduction for Florida swampland worth \$2 million. "This is a case of corporate greed," said U.S. Attorney Joe Whitley. "Hopefully this will serve notice that any taxpayer — be it a large corporation or an individual — who attempts to evade their tax payments will pay a large price."

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (Oct. 4) —

Former school superintendent Willie Herenton defeated two-term incumbent Richard Hackett by 172 votes today to become the first black mayor of Memphis. The razor-thin victory followed a lawsuit that abolished citywide runoff elections — a system that required black candidates who won with less than 50 percent of the vote to run again against a single white candidate.

DALLAS, Texas (Oct. 4) —

A Mississippi-based group of white supremacists that recruits neo-Nazi skinheads is negotiating to air its anti-minority programs on local cable television. Richard Barrett, an organizer of the Nationalist Movement, said his show "Airlinks" is already broadcast in Tampa and Memphis. "Dallas is a major city and a progressive area where we can reach people and make social change," Barrett said. "Dallas is keenly important to the Nationalist Movement."



LAKE ASBURY, Fla. (Oct. 10) —

Clay County sheriff deputies busted a neighborhood gang for vandalizing a vacant home. The suspects: three six-year-olds and a four-year-old. The children were read their rights, booked on felony charges, and told they could go to jail for 40 years. "My four-year-old said he didn't think he would ever see me again," said Lori Collins, mother of two of the kids. "He asked the deputy how many minutes are in 40 years."

SALUDA, S.C. (Oct. 22) — Labor

officials are investigating charges that peach growers recruited migrant farm workers from East Coast homeless shelters by offering them a ready supply of crack cocaine. Some workers also reported that they were beaten when they tried to leave labor camps in the peach orchards. "We want to see conditions be improved," said Marcie Wilhelmi of Catholic Social Services. "Any other industry would have taken care of these problems long ago."

HAMPTON ROADS, Va. (Oct.

23) — Sixty mothers joined forces today to force the state to toughen its collection of unpaid child support. The women formed a chapter of the Association for Children for the Enforcement of Support, blasting state officials for failing to track down delinquent fathers. Virginia statistics show that 520,000 children are owed \$361 million in support payments.

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (Oct. 29)

— Forty students appealed to the state superintendent to let their science teacher keep his job even though he failed the National Teachers Exam. Odilon Olivas, a Filipino-American, has received good reviews for his work and passed a performance-based test, but says he failed the national exam because he speaks English as a second language. "He deserves every opportunity to continue to teach and help us students," said Audrey Reid, a student who protested the move.

GAINESVILLE, Ga. (Oct. 30) —

Union County Sheriff Tommy Duncan and his son were found guilty of fabricating evidence against a burglary suspect and of illegal wiretapping. A former deputy and a jailer both testified that Duncan secretly bugged phones without authorization, and another man said he cut a deal with the sheriff to frame a man on burglary charges in 1988. Duncan dismissed the verdict, saying he was convicted on the testimony of "felons, thieves, drug addicts, and liars."

RICHMOND, Va. (Oct. 31) —

Prisoners will find it harder to "just do it" now that the state corrections department has banned high-tech athletic shoes that cost more than \$50. Inmates were reportedly fighting over the shoes, prompting officials to issue a catalog of state-sanctioned, low-priced footwear. So far, there are no reports of prisoners calling the shoes "Air Wardens."

CHARLESTON, W. Va. (Nov. 1)

— More than 1,000 fires blazed for over a week, consuming 250,000 acres in nine Appalachian states. More than half the fires were in West Virginia, and most were blamed on arsonists. "In Detroit, pranksters set cars on fire for Halloween," said forestry official Jim Lane. "In the rural South, they set our beautiful national forest afire."

ATLANTA, Ga. (Nov. 3) — The

City Council is considering a domestic partnership ordinance that would make Atlanta the first Southern city to legally recognize same-sex households. The law would allow city employees to extend their health insurance to unmarried gay or lesbian partners. The proposal was introduced a few days after Robin Shahar, an Emory law graduate, filed suit against state Attorney General Michael Bowers for withdrawing a job offer after he learned she planned to marry a woman.

WILKINSON, Miss. (Nov. 12) —

The white-majority Democratic Executive Committee held a closed-door session today to overturn the election of Reginald Jackson as the first black sheriff of Wilkinson County. The committee backed Jackson's white opponent, who charged voter fraud. Black residents boycotted white-owned businesses in protest. "The whites can't understand why people are complaining," said Everett Sanders, an attorney for Jackson. "For them, it's just business as usual."

Compiled by Katherine Orr. Illustrations by Steven Cragg.

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



ZINC, Ark. (Oct. 13) — One hundred Klansmen from across the country burned a cross and chanted white power slogans during the first meeting of their National Congress since 1986. The white supremacists met on land in the Ozark Mountains that leader Thom Robb vowed would be used for schools "to train a generation of young people ... and give America a thousand David Dukes."

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

On September 3, fire broke out at the Imperial Foods chicken processing plant in Hamlet, a small town in western North Carolina. As the flames spread throughout the factory, workers rushed to the exits — only to find six of the nine doors shut tight, most padlocked by the owner to prevent employees from stealing his chickens. Trapped in the burning building, 25 people died and 54 were injured.

The media immediately pronounced it the worst industrial accident in state history. But the Hamlet fire was no accident. It was a man-made tragedy from start to finish, created by the poultry industry and the public officials who promote it.

For years, state officials in North Carolina have chosen to ignore workplace safety. Despite previous fires at the Imperial Foods plant, the state had never inspected the factory since it moved to Hamlet from Pennsylvania 11 years ago. "The average workplace in North Carolina will be inspected once

every 75 years," says assistant state labor commissioner Charles Jeffress. "It's an outrage."

USDA inspectors who monitored the quality of chicken meat at the plant each day knew that some exit doors were kept locked — but say their job is to inspect birds, not protect workers. "I had several plant employees mention the locked doors," inspector Kenneth Booker told a Congressional committee. "I told them I had done all I could do by telling the plant management."

Booker also said he received calls from colleagues as far west as Texas describing managers at poultry plants "going around with bolt cutters the day after the fire unlocking doors."

The poultry industry has been guilty of smaller but equally abusive tragedies for years. In North Carolina, poultry workers are three times as likely as other workers to be injured on the job. One in four poultry workers — most of them black women or Hispanic men — is injured or suffers an occupational illness each year. The most common ailment is carpal tunnel syndrome, a crippling wrist injury that results from the high-speed, repetitive motions of slaughterhouse work.

But instead of protecting workers, public officials have conspired for decades to make North Carolina safe for owners of low-wage factories. In Richmond County, where Hamlet is located, the most powerful figure is R. W. Goodman, the nation's longest serving sheriff, himself a textile mill owner and a formidable opponent to efforts to unionize local workplaces.

That same principle of promoting business over human health also prevails at the state level. The 1991 legislature rejected proposals that would have increased spending for occupational health and safety, fined state agencies that violate workplace safety, and extended worker compensation to cover many injuries caused by long-term exposure to hazardous conditions.

By inviting dangerous industries to rural areas where people have few economic options, officials have sacrificed safety for low-wage jobs. A 1990 study found that 30 percent of all full-time workers in North Carolina earn less than \$12,000 per year — poverty wages for a family of four.

Since the tragedy in Hamlet, the state has agreed to spend more on worker safety and to hire more inspectors. But perhaps more important than the new money is the new momentum to organize poultry workers in the state. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union plans to file for elections in two poultry plants before the end of the year, and a coalition of two dozen unions and public interest groups is meeting to promote organizing workers and push for tougher legislative reforms.

The coalition wants to require factories to have safety committees with elected worker representatives who can identify, report, and resolve safety problems without fear of retaliation.

On the national level, labor advocates hope the Hamlet fire can parallel the Triangle Shirt Waist Fire of 1911 in stimulating a round of major federal reforms. Their chief goal is passage of a proposal to overhaul the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

WAR GAMES

For public relations executives quaking after the intensive news coverage of the Imperial Foods fire, the invitation to a "crisis communication" workshop at the Hilton Hotel in Raleigh, North Carolina must have sounded enticing. "If something bad happens to your company or organization, chances are the media and the general public, somewhere, are going to find it newsworthy," it said. "Come prepared to learn how to face the media during a crisis situation, and emerge unscathed."

A seminar on how to manipulate the press and the public. No big deal, right? Except that the November workshop was sponsored by the N.C. Press Asso-

ciation — an organization composed of newspapers themselves.

Were North Carolina's newspapers teaching PR people how to avoid tough media scrutiny in times of crisis?

"The Press Association would be the last organization to put on a program about how to lie to its members," says director Teri Saylor. Rather, the conference will focus on "how to cooperate with the press."

The chief example used at the press-cooperation workshop: the fire in Hamlet, and how local officials "emerged unscathed." Also among the sessions was "War Games," a videotaped simulation and discussion featuring PR executive Phil Fleming of Carolina Power and Light and media consultant Robert Norris.

—Barry Yeoman

The bill would put more teeth in the current law, establish elected safety-and-health committees, protect workers who report unsafe conditions, and offer incentives for attorneys to sue companies that hurt workers.

Back home, workers in Hamlet are getting mixed messages. Support has poured in from unions and churches, and Jesse Jackson has visited the town twice to shore up morale and focus media attention on the issue of worker safety. But local media have begun referring to outspoken victims as “opportunists,” and rumors abound that they’ll never get another job in the area.

Facing huge civil suits and the possibility of fines and criminal charges, Imperial Foods has closed its plant for good. The enduring recession has shut down several other plants in the area. Hard times are ahead, but town leaders are reluctant to change their approach to industrial recruitment.

“There’s nothing wrong with Imperial. I think they’re fine people,” declares Sheriff R.W. Goodman. “They just had an accident. That’s all it was.”

Moddie Kersey, a former Imperial Foods employee, sums up her feelings differently. “This was a real hellhole, believe that. They did a lot of people dirty.”

—Mary Lee Kerr and Bob Hall

OLYMPICS NO GAME FOR ATLANTA POOR

First came the news that Atlanta had been chosen to host the 1996 Olympic Games. Then came the Braves batting it out in the city’s first-ever World Series. But the two sporting spectacles are anything but fun and games for Atlanta’s homeless and poor, who have been targeted in an official campaign to “clean up” the city.

Homeless advocates say the crackdown started last year when city officials began wooing the International Olympic Committee. Police arrested scores of street people and blocked off a village of makeshift huts downtown to hide the problem from international observers.

“When the IOC visited last year, a number of people we regularly work with just disappeared,” says Anita Beaty, co-director of the Georgia Task Force for the Homeless. “Officials wanted to tear down the hutville on Mangum Street, but when they couldn’t do that, they parked 10 semi-trailers between Mangum and the Omni to block the view.”

Since then, city officials have stepped up efforts to sweep the streets of the homeless. In July, the city council approved a controversial “public nuisance”

ordinance backed by business leaders that empowers police to jail “aggressive panhandlers.” Police said they will use undercover officers posing as tourists to trick street people into asking them for money.

“The biggest problem with this law is its potential for selective enforcement,” says Kay Young of Olympic Conscience, an organization monitoring the impact of Olympic policies on the poor in Georgia. “The ordinance is not aimed at criminals, but at poor people, black people, people with substance abuse problems.”

Since the ordinance was approved, more than 100 homeless

people have filled out forms from the Task Force claiming police harassment. “During the World Series we knew the streets were being swept of homeless people,” says Anita Beaty. “It seems to me that the plan is to make things as rough as possible early on so that when the Olympics arrive, downtown will be a police state.”

But while the city adopts a “get tough” attitude toward the homeless, the problem grows worse. There are now an estimated 15,000 homeless people in Atlanta — nearly half of them women with children. City shelters offer only 3,900 beds, forcing many people to sleep in abandoned buildings, under bridges, or in one of five organized “hutvilles” around the city.

In October an unidentified homeless man died in a fire he set in a vacant house to keep warm. Several weeks later, a fire set by 60 homeless people living in shacks under a viaduct on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive burned out of control, forcing repair crews to close the damaged bridge for a week.

Teresa Pike spent five days on the streets with her three children. “Sleeping on the streets is a terrible way to live,” she told the *Atlanta Constitution*. “You feel cold, you feel scared, and you don’t really sleep much at all.”

Even Atlantans who have a place to stay may not be safe from the Olympic clean up. Officials are touting a plan to demolish Techwood Homes — the oldest housing project in the nation — to make way for housing for athletes in a downtown Olympic Village.

In an October referendum, residents of the 2,000-unit facility voted to approve the plan after the city promised to improve living conditions following the Olympics. But observers say the referendum included residents at two apartment buildings next door to the projects — thus skewing the results to suggest that Techwood residents approve of the demolition.

“My sense is that most of the people in Techwood oppose the plan as proposed,” says Dennis Goldstein, an attorney with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society who is representing Techwood residents.

As Techwood faces the wrecking ball and the homeless crowd into shelters for the winter, Anita Beaty and other advocates for the poor wonder what has happened to the spirit of the Olympics.

“It really feels mean around here now,” Beaty says.

—Paul Kvinta

Photo by John Rottel/News and Observer



MARTHA LEE NEBON CRIES OUT AFTER HEARING THAT HER DAUGHTER HAS DIED IN THE IMPERIAL FOODS FIRE.

NC VOTERS DUMP WASTE ISSUES

Waste issues fueled a large voter turnout and triggered upsets in local elections across North Carolina in November, signaling the growing power of grassroots environmental groups.

Though attention was focused on Northampton County — where all incumbents in the town of Woodland were swept from office in a backlash against a proposed hazardous waste incinerator — waste issues also triggered furious voting in Caswell, Dare, Pender, and Bladen counties. Election returns show that:

▼ Voters in Caswell County rejected by a three-to-one margin plans for a regional solid waste landfill proposed by Browning-Ferris Industries Inc.

▼ Voters in Manteo, where turnout was twice the size of typical municipal races, defeated their mayor in response to his support for a controversial sewage-treatment plant on Shallowhag Bay.

▼ Voters in the small town of Watha ousted two town council members who supported plans by ThermalKEM to build a hazardous waste incinerator in Pender

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County. The company later turned its attention to Woodland.

▼ The mayor of Tar Heel in Bladen County was defeated after residents protested his support for a huge slaughterhouse that Smithfield Foods Inc. plans to build on the Cape Fear River.

Lavon Page, president of the Conservation Council of North Carolina, said the results show the strength and mobilization of grassroots environmental organizations. "There are a lot of environmentalists who react strongly when they perceive a threat in their community, but it appears that they are broadening their horizons. It's a very encouraging sign," Page said.

"It used to be that when someone said 'jobs,' everyone would get quiet, but now they're asking, 'What kind of jobs are you talking about, and what is it going to cost us?'"

Lynda Midgette, election supervisor for Dare County, said that Mayor Luther Daniels of Manteo lost to Gus Granitzki by 17 votes as a direct result of his support for expanding the town's sewage treatment plant into sensitive bay waters.

"Boy, did we have an environmental issue!" she said. "We had a 56 percent turnout, and normally we don't have a 25 percent turnout for town elections."

Charles Schoonmaker of Watha said that 55 of the town's 70 voters turned out to defeat two town councilmen in an election tinged with resentment over plans to build an incinerator in the county. "After ThermalKEM's opposition machine is no here, in place, and rolling," Schoonmaker said. "There are still a lot of angry people."

And Pamela Graydon, chair of Concerned Citizens of Caswell, said that voters there rejected plans by Browning-Ferris to build a regional landfill on 750 acres by a vote of 3,949 to 1,202.

"It was a non-binding referendum, but

county commissioners issued a statement that they are going to abide by the people's wishes," she said. "That's what's called democracy in action."

In the town of Woodland — where ThermalKEM plans to build an incinerator to burn 100 million pounds of hazardous waste a year — the mayor and four town board members were defeated by a coalition that promises to stop the incinerator.

Barbara Cooke, elections supervisor for Northampton County, said that Mayor John Stanley, the principal advocate for the \$70 million incinerator, lost to Bill Jones by a vote of 217 to 213.

In June, police dragged Jones from town hall and arrested him when he protested the incinerator by refusing to leave an executive session of the town board. In November, Jones returned to town hall — this time as mayor.

"We're on higher ground now," Jones said. "We have the tools at our fingertips to fight the incinerator, and we'll use them."

But the fight may just be beginning. ThermalKEM said the new mayor has no power to stop the incinerator, and vowed to build the facility despite community opposition.

"These election results show a lot of support for us," said company spokesperson Jane Rogers. "We're going to continue the permitting process."

—Terry Martin

Terry Martin is a reporter with the Winston-Salem Journal.

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



ANGRY VOTERS IN NORTHAMPTON COUNTY DUMPED INCUMBENTS WHO SUPPORTED A HAZARDOUS WASTE INCINERATOR.

GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS

The headlines in our daily newspapers could turn the most optimistic social activist into a brooding cynic. When we read about the corruption, inefficiency, and bias that permeate our governments — local, state, and national — it becomes hard to believe that government can be a force for good.

But then we hear about Libby Wiersema and Julie Tilford, two “Resource Mothers” in South Carolina. Wiersema sits in a spartan and crowded room in a Florence public housing project, talking with a high-school student named Nancy about proper nutrition and health care for the child growing inside her. By the time Nancy goes into labor, she will know what to expect in the delivery room, how to get Medicaid, and how to feed her infant.

Not far away, Tilford teaches a young mother how to talk and respond to her six-week-old baby. Tilford has been counseling 17-year-old Audrey for almost a year, and as she leaves the mobile home and sets out down the winding rural road toward town, the younger woman calls out, “Now, remember to come to my wedding!”

These two scenes — from *Within Our Reach* by Lisbeth Schorr — show a different side of government. Wiersema and Tilford are community women who work to cut down on infant mortality among teenagers. Participants in a 10-year-old program funded by state and federal dollars, they are trained in fields ranging from infant safety to mobilizing community resources. And they have built a trust rarely found between government workers and the public they serve.

They have also built a reputation for effectiveness. In the first three years of the program, pregnant teenagers counseled by Resource Mothers gave birth to fewer than one-fourth the number of very-low-birthweight babies compared to other South Carolina teenagers. Follow-up research showed that their children also enjoyed better health than babies born to women who didn’t receive counseling.

That’s the type of story you rarely read in the press — including *Southern Exposure*. Many of the articles we publish detail the myriad ways government fails its citizens.

That’s an important role for the news media, but it’s one that carries a special responsibility. How do we criticize the system without dashing our faith that government can serve the social good? How do we instill hope rather than cynicism? How do we inspire each other to keep up the good fight — rather than to throw in the towel?



In trying to answer those questions, we combed the South for models of governments and public programs that work. And we found them. They span a broad spectrum — from health care to the arts, from protecting the environment to providing affordable housing. They include a small Georgia town that has empowered its citizens for the first time in decades as well as a rural Arkansas school board that has faced a legacy of racism head-on.

Some of those programs, such as a Land Bank in Kentucky that enables low-income families to buy their own homes, are still in their formative stages. Others, like a comprehensive health center in Mississippi, have been going strong for years. But together, these disparate programs provide some vital lessons:

▼ **Grassroots participation is essential.** The success of a Florida land-use law comes from the intensive way that citizens become involved in developing county growth plans. Likewise, the new town government in Keysville, Georgia — which now provides basic services ranging from garbage collection to tutoring — derives its power from a hard-fought struggle by once-voiceless black citizens.

▼ **Rigid models don’t work.** The nurses and outreach workers in a comprehensive health program in Virginia cross the normal lines of responsibility, helping their clients learn to read, find apartments, and navigate hostile bureaucracies. In Florida, environmental enforcement officers not only crack down on polluters, but also educate citizens about stewardship of the land.

▼ **Early intervention is more efficient than late treatment.** The Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center has delivered preventive care to Mississippi’s poor for two decades — and cut down on kidney disease, stroke, and teen pregnancy. Resource Mothers actually save South Carolina taxpayers money in the long run — more than \$100,000 for every baby spared from premature birth and its consequent hospital care.

These success stories remind us that government *can* work — when it begins at the grassroots, erases bureaucratic boundaries, and tackles problems at their roots. We hope this special section of *Southern Exposure* can provide both inspiration and real-life examples to nourish community struggles for genuine democracy — for government that serves the people it was intended to serve.

—Barry Yeoman



KEYSVILLE, GEORGIA HAD NO GOVERNMENT FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY — UNTIL EMMA GRESHAM WAS ELECTED MAYOR.

KEYS TO THE CITY

KEYSVILLE, GA. — One steamy afternoon last July, Mayor Emma Gresham entered the double-wide trailer that serves as City Hall in this small town near the South Carolina border. She passed the photograph of herself with former Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young and was walking toward her office when her assistant intercepted her with the good news: Keysville had just won a \$400,000 federal grant to provide indoor plumbing to local residents.

A chorus of drawn-out “ohhhhs” filled the trailer — then laughter and applause. “This is great news,” the mayor beamed. “Keysville has had water problems for a long time.” As her staff celebrated, Gresham entered her spartan office, sat behind her desk, and began calling council members.

For most small Georgia towns, getting a water grant would hardly qualify as a remarkable event. Indeed, at first glance there’s nothing at all remarkable about Keysville. A traveler passing through this east Georgia hamlet on an average day would probably think nothing

How black residents of Keysville, Georgia created an entire municipal government to help rebuild their hometown.

By Fredrick D. Robinson



of the youngsters planting flowers in front of City Hall, or the dozen or so street lights scattered throughout the town, or the three red fire trucks parked in front of the volunteer fire department.

But Keysville is no ordinary town. Just five years ago, it wasn’t a town at all, its local government having been disbanded by whites during the Great Depression. With no local leadership or city services, it had slowly become a desolate place, where weeds and dirt roads bespoke its character. Its population had dwindled to 380 souls, three quarters of them black.

But in 1985, black residents pulled together to resurrect their community. They assembled a municipal government that has worked relentlessly to restore Keysville as a viable and self-sufficient city — a struggle that received an important boost from the federal grant to build the town’s first water and sewer system.

Emerging from her office that July afternoon to rejoin the celebration, Mayor Gresham stood beside a poster of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and other historic black leaders. To many of the Keysville residents around her, Gresham seemed to belong among those shining black heroes in the picture — a living symbol of their town’s dramatic rebirth.



INSIDE THE TRAILER THAT SERVES AS A MAKESHIFT CITY HALL, GRESHAM WORKS LONG HOURS TO BRING BASIC SERVICES TO KEYSVILLE.

THE QUARTERS

At 66, “Mama” Gresham looks like the retired schoolteacher she is — her graying hair and stern features softened by her grandmotherly way with kids. The youngest of seven children, Gresham remembers the big camp meetings that used to be held every summer in Keysville under the pavilion that still stands near the new post office. “I was a little girl, running down there to see the people play the guitar and sing,” she recalls.

As Gresham and older residents tell it, the days were much better back then. Nestled in the midst of rich timber and farm land, the town had its own elementary school and a big two-story building with an auditorium where operas and plays were performed. Both were built

by a philanthropic organization called the Rosenwald Foundation. “We had a lot of stores, a school, a planer mill and a sawmill and a railroad depot,” Everett Poole, a retired grocery store owner, told the *Atlanta Constitution*.

Henry Key, the oldest resident in town and a descendent of its namesake, used to haul red Georgia clay to harden the sandy streets. “I don’t recollect how much they paid me, but ‘round then, if you made a dollar a day you were making gracious plenty for yourself,” Key told a reporter.

But then as now, the town was sharply divided along racial lines. Keysville was named after Joshua Key, a white man who took his black cook for a mistress. Most of his descendants and other white residents lived along the main highway, while most blacks occupied a neighborhood known as “the Quarters” on a small hill above the

road. Although black citizens comprised a majority of Keysville, they were not permitted to vote. Whites controlled the economic and political life of the entire town, holding every municipal office and owning virtually every business.

The Great Depression changed all that. Younger residents began to move away in search of jobs; stores began to close; older white leaders died off and no one came forward to replace them. Eventually, white residents gave up on local government. The town held its last election in 1933, the year Emma Gresham turned eight.

“It just happened like an old house going down,” Everett Poole recalled. “There wasn’t no sudden break in it. It just slowly dropped into the ground.”

Disbanding the town government had little effect on white residents like Poole. Most continued to make a decent living, and today their modest ranch-style houses include indoor toilets, running water, and satellite dishes.

But for the black majority, things went from bad to worse. With few local jobs to support them, many found themselves living in broken-down trailers and drinking contaminated water from rain barrels. Zelma Walker lived in her family home — until the floors and roof almost caved in.

Many black residents like Walker were forced to rely on outhouses and outdoor water pumps. There were no street lights, no police, and no fire protection. The nearest fire department was 20 miles away. According to state figures, the average Keysville resident still earns only \$4,335 a year.

THE CHARTER

Emma Gresham witnessed the slow and painful deterioration of her hometown. She attended Paine College and Atlanta University, and left to teach school in neighboring Augusta. But she kept her residence in Keysville, spending her weekends back home so she could attend church with her family.

When Gresham decided to lay down her chalk over five years ago — after more than 30 years of teaching — she could have enjoyed a well-earned rest. Instead, she found herself thrust into the middle of a political whirlwind over the future of the town.

Gresham took the lead in a self-help

organization of black residents called Keysville Concerned Citizens who were struggling to improve living conditions. For nearly two decades, the church-based group had been selling chicken dinners to raise money for community improvements — a modest endeavor that Gresham never expected would lead to the mayor's office.

"I owe my political ambitions to my faith in God and my desire for all people to be treated justly," says Gresham. "I had no idea I'd ever want to be elected to any office. I'm really not a politician, but I know what this town needs."

The biggest need was for water and sewers. In its 101-year history, Keysville has never had a water system — which Gresham says underscores the importance of democratic government.

"Towns all around here have water and sewer systems," Gresham says. "Burke County communities with as little as 75 residents have one. This says to me that if you do not have anyone to represent you governmentally, you can't get things you need as a community."

Keysville Concerned Citizens did their homework, and learned that federal and state funds were available for providing water and sewers. Hoping to apply for aid, the group met with prominent whites to find out whether the city had ever been incorporated. But white residents, who already enjoyed indoor toilets and running water, brushed the Concerned Citizens off.

William and Jean Harmon, owners of Keysville Convalescent and Nursing Center — the largest employer in town — told the group that they had recently installed a water system and were not interested in supporting a town government. They also told the Concerned Citizens that the town had never been incorporated.

The matter was forgotten. But not for long.

One day, a woman who owned a small grocery store asked the Burke County commission for a permit to sell beer and wine. The commission turned her away, saying she would have to ask the town of Keysville for a license. Herman Lodge, a black commissioner, had found a copy of the town's 1890 charter at the courthouse. The charter, it turns out, had never been officially invalidated.

But asking the town for a liquor li-

cense was an impossible task. More than half a century had passed since Thomas Radford was sworn in as the last mayor of Keysville. He and every other city official were dead.

The woman who applied for the beer permit has since moved away, her name forgotten. But her simple request re-

boundaries existed for the town.

Black residents asked an appeals court to strike down the injunction. They asked the General Assembly to designate city limits. They asked then-Governor Joe Frank Harris to appoint interim officials. All their requests were denied.

When new elections were held in

Photo by Rob Nelson



MANY RESIDENTS OF THE BLACK NEIGHBORHOOD KNOWN AS "THE QUARTERS" STILL HAUL WATER TO THEIR RUNDOWN HOMES. AVERAGE INCOME: \$4,335.

vealed that the town of Keysville still existed on paper, giving residents the tool they needed to revive their long-dormant government.

THE VOTE

Encouraged by Herman Lodge, Keysville Concerned Citizens began to push for local elections. In 1985, six black residents ran for office unopposed, and were sworn in as the new mayor and town council of Keysville.

But white residents, fearing that the new government would levy taxes to pay for city services, went to court to keep blacks from resurrecting the town. Five hours after the new city officials were sworn in, a Burke County judge barred them from taking office, ruling that the elections were invalid because no clear

1988, black residents were prepared. They handed out leaflets and held town meetings and worked with the American Civil Liberties Union and Christic Institute South, a social justice group based in North Carolina. Nearly 200 residents went to the polls, electing Emma Gresham mayor by a 10-vote margin and giving black candidates four of the five seats on the town council.

Civil rights leaders hailed the election as an important victory in the struggle for racial equality in the rural South. "Civil rights did not touch all of America, particularly rural towns," Georgia state representative Tyrone Brooks said after the vote. "It is time for us to direct our energies not on the Atlantas and Chicagos and New Yorks, but on small towns like Keysville."

But white residents continued to fight

THE KIDS OF KEYSVILLE

No one has to tell Emma Gresham that children hold the key to the future of Keysville. Even though she is mayor, the retired schoolteacher always has time for the dozens of kids who come to City Hall to clean up, read, do their homework, or just visit. She interacts with them in a grand-motherly but stern way: totally giving and compassionate, but quick to make sure they complete their chores and homework.

"The reason Ms. Gresham stays so tired is because she spends so much time giving of herself," says Turetha Neeley, a council member. "There is not a child's name she doesn't know. When they come in, they will always get a piece of her time if they want it."

"My work has always been with children," Gresham says. "When I see children, I don't see color. I see children. I really feel young people can change the course of history if the right kind of values are instilled at an early age. I believe everyone is important and has the right to pursue as high a goal as they can pursue."

Following her teacher's sensibilities — which "never left me" — Gresham often stays late at City Hall to help a student with reading or math. And she's happy to work with students that other teachers find too difficult to manage.

"I guess I'm just a plain Methodist who believes in treating everyone like I want to be treated," she says. "I'm slow to anger and quick to forgive. I have a deep, abiding faith in God."

Gresham hopes her example will inspire younger residents to pick up where their elders leave off. "People will say, 'Your mama Ida Rose was a respectable Christian woman. Why do you want to do this to the town?'" the mayor says. "Because I want some of those young people to say there were people like Emma Gresham who pushed and brought greater opportunity to Keysville."

Students get an introduction to civic life through Junior Concerned Citizens, a group of local teenagers who meet every Wednesday to discuss ways to make Keysville a better city. "Most of the kids are involved in one way or another in the beautification of Keysville," says Grady Sampson, a 4-H Club county extension agent who directs the group. "They plant flowers, cut grass, clean windows, and pick up trash. It gives them a sense of belonging to the community."

Fourteen-year-old Fredrick Grant agrees. "If we don't learn about our city," he says, "who's gonna run it when we get big?"

— F.R.

the new government, saying the voting boundaries included too many blacks. Nursing home owners William and Jean Harmon even filed suit against the town to block collection of a new business licensing fee — an assessment that threatened to cost the couple \$62.50.

Finally, after another year of legal wrangling, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the boundary dispute, clearing the way for Keysville to hold another election in 1989. This time, Gresham beat white opponent J. Upton Cochran by 59 votes, and blacks won all five council seats.

"I feel that God blessed us," says Gresham. "That last election made us official and we're able to continue making Keysville a better city."

Gresham says she wasn't surprised by the white opposition. "I saw the challenges as part of a group of people who are afraid of change, who had never seen

anything like this before," she says.

White residents insist their primary conflict with blacks is one of economics. Even with federal and state grants to build a water and sewer system, many white homeowners worry they'll be stuck with large tax bills to operate the system once the grants run out.

"We've got just a few households where both parties are working," nursing home owner Jean Harmon told the *Atlanta Constitution*. "Most of the others are widows living on fixed incomes. If they come in here and slap a bunch of city taxes on them, they won't be able to live here anymore."

J. Upton Cochran, who was defeated by Gresham in the mayoral election, agrees. "Our economic interests are just different from most of the blacks," he says.

But one white resident says such opposition is based on race, not economics.

"The whites never did want black people to have anything," says 67-year-old Elsie Munn, who went to work for Mayor Gresham as a part-time librarian once she saw how the new government was helping residents. "They — blacks — have always been pushed around, stomped on, and cussed by some white people. I think the white people should join in and help."

THE WORK

Under the leadership of Mayor Gresham, the new municipal government set to work immediately to do what it could to help. Funded primarily by donations from black churches across the nation, officials moved quickly to make real, physical changes in the community: adding street lights, creating a fire department, opening a post office, and staffing a day-care center.

But local businesses are still boarded up, and some homes are without indoor plumbing. "I'm not going to be satisfied until every citizen of Keysville has running water and there are clean streets, livable homes, a larger city park, more definite police protection, standard garbage pickup, a real library, a school, and other basic services," vows Gresham.

The town presently has a small park with a basketball court, a softball field, and a swing-and-slide gym set. The library is a small room added to the City Hall trailer and stocked with an odd assortment of donated books. Garbage collection is handled by Quinten Gresham, the mayor's husband and president of Concerned Citizens, who is paid \$25 a week to pick up trash and take it to the dump. And for police protection, a Burke County deputy drives through town once a day and stops at City Hall.

Residents know that making Keysville self-sufficient is going to take hard work. Gresham often puts in 12-hour days, but she is not alone. Council members, who work for free, are busy keeping the community informed and finding ways to raise money for basic services.

What's more, the new government has energized the people of Keysville, imbuing them with the spirit of improving their own community. "I'll continue to take my truck and pick up our trash until we can get a sanitation department," says Quinten Gresham. "Until we can get the proper aid, we gotta do for ourselves."

Residents are also taking part in Vi-

sions of Literacy, a new program that helps townspeople learn to read. Gresham, appointed by the governor to the Georgia Council on Adult Literacy, estimates that half of Keysville's residents need the program.

"We have residents who are outstanding citizens, who really are strong in their commitments to community, but they have not had a high-school or formal education," Gresham says. "In order to encourage economic development, you have to have people who are trained and educated. This is why we started this program."

Five instructors—including the mayor—teach an average of a dozen students, who range in age from 19 to 51. Kathie Johnson, a former teacher in the Richmond County school system, says she doesn't mind driving 30 miles from Augusta to Keysville in return for a small travel stipend. "The students are motivated and cooperative," she says. "Whatever they're asked to do, they do it. It's a refreshing difference from working with eighth-graders all day."

The literacy program has made a dramatic difference for Keysville residents like Georgene Allen, a 42-year-old cook at nearby Fort Gordon and a soldier in the Georgia National Guard. Allen wants to go to nursing school, so she attends literacy classes to brush up on her English, literature, social studies, and math.

"You should have seen us when we first started," she says. "I started from ground zero. You aren't associated with school every day like the kids are. It gets hectic. I have to study, and if you don't do it regularly, you get rusty."

THE MONEY

But perhaps the greatest success of the new government came in July, when the town received the \$400,000 federal grant to pump water to the homes of its residents. "The grant will give Keysville the greatest thing it has ever had: a water system free of contamination," the mayor says.

Much of the credit for qualifying for the grant belongs to Margaret White, an administrative assistant to the mayor. White was sent to Keysville by Virginia Water Projects, a non-profit organization based in Roanoke that helps communities obtain safe drinking water.

White—at 66 the same age as

Gresham—had also recently retired. But duty called, and she began traveling to Keysville for one week each month.

"I felt that I didn't need to sit down any longer," White says. "I had read about Keysville and their troubles, and since I had gone through a similar situation in Virginia, I knew I could help them. Why should someone have to keep reinventing the wheel?"

White went to work to acquire federal and state grants for the town. A former employee of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, she was familiar with the ins and outs of the federal bureaucracy. She knew where to look, what papers to fill out, whom to talk to, and when deadlines needed to be met.

White helped Keysville secure an emergency grant in 1988 that gave many residents their first taste of clean drinking water. Now, the \$400,000 grant will enable the town to pump water directly into their homes.

"Hard work pays off," says White. "In the end, I think Keysville will be the kind of city in rural America that it was when Mayor Gresham was growing up here. Water and sewerage is as good as here, and I eventually see a small school coming back. I see a Headstart program and an increase of industry that provides jobs for the residents here so that they don't have to travel to Augusta and Waynesboro."

THE FUTURE

Gresham shares those goals. Because Keysville lacks services that other communities consider necessities, she says, most young people are still forced to leave town to find work. "Keysville cannot attract industry in the condition it's in now," she says.

State and federal officials have been impressed by how much the Keysville government has accomplished. "These people are not ignorant," Jacqueline Byers, state manager of city and county governments, told *The Washington Post* shortly before the 1989 elections. "They don't know the workings of local government, but as fast as they've caught on to

everything—from talking to state government department heads about grants to marching on the Capitol—they're brilliant. All you have to do is point them in the right direction and voom, they're gone."

Although the new government has made significant progress in reviving the town, it still faces hostility from white residents. "It has caused some bad feelings, especially with the older citizens," nursing home owner Jean Harmon told a reporter. "I just wish it could really quiet down."

But J. Upton Cochran, who lost to Gresham in the mayoral race, believes the controversy will not abate as long as blacks control the town. "Blacks have always cried when there were all white governments, but it's the same thing down here," he says. "We white residents

have no representation."

Despite such opposition to majority rule, Gresham remains optimistic about the future of Keysville—and about relations between the races. "What I want most of all is for the white people and the black people who live in this town to sit down and talk," she says. "If we can sit down and talk, I think whites will understand why this is something that needs to be done. The future of our kids is at stake. Our very

destiny is at stake. These things are worth paying taxes for, taxes which are not going to be much anyway."

"I believe Keysville will once again be the town I always loved," she adds. "I always told people Keysville was an exceptional town where black and white lived together peacefully. I want to see black and white working together like they did when I was a little girl. It was a unique town."

Gresham looks around her tiny office in the makeshift trailer that serves as City Hall. "Keysville will become more than a crossroad or a stop sign," she says. "It will become a model of hope for other small towns that have been locked out, shut out and left behind." □

Fredrick D. Robinson is an Atlanta freelance writer.



CLASS ACTION

HOPE, ARK. — Driving down the main street of this small Southern town, it would be easy to mistake it for a movie set from the 1960s. Unlike many rural communities, Hope has remained relatively unchanged over the years. Downtown shops — everything from a taxidermist to a soda fountain — have managed to survive despite competition from a nearby WalMart. Every phone number in town begins with a 777 prefix, and residents simply recite the last four digits when exchanging numbers.

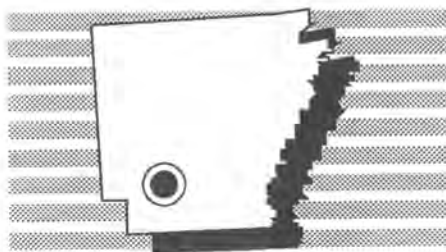
Perhaps the biggest change in Hope took place in 1968, the year the town integrated its schools. But even then, it didn't take widespread protests to bring children of different races together in the same classroom. There were no sullen mobs toting ax handles, no federal troops, no *New York Times* reporters. The well-funded white educational system simply agreed to meld with the town's collection of grossly neglected black schools, and the voluntary merger went off without a hitch.

The relative calm didn't surprise residents of Hope, a small community in the farmlands of southwest Arkansas. After all, the series of events that culminated with integrated schools unfolded the same way most things did in Hope — slowly and quietly.

"I think whites in Hope have always thought they didn't want a stink," says

A small-town school board in Arkansas has begun reversing the legacy of racial segregation.

By Gordon Young



Electa Wiley, a retired black educator who grew up in Hope. "They didn't want to give the town a bad name."

But while Hope held on to its good name, its "integrated" schools also retained the underlying inequality that had defined the segregated system. Black students, confined largely to low-level courses and shut out of most extracurricular activities, continued to receive an inferior education. Black teachers and administrators watched their numbers and influence dwindle. The school board, in charge of hiring and planning, was dominated by

whites, who were assured of control by at-large elections that diluted black votes.

"It had come to the point where blacks were no longer included in determining the direction of school policy," recalls Rosie Davis, a black teacher who was passed over twice for a job as principal. "We had a board that didn't represent the whole community ... and we had people getting promotions who didn't deserve them."

Determined to fight for the equal education that had been promised by integration, black residents decided to break with the tradition of quiet change in Hope. In 1988, a group of black parents, students, and teachers filed a class-action lawsuit against the Hope School District. They accused the school board of widespread discrimination in the hiring and promotion of blacks, and they challenged the at-large election system on the grounds that it effectively blocked participation by minorities.

The suit, which was settled out of court a year later, has already had a profound impact on education in Hope. The eight-member school board now has four black members, and the school district has its first black principal in nearly a decade. But perhaps most important, both blacks and whites have come to view the school system as their own.

"I think a lot of tension has disappeared," says Charles Morris, a newly elected white school board member with two children in the Hope system. "Before

the suit, all the board members came from one side of town, and it just wasn't fair."

"It's a better situation for students now because they feel they have someone to listen to them," agrees Rosie Davis. "All students have a chance to live up to their potential now."

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

Davis, an elementary school teacher who grew up in Hope, began to realize that something was wrong almost as soon as white and black schools merged. Integration broke up a tight-knit community of black teachers and sprinkled them throughout the new district.

"Human relations workshops were set up for the teachers and it was a smooth transition," Davis says. "But the outspoken ones were separated so there was the least resistance to anything negative about the change."

Communication wasn't the only thing lacking in the new system. The grades and test scores of black students began to plummet, along with their membership in the National Honor Society. College preparatory and honors classes soon came to be dominated by white students, while blacks were increasingly relegated to remedial and vocational courses.

"Somehow the aggressiveness for learning you saw at the old black schools was quenched," Davis says. "It just disappeared."

The influence of black teachers and administrators was also vanishing. Although blacks comprised more than 40 percent of the 10,000 residents of Hope, they accounted for just 22 percent of city teachers by 1988. Only one black had ever managed to make it on the school board—first by appointment, and then by running unopposed for re-election. Aside from the high-school basketball coach, no blacks led athletic teams or directed after-school activities. And while there had been three black principals in the old system, the integrated system employed only two blacks on its 14-member administrative staff—both vice principals.

After integration, Davis had managed to become principal of Hopewell Elementary, but the board closed the school in 1981. She took a position as a reading specialist at Yerger Middle School—once the pride of the all-black system—and was publicly promised an administrative post during a board meeting.

Years passed, but the promotion never came. When she was passed over twice by white candidates lacking her qualifications, Davis filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. When she was passed over a third time, she called a former grade-school classmate—Little Rock civil rights attorney John Walker.

HOMECOMING

Walker was the obvious person to call. A native of Hope and a graduate of Yale Law School, he had built a reputation as one of the foremost civil rights attorneys in the nation. Known as "Too-Thin Johnny" during his school days in Hope, he went on to fight desegregation cases for black parents in Little Rock and other school districts throughout the state. His intimidating style served him well in the courtroom, earning him as many enemies as friends in the legal community.

"He's using the Voting Rights Act as a club," an unnamed lawyer complained to the *Arkansas Times*. "He goes into these situations where he knows the city government can't afford to litigate, and when he's through, whether he is right or not, the makeup of the government will be different."

Although he moved to Houston after the tenth grade, Walker has no trouble remembering the iniquities of the old segregated school system in Hope. The white schools were well funded, but the all-black schools Walker attended were forced to rely on bake sales and hand-me-down books to make ends meet. There was no gymnasium, no football stadium, and no marching band.

"The black schools were obviously inferior," Walker says. "We seldom saw



BEHIND THE FACADE OF INTEGRATION, THE DOORS OF THE HOPE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING REMAINED CLOSED TO BLACK TEACHERS.

white faces in school because the district administrators had little hands-on contact with students. Black teachers had to go to the central office to voice any complaints. It had been done that way for so long few people really said anything about it—it was a *fait accompli*."

While Hope's black school system lacked funding and support from the white community, it had the devoted backing of strong-willed black educators and energetic students. Henry Clay Yerger started the first black one-room school in 1886 and developed it into a 12-grade program with more than 900 students, offering courses in everything from Latin to agriculture. As the first training school for blacks west of the Mississippi, Yerger's creation attracted students from all over Arkansas.

"We had a little different sense of

pride than some of the places that didn't have the accomplishments we had," says Walker, whose grandparents taught in the black system. "People came from miles around to go to Yerger High School."

Most black students were inspired to excel, and the school system provided the only opportunity. "We just wanted to rise, and education was the only way for us to rise," says 72-year-old Electa Wiley, who graduated from the black system to a career in teaching. "Nearly everybody in my class left here and went on to do something with their lives."

The black schools went beyond aca-

"This was the first time to my knowledge that an action was led in the South by black school teachers seeking to improve the lot of everyone," Walker says. "The plaintiffs were poor, well-to-do, employed, and unemployed. All of them came together for this effort, they stayed together, and they found success."

The first victory came when the all-white school board agreed to establish eight single-member districts for school board seats. Three of the districts would have black majorities and the remaining five would be predominantly white. The other charges in the lawsuit were put on

among the newly elected school board members. One of their first tasks — selecting a new superintendent — ended in a standoff, with the four black members supporting a black candidate and the white members backing a white applicant. Black board member Viney Johnson described the debate over the new superintendent as "heated." Board president Ed Darling accused black members of playing politics to eliminate white candidates.

Ironically, it was Earnest Brown, the black board member from a white-majority district, who broke the deadlock by throwing his vote behind the white candidate, Jimmy Johnson. Walker tried to block the appointment in court, but his request for an injunction was rejected.

"In the beginning there was some mistrust because neither the white members nor the black members knew what I was going to do," Johnson says. "But I've always believed if you treat people consistently and fairly, your race doesn't matter. There was a period when trust had to develop between the board and myself and I think it's developed."

WINTER BREAK

After the election, the new board worked to settle the remaining points of the original lawsuit. Finally, after months of negotiations, the case was settled out of court in December 1989. Although the school district admitted no wrongdoing, it pledged to remedy any past discrimination and prevent it from happening in the future.

The settlement required the board to take immediate steps to hire more black teachers and administrators — in effect, to recreate the family atmosphere that was so lacking for black students in the integrated system. The hiring agreement provided the first tangible evidence that the district was committed to placing blacks in leadership roles, giving students living examples of change standing at the front of the classroom.

"After integration, the black students were thrown into a completely different environment, and as a result they felt threatened," Rosie Davis says. "The settlement will eventually give them more people to turn to in the schools."

A black administrator, Kenneth Muldrew, was named to the newly created position of assistant superintendent. Although Rosie Davis wasn't given a job as principal, she became the director of federal programs for the district. Angela Pigeon was



ELECTA WILEY AND HER HUSBAND ROBERT SAW EDUCATION AS "THE ONLY WAY TO RISE" AFTER THE DECLINE OF HOPE'S BLACK BUSINESS DISTRICT.

democratic training. A family atmosphere prevailed at the schools that was never duplicated when the system integrated. "They instilled in us an attitude that if my brother was in trouble then I was too," says Rosie Davis, who graduated from Yerger High in 1953. "Teachers weren't afraid to give you that pat or hug. They weren't afraid to touch you. Somehow this was lost."

CLASS UNITY

Walker brought his customary aggressiveness and legal skill to bear on the Hope case. Rather than fighting a narrow legal battle to get Davis the job she had been promised, Walker went to court on behalf of 80 parents, students, and teachers who filed a class-action suit against the Hope School District for widespread discrimination.

hold until a new school board could be elected.

The politics of race seemed to dictate the outcome: a school board with five whites and three blacks. But the first election, held in June 1989, yielded an unexpected result. Black candidate Earnest Brown Sr. won in a largely rural district where nearly 60 percent of the voters were white. The other contests broke down along racial lines, giving the Hope School Board four whites and four blacks.

Walker was encouraged by Brown's victory. "He won in an area where blacks and poor whites have traditionally gotten along well together," he says. "They had something in common with each other and some respect for one another. They determined who would represent them based on something other than race, which is just what you hope for in a democracy."

But race was far from a forgotten issue

recently hired as an elementary school principal, becoming the first black woman since Davis to hold the post.

"We're making inroads in an area that needed to be addressed," Superintendent Johnson says. "Kenneth Muldrew's number one priority is to recruit qualified black faculty members. He travels to college fairs all over the South to find recent graduates."

The settlement also mandated racial sensitivity workshops for teachers, and eliminated the policy of offering three types of diplomas — vocational, basic, and college preparatory. Honors and advanced courses were opened to all students who could maintain passing grades, eliminating the previous system where admission was based on test scores and teacher recommendations.

A grievance procedure was also established to allow parents to contest disciplinary actions against their children. Although only three cases have actually come before the board since the settlement, black parents say they welcome the option.

"Some of the cases would never have been brought up in the past because it wouldn't have done any good," says Viney Johnson, a black board member. "Black students know that if they are mistreated, then something can be done about it."

Students seem to agree. "I really don't look at it as a black-and-white issue," says Michael Carter, who became Hope High's first black drum major this fall. "But the board's there to help if we need it."

"Everybody deserves a chance to teach or be on the school board," agrees Quinton Radford, a 16-year-old Hope High School senior and former student council vice president. "Now, whoever is best for the job has the chance to get the job, and the different cultures have a better chance to speak with one another."

GRADUATION

Nearly two years after voters elected a bi-racial school board, its members seem to have risen above much of their early racial antagonism. Because the single-member election system virtually ensures a racially mixed board, the new members came to realize that continued divisions between blacks and whites would render them ineffective.

"It takes time to build teamwork effec-

A FORGOTTEN HOPE

Decades before blacks and whites shared the same classrooms in Hope, most minority merchants and professionals had already disappeared from the streets of downtown. By fighting to halt discrimination against black educators, the parents and teachers who sued the school system helped preserve one of the last remaining vestiges of black influence in the community.

"I remember blacks being very visible at one time," says 72-year-old Hope resident Electa Wiley. "They were all over town doing individual entrepreneurial deals."

Wiley, who holds a Ph.D. in education, published a study of Hope's black community at the height of its influence, entitled *Black Elitism — Hope Arkansas 1900-1935*. In it, she describes the slew of black-owned businesses clustered on what is now East Division Street in Hope, where blacks could take their clothes to S.E. Wright's Cleaning and Pressing Shop, catch a ride in Virgil White's taxi, socialize in Ocie Cobbins' Pool Hall, or eat everything from chili to sweet potato pie in Ed and Ruth Mayers' cafe.

In other parts of town, Olivia Tellington Rankin ran a movie theater, Sol and Harriet Wilson owned a hotel, Amon McKinley set up a small dry goods shop, and a hat cleaner and several small groceries also flourished. "Hot Tamale" Parker sold his namesake wrapped in corn shucks out of a "store-in-a-cart," and his much-guarded secret recipe died with him.

Despite its small population, Hope also boasted two black doctors and a black dentist.

Hope was created as a railroad town in 1875, and the industry offered many blacks a chance to escape the poverty of sharecropping. While their wages were low and the work was hard, the right job with the Missouri Pacific or the Louisiana & Arkansas could elevate a family into the black elite with the doctors, store owners, and educators. That usually meant a small but comfortable house on Hazel Street and, eventually, a chance to send the kids away to college.

"The best jobs were inside," Wiley says. "Someone in the mail car made more money and didn't have to work outside in the heat. Their wives could wear silk and do their shopping in Dallas, Shreveport, and Little Rock."

But by the 1940s, Hope's black elite was dying out. The railroads were sending fewer cars through town and eliminating jobs. Large chains and bigger stores were pushing smaller black enterprises out of business. More importantly, many young blacks, especially ones with college educations, were looking beyond Hope to launch careers.

Today the black doctors, dentists, and small entrepreneurs have all but disappeared. The most visible black-owned enterprise is Hicks Funeral Home.

"I guess for some it was the same as migration to the Promised Land," Wiley says. "The children of the hat cleaner probably went to Los Angeles or Detroit to get more money and different experiences. They just didn't care to carry on the little deals their parents had."

— G.Y.

tively," Board President Ed Darling says. "We were kind of like eight people thrown out to plug the dike. There were some things said in the beginning on both sides that may have been racially motivated, but I think that's all behind us."

Hope High School Principal Michael Brown agrees. "There was really no one there to guide them so it took time to get adjusted," he says from his cluttered office on the ground floor of the sprawling brick high school. "A confidence has to develop within the board and the administration. We have it now, but it took a while to happen."

One of the clearest indications that the racial tensions are easing came last Sep-

tember. After heavy lobbying by a united school board, voters approved the first local property tax increase in more than 35 years for the construction of a new elementary school. The new building will house 1,500 students from kindergarten through fourth grade.

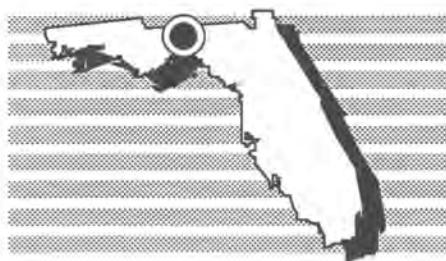
"I'd like to think that was the town's way of saying, 'OK, this is a new beginning and let's start supporting the new school board,'" says Superintendent Jimmy Jones. "It shows we're settling into a strong school system." □

Gordon Young is a staff writer for Spectrum Weekly in Little Rock.

WASTE BUSTERS

“Envirocops” are
making life harder for
Florida polluters.

By Greg Williams



TALLAHASSEE, FLA. — Newspapers looking for flashy headlines call them “envirocops.” Corporate polluters call them “dump wardens.” But most Floridians aren’t concerned with what they’re called. They only hope the new state Environmental Enforcement Section can save what’s left of Florida’s fragile environment.

Established in 1989 as a bureau of the state Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, the Environmental Enforcement Section (EES) is designed to respond to an onslaught of pollution that threatens the land and water. Its mission: take hazardous waste criminals to court and make them pay for their environmental crimes.

In their first two years on the beat, the envirocops have handed out 2,200 citations and chalked up a conviction record of 90 percent. The initial success of the environmental police force demonstrates how states can take action to protect their natural resources — without writing more laws, and without spending more money.

In Florida, the need for tougher en-

forcement of pollution laws stems from the population boom of the past decade. Nearly 1,200 people move to the Sunshine State every day to carve out their piece of paradise. Over 13 million now inhabit the state, with an additional three million projected to join them by the year 2000 — an annual increase equal to the population of Tampa.

The dramatic influx of new residents has meant more roads, shopping malls, office buildings, and homes — developments which threaten critical wetlands,

destroy wildlife habitat, dry up groundwater supplies, and produce a staggering 45,000 tons of solid waste each day.

Unlike other officers with the game and fish commission who concentrate on nabbing small-time poachers, the new envirocops have bigger fish to fry. “The commission has realized that the greatest detriment to fish and wildlife is habitat destruction,” says Sergeant Lou Roberson. “That will destroy more fish and game than any hunter every could.”

And while other state agencies get bogged down in lengthy hearings and bureaucratic detail, the EES is strictly a criminal investigative unit. Its 39-member team is designed to fill a gap between administrative agencies and the courts. Once officers find evidence of environmental crimes, they build a case and haul the polluter before a judge. Their record on criminal dumping of solid and hazardous waste has been especially successful — violators are often forced to cease illegal dumping, pay stiff penalties, and restore the damage they’ve done.

That means getting tough on polluters like Edward Fisher. Last year, the Inverness

businessman contacted the landlords of two vacant storage areas near Tampa and arranged to rent their spaces to temporarily store discarded tires on their way to be shredded for disposal. During the next month, tires streamed into the two locations as planned.

The problem came when the rent checks Fisher wrote to the landlords bounced. The owners visited the sites and discovered more than 20,000 tires stacked to the ceilings. Fisher was nowhere to be found.

Threatened with having to pay for removing the tires, the two landlords contacted the EES for help. Investigators tracked down Fisher, arrested him, and charged him with commercial littering — a felony under Florida law. He was sentenced to three years probation, required to perform 200 hours of community service, and ordered to pay \$10,000 to clean up the mess.

Such decisive action comes from looking at environmental crime from a different perspective. “As law-enforcement officers, we have a more cynical mindset,” says Paul Hoover, staff officer for the bureau that oversees EES. “We turn up things that aren’t considered or that other agencies miss. People see us in uniform and know that we’ll get more done, and quicker.”

NO MORE FIG LEAVES

In its brief two-year existence, EES has come a long way in toughening enforcement of environmental laws. But its origins are rooted in the far-reaching legal powers of its parent agency, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

Established in 1943 by executive order from the governor, the commission was charged with enforcing fish and game laws. Over the years, wildlife officers evolved into fully empowered state cops. Their fish and wildlife duties were combined with those of other police officers, giving them more power than any other state law enforcement agents.

In 1972, the federal Environmental Protection Act gave the commission even more enforcement responsibility, shifting its priorities from simply enforcing fish and game laws to managing and protecting the land and water where wildlife lives. Already overburdened officers found themselves hard pressed to enforce the growing number of laws and regula-



ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICER CHIP BRADSHAW INVESTIGATES A MARSH WHERE 30 ANCIENT CYPRESS TREES WERE ILLEGALLY CUT DOWN.

tions, and environmental violations were often lost in the bureaucratic confusion.

Then came the Florida growth boom of the mid-1980s — the proverbial back-breaking straw that forced a change. A 1988 study by the game and fish commission showed that officers spent 8,000 hours on 744 cases. With the caseloads soaring, a separate enforcement unit

seemed like the only solution.

Created in the midst of a state budget crunch, EES showed how a state can protect its land and water without spending more money. No new positions or personnel were required: The game and fish commission simply changed the status of 34 officers and five supervisors and reassigned them to the new team. The move

allowed investigators to devote all their energy to cracking down on environmental polluters.

The officers selected for EES are veteran men and women experienced in a variety of law enforcement techniques. They must be able to slog through a swamp looking for evidence of illegal dumping, and to sit in a board room holding a corporate president accountable for pollution. They must work closely with state and federal officials, and handle the technical complexities of toxic substance removal, water quality, and chemical and oil spills. They even receive training in media relations — another way of putting pressure on environmental criminals to clean up their act.

"Years ago our officers were asked to hide under fig leaves when the media came around," laughs Paul Hoover, who supervises the new unit. "But the day and age of being able to avoid the media is gone. Today our investigators receive training on how to deal with the media. We encourage it. It works well from an enforcement and deterrent standpoint. Companies don't want to be publicly labeled as polluters."

POLLUTION DOESN'T PAY

Such tactics are putting Florida companies on notice that environmental crime is serious business. For years, corporations have intentionally violated environmental regulations — simply budgeting funds in advance to pay the small administrative fines.

Now, polluters are beginning to realize that the stakes of illegal dumping are much higher. In addition to levying costly fines, Florida courts are tacking on stiff jail terms, long probationary periods, and community-service time. Paying fines is one thing, but going to prison is an alternative few CEOs can afford.

"I think people are finally beginning to realize that this is real crime," says Florida Attorney General Robert Butterworth. "And the victim is a whole lot of people."

To put even more bite into the law, EES is empowered to seize equipment and property from offending companies. In the Ocala National Forest of central Florida, a now-defunct oil transport company was caught discharging oil along the roadside. The driver was arrested and later convicted, and the company had to

forfeit its tank truck. In the Florida Keys, the state confiscated more than \$250,000 in heavy equipment from Key Iron Works after the company illegally dumped construction debris, creosote, and other hazardous chemicals.

No polluter seems too big for EES to confront. In Polk County, officers charged developer Louis Fischer with filling a wetland without a state permit. Fischer plans to build a huge resort on 8,500 acres in the county where six Southern bald eagles nest.

Even when EES doesn't win its cases, it puts polluters on notice that they are being carefully monitored. In one major case, officers cited the Amtrak Corporation for dumping raw sewage in the St. Johns River. The company was found guilty on four counts of felony littering, sparking similar litigation in 22 other states. In the end, however, the ruling was overturned on appeal, allowing Amtrak to continue dumping until it develops septic holding tanks for its trains.

As with Amtrak, many of the cases EES investigates result from the most powerful tool in its arsenal: the 1988 Florida Litter Law. "The litter law was a landmark piece of legislation for us," says EES supervisor Paul Hoover. "It was much of the impetus in setting up the unit."

Born from a patchwork of divisive statutes, the new law became the cornerstone for all waste dumping cases. It's been used to cite violators for illegally dumping everything from toxic chemicals to dead chickens. The law classifies violations as infractions, misdemeanors, or felonies based on how much and what kind of waste is dumped.

Under the law, illegally dumping hazardous waste, litter exceeding 500 pounds, or any quantity for commercial purposes is a third-degree felony punishable with a fine up to \$5,000 and a prison term up to five years. Using a commercial vehicle in the crime automatically makes the violation a felony, and the vehicle may be forfeited.

Making major cases that stick has given EES a reputation as unbending under pressure, but taking people to court is only one solution. Randy Hopkins, head of the section, thinks success is more about preventing environmental crime than winning cases.

"We don't measure our success by the number of arrests," Hopkins says. "Compliance with the regulations is the issue. If

we can't ensure compliance, then we'll go into the courts to get it."

THE BOTTOM LINE

The success with environmental law enforcement in Florida has not gone unnoticed in other Southern states. "In a short time Florida has been able to accomplish a lot and bring in some good fines," says Paul Oliver, director of fish and wildlife law enforcement in Kentucky. "They've expanded and made a place for themselves as the leading environmental enforcement agency."

Oliver and other officials in Kentucky are developing their own specialized enforcement unit modeled on EES. Last fall, they placed environmental enforcement officers throughout the state to investigate pollution and illegal dumping. "We looked at the environmental problems Florida and other coastal states are facing and realized that Kentucky may have similar problems in the future," Oliver explains.

In West Virginia, officials recently streamlined the Office of Environmental Enforcement, combining its water quality and solid waste bureaus into one group. Although the 48 inspectors in the unit routinely monitor hazardous waste sites, they are not law enforcement officers and lack the power to make arrests. Cases that require criminal investigation are still referred to other department divisions or to state and county prosecutors.

Slowly but surely, the tougher enforcement of environmental laws in Florida seems to be catching on. Those fighting to conserve the land and water say they are impressed to see a Southern state cracking down on companies that profit from pollution — especially at a time when the federal government is supporting developers who want to build more condos in sensitive wetlands and oil companies that want to expand offshore drilling.

Florida environmental investigator Clyde Jordan says his job gives him a chance to make a difference. "It's a direction I wanted to take a long time ago. We can't stop growth, but we have to minimize its impact on the environment. If we don't watch out for it, it's over. That's the bottom line." □

Freelance writer Greg Williams has written for Florida Wildlife and E Magazine.

SPRAWL NO MORE

A new growth management law has given Florida citizens a voice in the shape of their state.

By Anne O'Neil Nelson

Look at any map of southeast Florida and you'll see cities: Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach. What's not so obvious is that the tiny marks on the paper are separate only in name. In reality, south Florida is one vast urban area, a sprawling "city" that has been on an inexorable march northward since the 1960s.

Now, that pattern of urban advancement is beginning to repeat itself in other areas of the state, most notably in the Gulf Coast counties surrounding Tampa and St. Petersburg. But this time, residents are armed with a state law that gives them a real opportunity to make lasting decisions about the physical shape of their communities.

Known as the Growth Management Act, the 1985 legislation gives citizens a voice in how and where their communities build new housing developments, office buildings, and shopping malls. For the first time, what used to be purely private business decisions are now in the hands of the entire community.

The law requires every city and county to submit a "comprehensive plan" outlining where and how growth will occur. The plans must meet a stringent set of criteria: They must be based on fact, they must link the kind and amount of development communities will allow to estimates of future population growth, they must show how growth will be financed, and they must ensure that facilities that will be used by development — things like

roads, sewers, and water — are in place when they are needed.

But what most sets the growth management law apart from efforts in other states is the opportunity it gives citizens to participate in the planning process. Unlike previous legislation, communities are required to provide citizens ample opportunity to comment on the plans before they are finalized. Even more important, citizens have legal standing to challenge the plans during and after the state approval process.

"Citizens have an unprecedented ability to hold local governments accountable for the decisions they make about development," says Patricia McKay, planning director for 1000 Friends of Florida, a statewide growth-management advocacy group.

The new process has generated tremendous support during the past five years from both the public and private sectors. For the first time, supporters say, Floridians are beginning to grapple with the real costs of growth — financial, environmental, and aesthetic.

The law came just in time for Martin County, a mostly rural and suburban area just north of Palm Beach. While Martin has seen its own share of growth during the past 10 years, its pace could not compare with that of its neighbors to the south. Residents had watched with growing concern as shopping centers and multi-lane highways spread northward, crowding the county line. Growth was knocking at the door when the state passed the new law.

"The growth management act really mobilized the community," says McKay. "The people needed a framework to help direct their very strong desire to manage growth in the community. The 1985 act gave them that."

Hundreds of Martin County residents participated in the planning process. When the plan was approved without

some of the provisions they felt were important, citizens challenged the plan and won increased protection for the headwaters of the Loxahatchee River.

They even put together a special publication, the *Martin County Growth Management News*, to make sure everyone in the community understood the comprehensive planning process.

When local elections were held in the fall of 1990, Martin County affirmed its support of the growth management process by electing virtually every candidate — incumbent or newcomer — who supported growth management.

Similar victories have been repeated throughout the state. Citizens in Crystal River fought for — and won — increased protection for the endangered manatee. The residents of Cross Creek, a tiny town in central Florida that was the home of *The Yearling* author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, passed a local ordinance limiting new development to protect the natural resources and character of the land surrounding their historic community. Citizens in Lee County on the lower west coast used their comprehensive plan to increase access to local beaches.

In many communities, citizen advisory councils have played an integral role in writing the initial plans. And as the process continues, citizens are looking for a broader role in amending the plans and challenging individual developments.

"Growth management is working in Florida," says McKay. "From what we have seen in our work with community groups around the state, Floridians want it, need it, and are not going to let go of it."

Anne O'Neil Nelson is a Tallahassee freelance writer.

Photo courtesy Florida Department of Commerce



BANKING ON LAND

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — In a vacant lot that was once home to a huge, abandoned Victorian house, Betty Vannerson takes hold of a shovel and digs into the earth. White lines drawn with flour on green grass mark the place where a small three-bedroom house will soon stand. Vannerson, a 39-year-old cook with three children, is breaking ground for her own home in the West End neighborhood of Russell.

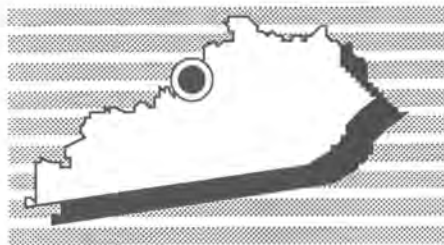
A prosperous black community in the early part of the century, Russell has fallen on hard times in the past few decades. More than half its residents live in poverty, and its streets are dotted with boarded-up houses and empty lots.

But as Vannerson smiles for photographers and surveys her new neighborhood, she can see signs of revitalization. Across Magazine Street, three new houses with neat white trim stand in a row, separated by narrow strips of well-tended lawn. Another new house stands just around the corner, and plans are under way for more new houses on two vacant lots next door.

"I'm very excited," Vannerson tells reporters covering the groundbreaking. "This is a dream come true for me and my kids. I always wanted to buy a house, but I thought it would be above my

An innovative new program in Louisville is helping build affordable housing on abandoned property — for only \$1.

By Robin Epstein



means. I've been renting since I was 22. The difference will be that I won't have somebody monitoring my life."

Like the other new homes on the block, Vannerson's is being built by volunteers from Habitat for Humanity, a nationwide group that helps construct affordable housing for low-income families. Becoming a homeowner will cost Vannerson only \$25,000, and her monthly mortgage payments of \$180 will be less than the \$277 she now pays in rent.

How can Habitat afford to build the house so inexpensively? One reason: It bought the lot for \$1 from the Louisville and Jefferson County Land Bank Authority, an innovative new program that buys up abandoned properties and turns them over to non-profit developers who build low-income housing.

The Land Bank — a joint venture by the city, county, state, and school board — erases all back taxes on abandoned lots and sells them to developers like Habitat for \$1. The tax savings and giveaway prices make it easier for non-profits to build homes for people who might otherwise be priced out of the housing market.

"One of the great challenges of trying to build affordable housing is to keep the costs down," says Mike Jupin, executive director of South Louisville Community Ministries. "If we can acquire a piece of land for \$1, it means it'll cost less to the person we sell it to. The Land Bank makes it more economically feasible to provide housing at the lowest possible cost."

TRASH AND TAXES

The need for a land bank in Louisville has been painfully apparent for decades. The city is home to an estimated 7,000 abandoned lots, many of them choked by

weeds and trash. At the same time, more than 2,000 people currently crowd the waiting list for public housing.

The Land Bank offers a disarmingly simple solution to both problems. The program helps the city and county by rejuvenating vacant lots and generating taxes on delinquent properties. It also helps low-income families move out of public housing and into their own homes, freeing up space for the homeless.

"It's a terrific tool," says David Fleischaker, a consultant with Louisville Housing Services, a city agency that plans to build low-income housing on Land Bank property. "Like the mousetrap, a lot of ideas seem obvious after they're implemented, but somehow they weren't. The Land Bank is probably one of those. I don't see how it can't catch on elsewhere."

Although the Land Bank is less than a year old, other cities across Kentucky are already moving to create similar programs. Louisville has received calls about its Land Bank from Florida, Michigan, California, and Pennsylvania.

The Louisville Land Bank got its start back in 1988, when legislators from the city prompted the Kentucky General Assembly to pass a law allowing the creation of land banks. The city, county, school board, and state promptly signed an agreement creating the Land Bank Authority, but the program didn't really get off the ground until 1990, when the legislature amended the law and ironed out some of its technical problems.

The law requires the Land Bank to have four directors — one each from the city, county, state, and school board. The Bank goes to court to buy up tax-delinquent lots and then sells them, dividing the revenues among the four participating governments in proportion to the taxes each was owed. Non-profits can buy lots for \$1, but private owners must pay the full price the Land Bank paid for the lot plus 20 percent of its assessed value.

Officials say they are thrilled with the way the Land Bank takes abandoned lots that cost the city money to maintain and turns them into tax-generating properties. "We get calls about the grass not being cut and trash piling up," explains Jim Allen, director of city housing and urban development. "We go out and maintain the property and send bills to the owners that never get paid. If we can get a property cleaned up and get a house on it, it's a

double hit for us. It's producing taxes and it's not costing the city time and money to maintain it."

\$11 A MONTH

Leaders of non-profit organizations struggling to build affordable housing say they are equally thrilled by the success of the Land Bank. Sitting on a low cement wall bordering a vacant corner lot that is the first piece of property Louisville

getting it from the Land Bank for a dollar, Fleischaker points out, it would have been forced to add \$11 to a family's monthly payment. "That would mean they need to make \$500 more per year to qualify for a loan. That may not sound like a lot, but in that income range, there's a lot of people who can just barely afford it and to whom \$11 a month makes a big difference."

Squinting into the sun, Fleischaker looks across the street at the renovation

Photos by Robin Epstein



BETTY VANNERSON, CENTER, BREAKS GROUND FOR HER OWN HOME ON LAND THE CITY PROVIDED FOR \$1.

Housing Services has bought from the Land Bank, David Fleischaker whips out his calculator to figure out what it will cost families to buy the houses that will be built here. "This is just a gleam in our eyes right now," he says, "but in terms of numbers, I can say that with the Land Bank you can do development for a lot less."

At most, Fleischaker calculates, it will cost \$49,000 to build a 1,100-square-foot house with three bedrooms and one and a half baths. Assuming a mortgage with city-backed interest rates of eight percent, monthly payments will run about \$440. To qualify for such a loan, a family must earn at least \$1,570 per month — \$18,857 a year — and can't have more than \$125 in other monthly fixed expenses such as car payments and education costs.

If Louisville Housing Services had paid \$1,500 in taxes on the lot instead of

under way on a dilapidated building that appears to have had past lives as a church, a bar, and an apartment building. Then he glances down the street in the other direction, taking in a well-maintained brick house. "This will be a very nice corner," he says.

At the rate the Land Bank is buying up land, other corners should be quick to follow. The Bank has already acquired close to 600 lots, thanks to a mass foreclosure law which allows the city to lump tax-delinquent properties together and file suit against them in circuit court all at once. As a result, the city forecloses on approximately 20 properties each month. The Land Bank bids on those lots at court sales, and usually gets them all.

In fact, the Land Bank is buying up properties faster than it can sell them. "The non-profits have limited resources



WITH HELP FROM THE LAND BANK, MIKE JUPIN AND SOUTH LOUISVILLE COMMUNITY MINISTRIES HOPE TO BUILD FIVE AFFORDABLE HOMES NEAR CHURCHILL DOWNS.

and staff, and they simply cannot redevelop that many properties a year," says Fred Nett, city administrator of acquisitions and foreclosures. So far, the Land Bank has sold only 50 properties.

In many cases, Nett says, the Land Bank buys properties with the intention of hanging on to them for a while. Many inner-city lots have only 25 feet of frontage. Because fire codes require five feet on either side of a house, homes built on such lots could be no more than 15 feet wide. To provide more space, the Land Bank gradually collects several tracts in one area, assembling larger lots that will be more attractive to developers.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Not far from Churchill Downs, Mike Jupin of South Louisville Community Ministries walks down a run-down street. To his left is nothing but a small playground, a pink, boarded-up shotgun house, and an overgrown tangle of brush. To his right a large vacant lot splits the block in two.

Jupin can picture a cluster of homes here, a vibrant, rebuilt community. He knows exactly how the houses will look: energy-efficient, low-maintenance, and vinyl-sided. And he knows who will live in them: low-income, first-time homeowners.

The Land Bank owns several vacant lots on both sides of the block, and the

Community Ministries wants to build four or five two-story, two-bedroom houses on them. The group, which provides emergency assistance to help people pay for rent and utilities, got interested in building low-income houses because homeowners in South Louisville are resistant to additional public housing. The area is already home to the 750-unit Iroquois Homes, the largest housing project in Kentucky, and two private, low-income apartment complexes totaling 800 units.

Jupin says the Ministries plans to sell houses on the Land Bank lots to people now living in public housing who make between \$16,000 and \$20,000 a year. "Hopefully we're helping them buy part of the American Dream — their own home," he says. "I think it's been shown that if you own your own home you have more of a stake in the community. That will open up public housing for people at the bottom of the rung right now — people who need to stabilize their lives and work towards a job or an education and get to the point where they can buy a house."

The Ministries came up with its plan for building houses near the Downs only after the Land Bank offered to sell the lots for \$1, free of back taxes. "Without the Land Bank, we probably would not pursue this," Jupin says. "We do not have the resources to track down the owners of vacant properties and go through the

courts. We'd wind up with lots of blight in the neighborhood, broken windows, and weeds."

While housing advocates applaud the Land Bank for reaching out to local groups like the Ministries, some caution that the program is still young and has the potential to go astray. Jack Trawick, director of the Louisville Design Center, a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to neighborhood groups, worries that the Land Bank may be tempted to package small lots into larger tracts for big developers.

"The Land Bank certainly could be a very helpful and powerful tool, but it remains to be seen how neighborhood-sensitive it is and how closely it works with community-based organizations," Trawick says.

City officials say neighborhood-based non-profits can buy as much Land Bank property as they want — but that there has not been much competition for the lots so far. "They're not in heavy demand," says Fred Nett, city administrator of foreclosures.

Still, Trawick and other housing advocates say the success of the Land Bank will ultimately depend on planning. "The question is, what's their strategy for unloading these things? Is it random, catch-as-catch-can, or more deliberate? I think there is more and more of a push coming from neighborhood organizations and housing advocates for comprehensive planning that uses things like the Land Bank. A lot will depend on the next year. I am hopeful that the community groups and the city will develop a constructive dialogue on how to make the Land Bank work for everyone."

In the meantime, non-profit groups like Habitat for Humanity continue to buy Land Bank properties and build homes for working families like Betty Vannerson's. Diane Kirkpatrick, executive director of Habitat, says the group hopes to build 40 houses in the Russell neighborhood in the next five years.

In the past, Kirkpatrick says, Habitat has had to pay as much as \$800 in back taxes on lots it bought. The Land Bank has helped make affordable housing more affordable.

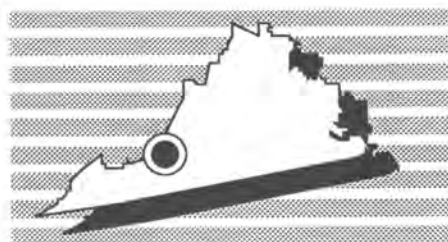
"If we can buy 40 pieces of land for \$40, that obviously frees up a tremendous amount of money for construction," she says. "The more money we save, the more houses we can build." □

Robin Epstein is a freelance writer in Louisville.

CHIPPING IN FOR KIDS

An innovative health care program is giving Virginia children something they've never had: their own doctors.

By Mike Hudson



After the twins came home, a CHIP nurse and outreach worker helped Guthrie get them into an infant-stimulation program to make up for their slow

ROANOKE, VA. — “I’m 27,” Elizabeth Guthrie says. “Twenty-seven. Feel 97. I feel like I’m just the oldest woman in the hills.”

Guthrie gave birth to her twins, Casey and Cody, a year and a half ago. Born three months premature with weakened lungs and hearts, they spent most of their first few weeks in intensive care. With three other children at her apartment at Jamestown Place housing project, Guthrie found it almost impossible to get back and forth to Roanoke Memorial Hospital each day to be with the twins. She was overwhelmed.

But CHIP, the Roanoke Valley’s innovative medical program for children, began picking her up in its van and taking her to the hospital. CHIP arranged a meeting to give hospital workers an idea of her problems and to help Guthrie understand her babies’ ailments.

development. Now CHIP is working with her as she appeals their cutoff from Medicaid. Cody and Casey still weigh just 18 pounds each, but their health is improving.

But CHIP didn’t stop with providing medical care. Nurses and outreach workers from the agency also helped Guthrie break away from a violent husband who has a criminal record and alcohol and drug problems.

Guthrie says he’s beaten her, trashed her apartment, and run over her with her car. Last fall, with the support of an outreach worker from CHIP, she went to court to get a judge’s order protecting her from her husband.

Now, she says, he is sober, has a job, and is treating her better. She hasn’t decided whether to take him back, she says, but she feels stronger and more confident.



DR. JOHN DAVIS USES KERMIT THE FROG TO EXPLAIN TO ALEX WERTZ, A CHIP PATIENT, WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING HIS DENTAL CHECKUP.

CROSSING LINES

Guthrie's story shows what CHIP is all about — blending medical care and social work to help poor families grow up healthy. "They're one of the few programs I've been involved with where they treated you as a person," she says. "They don't make you feel you've done something terrible when you're asking them for help."

CHIP — the Comprehensive Health Investment Project — serves nearly 900 poor children in the Roanoke Valley, from newborns to age eight. It does it all on a budget of about \$800,000 a year, pieced together from state and local funding, foundation grants, and donations from local businesses.

Since its creation three years ago, CHIP has attracted nationwide attention, winning awards for innovative health care from the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Health Officials. The program works because it defies traditional models for health and social services — both in the way it's funded and in the way it operates at the grassroots.

It has grown and prospered financially partly because it hasn't depended solely on the federal and state governments for funding. Instead, it operates as a cooperative developed by private doctors, local health departments, area businesses, and the local community action agency, Total Action Against Poverty.

CHIP is anchored in the Roanoke city and Allegheny regional health departments and receives some state funding. But in Virginia — the 12th richest state in the nation but one of the stingiest when it comes to paying for social services — CHIP has also been forced to look elsewhere for money.

It has earned support from local businesses, which have donated office equipment, passenger vans, and other help. State and national charitable foundations have also backed the program. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, one of the nation's largest, has awarded CHIP \$3.8 million.

The money has allowed CHIP to expand beyond the bare-bones operations that have characterized most social programs since the federal government surrendered its War on Poverty. With its

broad base of support, CHIP has even managed to grow in the midst of the recent state budget turmoil in Virginia.

KIDS FIRST

Just as it goes beyond traditional models of funding, CHIP also violates the standard procedures that make many social service programs a bureaucratic nightmare for families that are struggling to survive. CHIP workers cross the normal lines of responsibility that usually fence off different social programs — and send poor people from office to office looking for help.

They rarely tell anyone: "Sorry, it's not my job." Instead, they give poor families whatever help is necessary, and serve as advocates in cutting red tape and forcing action from other agencies. This holistic approach includes helping a mother and child find better housing, taking them a box of canned goods from a food pantry, and operating a "lending library" of toys that they can borrow. It also includes empowering parents by helping them learn how to read.

One 23-year-old mother earned her high-school equivalency diploma at the urging of CHIP workers, and has now been accepted into nursing school. Her CHIP workers said it took some gentle pushing at first, but from there she took off.

"I made a commitment to myself to accomplish something besides working in a fast-food joint," said the mother, who is so shy she didn't want her name used. "I'm proud of myself. I want the kids to be proud of me too."

CHIP nurses and outreach workers are paired into seven teams. Case loads for each team run about 140 children; CHIP officials admit that is too many but say they hope to cut down those numbers as the staff grows.

Linda Lamm, who lives in a subsidized apartment complex in Roanoke, says the visiting nurses and outreach workers from CHIP have made a big difference for her three-year-old daughter. Clarissa, who suffers from a hyperactive condition known as attention deficit disorder, often attacks her one-year-old brother Kenny. She pulls his hair, bites him, pushes him.

"It's not every once in a while," Lamm says. "It's an everyday thing, four to six times a day. It really bothers me, nerve-wise. I'm a very nervous person anyway."

Thanks to CHIP, Lamm says, Clarissa is on new medication and starting to improve. "CHIP is wonderful. I think the United States should really focus on our American children's health. Giving money overseas, Russia and stuff, that's fine. But we've got to take care of our kids first."

OUT OF THE E.R.

America hasn't been doing a very good job of taking care of its kids. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, one-third of low-income children lack proper immunization for measles or mumps; 1 in 10 children under four have not seen a doctor in the past year.

Meanwhile, fewer pediatricians across the nation are willing to treat Medicaid patients because of red tape and low government payments, according to a study published by the academy in June. The study found that the proportion of pediatricians who saw no Medicaid patients grew from 15 percent to 23 percent in the past decade, and the proportion who limited the number they saw increased from 26 percent to 39 percent.

The problem was even worse four years ago in the Roanoke Valley. Only one of the 21 pediatricians in the area was willing to see new Medicaid patients, and 42 percent of the people who qualified for Medicaid in Roanoke weren't using it.

Dr. Douglas Pierce had those facts on his mind in 1987 when he read in the newspaper that Cabell Brand, a Salem businessman and president of Roanoke's community action agency, Total Action Against Poverty, had been named chairman of the Virginia Board of Health.

Pierce, who had treated Brand's children, picked up the phone and called him. From there, CHIP was born. Total Action Against Poverty helped write the proposal that drew in seed money from the state. From an initial pilot group of 100 children, the program grew.

Today, 33 pediatricians and family doctors and seven dentists participate. CHIP nurses and outreach workers fill out the Medicaid paperwork, make sure that patients keep appointments, and help them fill prescriptions. Super X Drug Store provides discount prescriptions to CHIP children.

Despite its success, organizers say the program is a long way from reaching all the children who need it. So far CHIP has enough money to reach only one in five of all eligible children in the Roanoke Valley.

A family of four qualifies for the program if it has a yearly income below \$17,823.

For many working poor families, who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to buy health insurance, CHIP provides their first chance at a regular pediatrician. If they got medical help at all before, it was through walk-in visits to emergency rooms. A study last year at Roanoke Memorial Hospital found that fewer than 15 percent of children's emergency-room visits on the evening shift were true emergencies.

When families are forced to use emergency rooms for regular care, the doctors on duty do not know the children and have no medical histories on them. So, to play catch-up medicine and to protect themselves, the doctors run expensive background tests. That runs up huge bills the families can't pay. So they go to another emergency room the next time their children get sick — or nowhere at all.

That's the way things were a few years ago for Gerald and Roberta McCraw and their five children. The McCraws, who live at Lansdowne Park public housing complex, couldn't afford insurance, and they had a stack of unpaid hospital bills.

CHIP gave them something they'd never had: their own doctor.

It was almost too good to believe, Roberta McCraw told an Associated Press reporter last fall. "The baby was fussing and running a fever and I was scared to death. I had never called my doctor at night and didn't know whether I should maybe just go ahead and go to the emergency room. But I called, and he said bring her in.

"He examined her and looked at her record and in a minute said, 'Mrs. McCraw, Amanda's teething. Take her home, she'll be just fine.' And she was."

It's a story that Cabell Brand and other CHIP founders would like to see repeated across the nation. More than \$2.4 million of the money CHIP received from the Kellogg Foundation is for replicating the program across Virginia, starting in Abingdon, Charlottesville, Richmond, and Chesapeake. From there, Brand says, "There's no reason for it to stop at the state line."

BRIGHT SUNSHINE

Again and again, CHIP's outreach workers cross the line that has been set down in traditional welfare programs: Don't get personally involved.

Gloria Charlton, an outreach worker, talks on the phone every day with one CHIP mother who needs daily support. Some of her problems might not seem like a big deal to some people, but "they're a crisis to her."

"Whenever they call you, whatever they tell you, you have to know it's the most important thing, the most awful thing in the world to them at that time," Charlton says. But "sometimes you have to ask yourself if you're really helping them if you do everything for them."

The key, she says, is doing what needs to be done to build up their confidence and help them gain the skills they need to be more self-reliant. When they start to succeed, Charlton doesn't just tell them: "I'm proud of you." She tells them, "You should be proud of yourself."

One CHIP kid was born with severe birth defects and spent two months in the hospital getting reconstructive surgery. The baby has potentially life-threatening asthma, so CHIP helped the mother get a phone to use in emergencies.

In April, the mother got a phone bill for \$600 worth of 900-number phone calls. Her CHIP nurse, Pat Gayle, did some checking; it turned out that all the calls had been made on two days when the mother and child had been at the hospital.

The mother has a speech defect, so Gayle spent two hours one afternoon in conference calls with her and MCI and AT&T officials before she was finally able to persuade them to drop the 900-number charges. The mother ended up paying only her \$30 bill — and kept her phone.

Sometimes, what a child needs is as simple as a change of scenery. Darlene Brown, a former CHIP outreach worker, remembers working with one three-year-old girl whose slow development made it difficult for her to speak clearly.

Her family's home was dark and dingy, and she had never been to a park. Brown took her — and the effect was dramatic.

"Just being out in the bright sunshine, she really started talking," Brown recalls. "She started saying things I didn't know she knew how to say." □

Mike Hudson is a reporter with the Roanoke Times & World-News.

“GOTTA BE BOLD”

As a young pediatrician working in the Mississippi Delta in the 1960s, Aaron Shirley discovered that a comprehensive medical clinic could really make a difference in the health of a region.

Shirley was working two days a week at the Mound Bayou health center, a government-funded project set up by Tufts University in the nation's oldest black community. The clinic provided both preventive and curative services, and it also ran a farm cooperative. The results were astounding: Within four years, the community's infant mortality rate was cut by more than half.

That inspired Shirley to help found the Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center in 1970. Operating clinics in Jackson and rural Hinds County, the federally funded center takes a broad view of health—a view that encompasses everything from decent housing to clean water.

Statistics show that the comprehensive approach works. According to Lisbeth Schorr of Harvard University, Jackson-Hinds immunizes children and screens them for anemia at a much higher rate than in similar communities. And since the center began operating clinics in the local schools, the dropout rate for school-age mothers has fallen from 50 percent to 9 percent.

At a time when numerous cutbacks are plaguing our health care system, Shirley has found ways to keep those services flowing. He spoke with Delia Smith about the founding of the center and some of the services it offers.

For Aaron Shirley, health care means everything from contraception to clean water.

Interview by Delia Smith



Being a doctor was not my idea. It was planted in my mind by my sisters, one of whom was a nurse. As far back as I can remember, she told me I was going to be a doctor. My preference was engineering. But at that time, scholarships were available for doctors. They weren't available for engineers.

I got my training in pediatrics at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. I was their first black resident. This was 1965, in the midst of the civil rights turmoil. And I finished my residency and set up private practice in Jackson. At about that time, Tufts Medical School was establishing a center in the Delta as a demonstration project. I got involved in that by going

up there two days a week to work as a pediatrician.

Going to the Delta was how we conceived of the idea for the Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center. The center was established in 1970 at Cades Chapel Church in Jackson and in an old renovated bus in rural Hinds County.

Let me tell you why we founded the center: We had so many patients that could not afford private doctors. Those that did not have health insurance had to go to the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Almost everything was segregated.

We told our patients who couldn't afford us, "OK, you pay us later." But if they needed prescriptions, they couldn't get them. If they needed to go to the hospital, they couldn't get in. It

was frustrating for us to do all we could, but then the patients needed more, and they didn't have the money.

It was extremely hard to obtain funding for the health center. First of all, we had to prepare grant applications, something we had never done before. Our grant application was eventually approved by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity, but the governor vetoed the grant. We had to put forth a lot of justification to show that the governor was wrong in his veto. It was difficult to get the head of the OEO to override the veto.



Poor health doesn't occur in a vacuum, especially among low-income individuals and families. Often the medical problems that we see are related to environment, the home, the neighborhood, so we try to look at whatever might contribute to the poor health of individuals.

We have a rural clinic that serves a lot of elderly individuals. Several years ago, many of our patients who were being treated for chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis were making very frequent visits — beyond what we expected. Eventually we learned that they were coming to the clinic more to be in other people's company than to see the doctors. We implemented a noontime feeding program and provided transportation and brought them in. They ate the meal and they socialized. Believe it or not, the diabetes and the hypertension were under better control, and there were fewer complaints about aching joints.

Another example: Twenty-five to 30 percent of our patients don't have running water. In the summer months, the water they have comes from the runoff from the roof when it rains. We notice an unusual number of cases of diarrhea in the summer months, especially in infants who were being bottle fed. We checked the water that the formula was being mixed with, and noticed that the water was being contaminated with coliform bacteria. This is what prompted us to deliver water from a tank truck to those families. Then we teach them, when they use the runoff, to boil the water to make it safe.

We do a lot of work in the schools. I used to do sports physicals, along with some other doctors. Kids had to have a doctor's statement saying that it was OK for them to participate in sports. We volunteered to do this, because these kids didn't have private doctors.

We were finding that a lot of those kids had problems that they didn't know they had. They had ear infections. Some had high blood pressure. They had gone untreated, and things had led to more serious problems. So we became concerned that if the athletes had these problems, then the general school body probably had problems too. But they weren't coming into our clinic.

So we began to establish clinics in the Jackson area schools. We have them in four high schools, three junior high schools, and one elementary school.

Students can't just come to our school clinics and say, "I want this and I want that." They have to enroll. They have a

physical and complete history and a psychosocial assessment, in which they tell us what's happening in their lives. From that assessment, we determine their risks for pregnancy, depression, disease, violence. If, after that, the students want contraceptive services, we provide them. But they can't just come in and seek out contraception, without having participated in the overall program.

It hasn't cut down on sexual activity. It has cut down on pregnancies among the students who use the clinic.

We've had some students who found out they were pregnant by coming in. We've had others who found out they were pregnant and came in to start prenatal care. Some were scared to death. We had a pregnant sixth-grader this year, and another sixth-grader about three years ago. They don't know what is happening to them. They don't have any idea what the implications are. If we weren't there, I fear that they would just be lost.

The boys have problems too. They have problems with their parents, with their peers, with gang members, with feeling isolated, no male figures. They see one of us, and we show them attention, and they keep coming back just for the male-figure attention that they don't get at home. They're longing for somebody.



From a medical standpoint, the center has made good, first-quality health care available to a lot of people who otherwise would not receive it. We have dentists, we have optometrists, and we do our own X-rays in our lab. So a lot of people are getting early preventive care before it gets to where they need a kidney transplant or they have a stroke.

The other major achievement is our link with the community. We do the work, but we have a governing board that is made up of community people. So we have given the community a sense of ownership and a sense of pride. At least 51 percent of the governing board members must be active patients. They volunteer; they don't get paid. I think it's their way of contributing.

How do we stay effective in a time of cutbacks? Gotta be willing. Gotta be innovative. Gotta believe in it. Gotta be bold. You have to constantly come up with new ideas. We keep abreast of what's about to happen. If we realize that a cut is coming, then we start thinking up ways that we can take up the slack.

You see, we're funded at about 65 percent of what it takes to operate. We have to generate 35 percent. So we have to find ways to broaden the base of our patients. That means we have to adjust our hours for working people. We've got to constantly counsel our staff about how to treat people. We've got to operate like a business.

I think the center will thrive. I think it will thrive because the notion has caught on and the need is so great. The doctors in private practice cannot afford to treat people on a private-fee scale. So we are getting more and more patients who are being encouraged to come to us rather than to be a burden on the non-subsidized doctors. As the need expands, we'll find innovative ways to serve them. □

Photo by The Clarion-Ledger



DR. AARON SHIRLEY: "YOU HAVE TO CONSTANTLY COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS."

Delia Smith is a teacher assistant with the Jackson Public Schools.



MAYOR JAMES EASON STANDS BEFORE THE WATERFRONT MUSEUM BEING BUILT IN DOWNTOWN HAMPTON — A CONCRETE SYMBOL OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL REVIVAL.

ART FOR HAMPTON'S SAKE

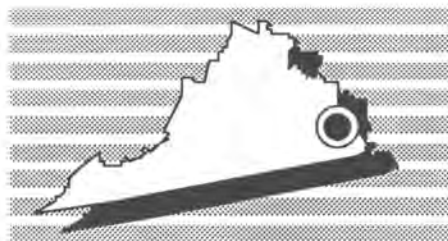
HAMPTON, VA. — You can stand on the sidewalk where Bridge Street crosses an inlet of the Hampton River, focus your eye on the egrets wading through the bay — and gaze into another era.

Here, at the edge of downtown, scurvy crabbing boats with nets piled high sit anchored in the river. Gulls swim alongside and fly overhead, hoping for an easy morsel from the day's catch. Along a hidden lane, two wholesale crab dealers advertise their goods in front of non-descript buildings. "Quality Crabmeat Since 1937" boasts the sign outside Lawson Seafood Company.

Indeed, this 380-year-old city is tied inextricably to its 63 miles of shoreline, and seafood has helped support thousands of its residents. But cast your visual net wider and a different Hampton emerges. Across the lane from the crab wholesalers rise the vaulted trusses of the brick-and-glass building that will soon house the Virginia Air and Space Museum and the Hampton Roads History Center. Across the street, in a landscaped brick plaza, children line up to

How a Virginia tailback
and an Englishman
are reviving the
cultural life of the
nation's oldest
English-speaking city.

By Barry Yeoman



ride an elegant 1920s carousel. Just down the block, visitors admire the diverse local artwork in the cooperatively run Blue Skies Gallery.

And in a restored brick building that

punctuates the Victorian houses and crepe myrtles of nearby Victoria Boulevard, a small group of city employees plan the next stages in Hampton's cultural revival. They work for the Hampton Arts Commission, one of the few local government agencies in the South charged with creating an environment in which the arts can flourish.

In four years, Hampton has gone from a city with few cultural opportunities to one with rich and diverse offerings. At a time when most governments are slashing funds for the arts — Governor Douglas Wilder referred to the arts as "niceties" and cut the state arts commission budget by 70 percent this year — Hampton has taken the opposite direction. "Our mission is to make Hampton the most livable city in the Commonwealth of Virginia," says Mayor James Eason.

Not just livable for people who enjoy Verdi or Mozart. The commission has reached across lines of race, age, and class to make the arts accessible to a broad range of Hamptonians. For sure, it has presented the classical concerts and juried art shows

that fuel most local arts councils. But it has also worked with inner-city teenagers, deaf schoolchildren, and African-American artists. A concert this fall by Guinea's Les Ballets Africains drew the commission's first sell-out crowd — and let the traditional arts establishment know that Hampton was ready for some cross-cultural excitement.

"I think the future of the arts is in ethnic programs that represent the essence of a culture," says commission director Michael Curry. "We've got a global family — music, dance, the arts do cross all those lines and make us expand our awareness of working together."

DWARF AMONG CITIES

Within the sprawling metropolitan area of southeastern Virginia known as Hampton Roads, the city of Hampton itself — population 130,000 — has long suffered from an inferiority complex.

Dwarfed by Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Newport News, Hampton often gets lost amidst its better-known neighbors. Its greatest claim to fame lies in its history: City boosters promote Hampton as the oldest continuous English-speaking settlement in the nation. Unfortunately, most of the historic structures have been torn down — first during the Civil War and more recently during "urban renewal" — giving Hampton the feel of a generic, medium-sized Southern city.

Hampton's other source of pride has come from the aerospace industry. The original seven astronauts trained at the NASA Langley Research Center, a billion-dollar lab that helped send missions to Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Near the NASA center sits Langley Air Force Base, home of the U.S. Tactical Air Command.

Even though NASA and the military base have poured billions of dollars into the local economy, they have hardly brought prosperity. With an average personal income of \$14,460 last year, Hampton ranked well below the state and regional average. Throughout the 1980s, economic development stood still. The city was losing industry to Newport News; it didn't even have commercial sites to offer prospective businesses.

"If General Motors had knocked on our door and said they wanted to move their headquarters to Hampton, we couldn't have accommodated them," says Mayor Eason.

Just as the economy lagged, so did Hampton's cultural life. In the late 1960s, a grassroots group called the Hampton Arts and Humanities Association sprang up, and did good work for about a decade. It provided music and art lessons for children and promoted archaeological research downtown — and it provided a model for biracial cooperation in a city that's one-third black. "Black and white people really interacted and struggled for the same goal," says Jeanne Zeidler, who worked at the association for several years.

But in the late 1970s, the city absorbed the association into its recreation department, and the group soon floundered. For a decade, Hampton had no coordinating arts group.

"There was no arts scene," says Hampton native Nancy Bagley Adams, who now chairs the Hampton Arts Commission. "We had local artists that were fragmented, and people went to Norfolk." Carol Conway, another native who runs the Blue Skies Gallery, remembers the city 10 years ago as a "vast wasteland." The public schools had all but eliminated art education. The most thriving cultural scene took place at Hampton University, but the white community pretty much ignored the goings-on at the historically black institution.

It took the election of a mayor who made the connection between the stagnant economy and the ho-hum cultural life — and who saw the arts and humanities as a chance for the city to attract new jobs — to change all that. After defeating an anti-tax incumbent in 1982, James Eason immediately sponsored a series of citizen forums at public schools and a shopping mall. People turned out and talked about their vision for the city — and based on those comments, the City Council kicked off an intensive strategic planning process.

"We saw that there was a window of opportunity open, but that window would close in the late '80s, and then there would be an economic downturn," Eason says. "If we had to wait until the next upturn in the 1990s, it would be too late."

So the council divided its goals into five broad areas: putting together attractive commercial sites, addressing the city's tax structure, cleaning up Hampton's appearance, upgrading the schools, and improving the quality of life.

In an unusual move, the mayor as-

signed an assistant city manager to focus her energies on improving Hampton's cultural offerings and recreational facilities. As a result, since 1987, the city has built a new library and three new branches, an arts center, and a stadium. The Hampton Carousel, one of the 200 original turn-of-the-century carousels left in the United States, has been renovated and moved downtown. Construction on the \$30 million waterfront museum — which city leaders expect will draw 300,000 visitors each year — will be completed next spring.

Most significantly, Eason established a protected fund — using cable franchise fees — dedicated solely to the arts. The fund raised \$322,000 during



the last budget year. Using that money, the mayor created the Hampton Arts Commission four years ago as a full-fledged department of city government and hired Virginia's only full-time local arts director.

A LOST PEOPLE

That director is Michael Curry, former director of the non-profit Fine Arts Foundation in Lafayette, Louisiana. A chain-smoking Englishman with a graying

beard and a self-confidence that borders on cockiness, Curry attended a London boarding school and studied at the University of London before immigrating to Louisiana at the age of 22. At the time, Lafayette had almost no arts scene outside the indigenous Cajun culture; *Places Rated Almanac* once ranked the city dead last. Curry turned the city around during his 14 years there, bringing in such performers as Ella Fitzgerald and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

"We sat around before Michael was hired and said, 'What are we going to do?'" recalls Adams, chair of the Hampton commission. "We were a lost group of people. And then Michael came in."

Curry began by surveying existing

1,800. "I was bloody terrified," Curry remembers. But he kept pushing — and he expanded the commission's offerings beyond the traditional classical-music-for-middle-class-white-people fare.

Working with Hampton University, the commission sponsored a four-week workshop with master printmaker Ron Adams. Twenty-two high school and college students — black, white, and Asian — participated. The commission also curated an exhibit of works by the university faculty, the first time some of them had exhibited off-campus. It worked closely with the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, along with the Hampton school system, to give students a wider exposure to cultural events. And each

worked for grassroots arts organizations in Hampton since the early 1970s, says the Arts Commission is still struggling with the community's competing needs.

"What is going on now is an attempt to find a balance — to attract an audience that's truly diverse, and still keep the people who had the advantage as children to go to concerts and travel to great museums," says Zeidler, who now directs the Hampton University Museum.

"I don't think all the solutions have been found, or even that all the questions are asked," Zeidler continues. But she believes that Curry has taken important strides away from elitism. "Is he perfect? No. Is anybody? No. But I think he had a solid sense of direction. Besides that, he's not afraid to take risks, which is sorely needed in this area."

One of those risks has been locating the Great Performers Series across the river from downtown, at Hampton University. Despite its magnificent waterfront campus, the university still scares away some white Hamptonians who never set foot on that side of town. "The collaboration between the city and the university has never been so strong, and that is still a risk," Zeidler says.

THE TAILBACK

For all of Curry's successes, the real inspiration for Hampton's cultural renaissance comes from a native Hamptonian — a former high-school tailback who grew up to be mayor.

In James Eason's childhood home, Hampton affairs were paramount. His father coached football for 20 years at the city's only white high school before going on to become Hampton's first recreation director. "The thing we talked about at home was the city," recalls Eason, who looks like a cross between an accountant (which he is) and a teddy bear (which his friends say he also is). "The environment in which I grew up was a very pro-Hampton, loyal environment. When Hampton High School played, it was almost like the city competing against the other cities."

Eason left his hometown to play football for the University of North Carolina. But he returned immediately after graduating in 1965 — and 13 years later he won an appointment to the local school board.

The appointment turned out to be a mixed blessing. The Proposition 13 anti-tax movement was spreading eastward

Photo by Adrin Snyder/Daily Press



MICHAEL CURRY OVERSEES ONE OF THE FEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN THE SOUTH CHARGED EXCLUSIVELY WITH PROMOTING COMMUNITY ARTS.

arts groups to discover their needs. Besides the obvious one — money — most of the groups said they sorely needed publicity. So the commission began publishing *Diversions*, a bimonthly magazine that reaches 15,000 Hampton households. Then it launched a traditional concert series, starting with the Haydn Trio of Vienna. "I felt very strongly that we had to get the existing arts patrons behind us before we did anything," Curry says.

Fifty-two people attended that first Haydn Concert, in a hall that seated

year, the commission doles out money to a wide array of local arts groups.

Recently, Curry brought in Cantare Audire, a Namibian choir, during its first American tour. The first half of the concert was strictly classical — but then the choir broke out into drumming and grass-skirt dancing. "The audience was on their feet, screaming and dancing," he recalls.

Much of the city-sponsored programming remains quite traditional — groups like the Orion String Quartet and the Hanover Band. Jeanne Zeidler, who has

from California, and it hit Virginia with full force. Just as Eason was taking a leadership role on the school board, Hampton elected its first and only anti-tax mayor and City Council majority.

"It reached a point in the spring of 1981 that the council sought to really decimate the school budget," Eason says. As vice-chair of the school board, he had to defend the city's educational system — and he did so at a meeting that got so crowded that it had to be moved to the coliseum.

But the anti-tax majority prevailed that year. The city began closing schools, laying off teachers — and using Hampton's economic problems as an excuse. "The mayor at the time said Hampton is a declining city; we can't afford these educational programs. *We are a declining city.* That hit me on the head like a two-by-four. That sent shivers up my spine." Enraged, Eason challenged the incumbent during the 1982 elections — and won by a more than two-to-one margin.

Eason's belief in the importance of the arts came later, as the city developed its long-term strategic plan. The new mayor began to see a richer cultural environment as the way to attract industry — and to create a workforce that appreciates diversity.

"One thing that has influenced me is to look at who will be your workforce in the year 2000," he says. With only 15 percent of the new jobs going to white men, "we're going to be sitting here with the greatest diversification of the workforce in America's history.

"What's going to be necessary is molding the workforce into a team. You as a white male have got to appreciate what is motivating the black female or the Hispanic. You can't just snap your fingers and say, 'You — appreciate diversity.' In the arts program, the main lesson is the appreciation of differences."

The second lesson, of course, is creativity. "Art encourages the expansion of the mind," Eason says. "If the city has

created an environment that encourages expression and risk-taking, who is going to say that there will not be a spillover into somebody who sits down with a computer to program? Because that person was encouraged to be expressive without the fear of ridicule — Lord knows what happens from a creative standpoint."

The biggest monument to Hampton's cultural revival will be the waterfront museum, a 110,000-square-foot building with air-and-space artifacts as well as historic exhibits. City literature promotes the museum as a tourist draw, but Eason sees it as a way to educate Hampton's

own citizens — particularly children. When the mayor's conversations wander afield, they often touch on his hopes for children and his fears that the next generation is growing up at a perilous time.

Perhaps that explains why Eason takes so much pride in the recent work the city of Hampton has done in the school system, expanding elementary-school art programs at a time when Virginia schools face across-the-board cuts. The city has

sent artists into the public schools, and the Arts Commission has exhibited work by artists on the faculties of the city schools.

His concern for children also explains why Eason beams when he talks about the restored carousel, which operates in a glass pavilion overlooking a landscaped plaza. Made by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company more than 70 years ago, its 48 sad-eyed horses and two chariots were hand-carved by German, Russian, and Italian immigrants. The carousel reopened last summer — and on weekend days, more than 1,000 children come downtown to ride.

Of course, the carousel is dwarfed by the Air and Space Museum. But, says assistant city manager Elizabeth Walker, "I think the carousel meant as much to the mayor as the \$30 million project next door."

BEYOND BRICK AND MORTAR

In late October, the British-based Lucas Industries announced it would lo-

cate the world headquarters of one of its divisions to Hampton. The conglomerate, which manufactures automobile parts and aerospace equipment, will generate 400 jobs at first and more than 1,000 later on. It will also pay more than \$175,000 in annual real-estate taxes. Eason calls Lucas' decision "the biggest hit that Hampton has ever had."

City officials cite the industrial recruitment as an example of Hampton's cultural strategy paying off. At the same time, attracting international corporations comprises only one form of economic development. Eason continues to work on downtown revitalization. He wants to build a performing-arts center in the central business district, which will attract more nighttime traffic. Restaurants should follow, along with other late-night businesses.

What's more, the city is now working to create a Santa Fe-style arts district that would include artist studios, galleries, and other art-related businesses in the Victorian houses lining two downtown streets. The city has already attracted the cooperative Blue Skies Gallery to a commercial building in the central business district, and gallery manager Carol Conway looks forward to moving into one of the grand old homes along Victoria Boulevard and Armistead Avenue.

City planners are continuing to do the research that will enable the city to create the district. But even without that district, Conway sees a tangible difference in downtown's vibrancy over the past few years. The carousel has drawn people back to the inner city, and those families come to visit — and shop — at Blue Skies. At this rate, she says, it won't be long before downtown becomes a mecca where people come to browse galleries, dance at street festivals, watch theater productions, eat at restaurants, and just take in the passing scene.

"Hampton's making more of a commitment, both in a financial and physical way," she says. "Before Michael Curry was hired, downtown was just involved with brick and mortar — the tearing down of buildings mostly. The arts were the last to get on board — but now we're off and running." □

Barry Yeoman is associate editor of *The Independent in Durham, North Carolina.*



MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK

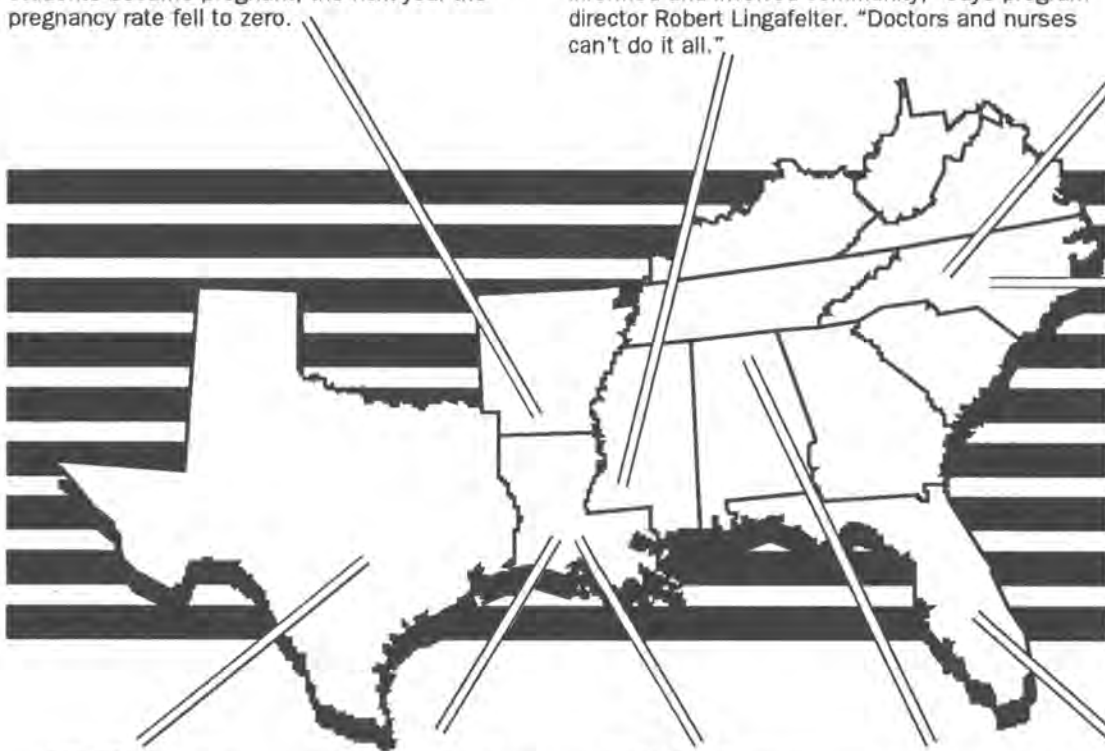
From protecting abused children to recycling garbage, citizens are mapping out public programs that meet real community needs.

By Betty Meeler

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — State health director Jocelyn Elders successfully fought conservative lawmakers to establish health clinics in public high schools statewide. The clinics provide services ranging from dental exams to contraceptives. The first clinic opened in the town of Lincoln after 10 students became pregnant; the next year the pregnancy rate fell to zero.

JACKSON, Miss. — The Community Health Advisor Network trains local leaders in rural counties to provide health care assistance for their neighbors. In Humphreys County, 52 trained advisors help 400 residents each week, reaching half the low-income population. "We need an informed and involved community," says program director Robert Lingafelter. "Doctors and nurses can't do it all."

DAVIE COUNTY, N.C. — When the state ordered local governments to bury less garbage, county landfill manager William "Junior" Barbee responded. He refitted a soft-drink truck as a recycling vehicle, tailored individual programs to local industries, and provided educational materials to residents. Thanks to his efforts, the county has cut its solid waste stream in half.



AUSTIN, Texas — Under a new state program, Texas counties have centralized health care services to make access easier for low-income residents. Counties are also required to provide care for poor residents who fail to qualify for other aid. Once a county spends 10 percent of its annual budget caring for the poor, the state pays 80 percent of medical bills.

OPELOUSAS, La. — Mayor John Joseph, the first black ever elected to public office here, has united a community previously divided by race. One secret of his success: bi-racial citizen committees on topics ranging from tourism to race relations. "We found people with a lot of expertise with nothing to do who were just waiting to be invited to serve their city," Joseph says. "There's a new spirit of cooperation and pride."

LAFAYETTE, La. — Using federal Community Development Block Grants, the city has rehabilitated over 600 homes for low-income residents in the past 10 years. The city provides the labor and up to \$8,000 in materials, and offers low-interest loans to help owners make up the difference.

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — Frustrated when an abused child was interviewed 14 times by investigators from different agencies, district attorney Bud Kramer founded the Children's Advocacy Center in 1985. Since then, the center has teamed police, social workers, prosecutors, victim advocates, and doctors to treat more than 1,000 abused children. "Our goal is to provide the services needed to heal," says clinical director Ethel Amacher.

GATES COUNTY, N.C. — Elementary students in this rural community are learning French in "total-immersion" classrooms. Although students in the "Project Stretch" program study every subject except English in a foreign language, they typically score higher on standardized tests than their English-taught counterparts.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — The state-sponsored "Preservation 2000" program provides \$3 billion in bonds over 10 years to buy and conserve undeveloped land. Counties willing to put up money of their own can qualify for matching funds. Five counties have already taken advantage of the program, preserving forests, wetlands, and creeks worth \$365 million.

Betty Meeler is a volunteer with the Institute for Southern Studies.

Rose Looney

By Connie May Fowler



ere I sit at my kitchen table, watching my coffee grow cold, knowing with every pore of my body that when Charlie comes home tonight he's going to want to touch me. And what will I say? What will I do? Will I giggle like I did on our wedding night and feel like

his touch is setting me free? Will I do what I've done for sixteen years of marriage: let his smile and sweet-talking apologies melt away any resistance, any anger? I have no idea. The only thing I'm sure of is how different this last fight was from all the rest. The rules had been changed. The stakes had been raised higher than I ever dreamed possible. Now even the sunlight that splashes into what I once thought of as my cozy kitchen seems brutal. I spent last night at Eudora's, but I can't stand that again. So what do I do tonight after suffering through a wordless meal and an hour or two of TV racket? Once the covers are turned down and the bedroom

light is switched off and he gropes at me with hands I once adored, will I say, "Get the hell away from me, you son of a bitch," and do so confidently, not wavering, knowing that his touch isn't freedom but sweet poison?

I actually could do a lot with my day. I could pick up the broken water glass that I threw at Charlie two nights ago. It didn't hit him. Instead it hit just beyond his head, shattering against my yellow walls, leaving a shadowy whiskey stain that only a new coat of paint will hide. When I was first married I chose yellow for my kitchen, because I was so young and naive. I told the man at the paint store, "I'm going to paint my walls with sunshine." What a joke.

Or I could get off my dead butt and mop the floor, or put the broom that Emory had threatened Charlie with back in the closet. Or I could even go in and straighten the living room. I could empty the crumpled cigarette packs and the ashes and the half-smoked Salems from my kidney-bean ashtrays — the ones with all the tiny mosaic tiles that I glued in myself. I



could straighten the lampshade with the picture of the fighting bulls on it. Charlie knocked it cockeyed after Emory punched him. Or I could walk in there and do something harmless like dust. I could dust the family pictures I have set out so proudly on the TV console. I could straighten the oil painting — a seascape — that I bought at Woolworth's three years ago. It looks just like the Atlantic Ocean with gulls and sea oats and sand dunes and everything. But two nights ago, when I put my hands to my ears to block out not the shouting — that was already over — but I guess the memory of the shouting, I accidentally hit it with my elbow. And it crashed to the floor but nobody heard it. Yesterday it was back on the wall, crooked. I don't know who did that.

Then again, I could just sit here and try to imagine my living room with its beautiful white stucco. That's what I liked most about this house when we bought it thirteen years ago. We'd scrimped and saved for three years. I'd even held out grocery money — unbeknownst to Charlie — so that we could

stop living in cramped, noisy apartments. This was the fourth house we looked at, and the minute I stepped inside I fell in love with it. It didn't have paneling like most of the other small two-bedroom houses we could afford. No. Somebody had bothered to stucco the living room and both bedrooms. The pure, clean whiteness of those rooms made me feel better off than we really were. But now when I think about my lovely living room, the walls are splattered with blood. Not much. Just a little. Like sea spray. And I don't know whose blood. Maybe mine, maybe one of theirs. But mostly Charlie's.

Of course if my life was still normal what I might be doing is humming around the kitchen baking Emory's favorite: sugar cookies. Even though he was growing up as tall and handsome as his daddy, he still wasn't too grown-up for an after-school snack. But there wouldn't be any Emory walking through that kitchen door. There wouldn't be my son — who was now taller than me — tossing his books on the

kitchen counter and heading straight for the refrigerator to drink the milk from the carton even though he knew I'd tell him to get a glass.



emory was my only baby. After he was born I said, That's it. One is enough. I'm not like a lot of women — I remembered the pain of labor long after it was over, like it was branded into my soul. So my diaphragm became my talisman, my little charm that would ward against any more kids.

But it didn't work. I got pregnant again anyway. Years later. And despite the memory of my first labor, I wanted that child. Once I became pregnant the thought of a baby crawling around my kitchen floor made any labor pain well worth it. But in a horrible, sinister kind of way the talisman was potent after all. Because I miscarried, and that pain was far worse than childbirth.

I need to get a handle on this. I need to understand what really happened in this house between my child and my husband. I'm sipping cold coffee. The afternoon sun is beating through the kitchen window without any wind to stir it. I like sitting here because all I can see is the yard, and not that damn penitentiary across the street. But I'm in the full sun and I'm sweating and I know heat rash has probably started to turn the inside of my arm a spotty crimson. But I refuse to check. Instead, I stare at my dust-covered pot of plastic daisies that sits in the center of my kitchen table. I know that if they weren't plastic they'd be long dead. I have a funny urge to sniff them — as if they might actually give off a scent. But I know all I'd get is a nose full of dust. So I refrain.

Instead, I touch a harsh, faded plastic petal and consider the possibility that I should have trusted Charlie. Maybe after I'd found lipstick on his shirt for the umpteenth time — deep plum is a color I never wear — I should have just ignored it. Maybe after he phoned and said he'd be working late again and after I drove past the car lot and saw it was empty, I should have just said, That's a man for you. Maybe I should have just eaten all my pride and ignored the fact that Mary Sue O'Connor sidled her grocery cart up to mine at the A&P right as I was choosing a baking hen for dinner and said, "Rose, I don't mean to gossip, but Tom was at the car lot yesterday delivering the new lavender business cards Pauline DuPree ordered and he said your husband and Miss DuPree were on awfully friendly terms."

And I said to her, "Why, Mary Sue, what should be so remarkable about my husband being on friendly terms with his boss? Perhaps wandering minds see only what they want to see."

But deep in my soul I knew she was right. I got home and started putting two and two together. Again. I saw through all

of Charlie's excuses. I even imagined him heading over to Pauline's for a quickie every time he said he was going out for a quart of milk. I figured it started even before I lost my baby girl. It wasn't the fact that I hadn't been able to bring his baby to full term. I figured he'd been cheating before that.

After one full water glass of Jack Daniel's I decided that from the very day we got married he had been untrue. And after two full water glasses, I decided the only thing left for me to do was get him to admit to me that he was a no-good, cheating bastard. And if he didn't admit it maybe I'd kill him. And if he did admit it maybe I'd still kill him.

I was horribly worked up.

So when he finally did walk in the back door, the kitchen door, wearing his jaunty hat and his beautiful charcoal-gray business suit, I didn't say how do you do or kiss my butt. I threw my third glass of JD at him. Which, of course, he ducked, so that it hit my nice yellow wall, thus the whiskey stain. And then he straightened up — his six-foot frame filling my vision — and started to laugh.

Then he took off his hat, removed his coat, and loosened his tie and said, "Rose, how the hell are you."

I'm not sure what all I said to him. But I gave it to him full blast. The shouting was horrible. And with Charlie and me it's always been easy transition between shouting and shoving. In fact, it's like time speeds up into one furious, barbed ball. So before I knew it I'd ripped his new white shirt. And it seemed like just seconds had passed when I found myself being shaken so hard I thought my spine would snap. "Shut your mouth, Rose Looney, slam it shut right now!" Charlie was screaming.

That's when Emory came out of his room and pulled the broom out of the closet. He swung it twice — warning swings — and told Charlie to take his "goddamn hands off my mother." Which he did. So I ran into the living room, but Charlie ran after me. And I think it was then that I shouted at him, "Now I know why your mother abandoned you. Now I know why she walked out the first chance she got. Because you're bad seed."

That's when he backhanded me. Busted my lip. And that's when Emory jumped over the back of my blue upholstered couch and stepped

in between Charlie and me. And he didn't give Charlie a chance to back down or to get in the first punch. He hit his father full and square in the face. Blood spewed and I was afraid Charlie's nose was broken. And I screamed, "Oh my God, Emory, go get some ice." Charlie stood there looking amazed — not angry, more like shock. He didn't put his hands to his face. He stood very still and let the blood flow. And Emory slumped down on the couch, put his head in his hands, and bawled.

So I went in and got the ice and put it on Charlie's face. He winced and walked away, down the hall. I put the ice to my own lip and then touched Emory's curly blond hair, but he waved me away. The silence was as violent as the shouting had been. I didn't know what to do so I did something dumb. I went into the kitchen and started a pot of coffee. But right as I set the



pot on the burner somebody spoke. It was Charlie, in a very calm voice, calling, "Emory, I want to see you in your room. Now." I wanted to run in there, separate the two of them. Make it all okay again. But I couldn't move. My legs were like crumbling concrete. Scared, petrified. I just stood there watching the coffee percolate like it was my own blood, because I was convinced that the fighting would start again. That Charlie would raise his fist to Emory.

But what happened was worse than that. They were in Emory's room all of fifteen minutes. And then I hear Charlie in the living room. He has switched on the TV. I hear Rob telling Laura he can't possibly accept a raise if Buddy and Sally don't get one too. And then Emory walks into the kitchen. He doesn't look like a boy blossoming into manhood anymore. Instead he looks scared, like the little kid who would fight back the tears after skinning his knees. But he says, his eyes peeled to the floor, "He said I should be the one to tell you. He's going to call Uncle J.W. We think it would be a good idea if I went down to Lake Okeechobee, spent some time with him. I'll just sugar-cane it for a while."

I said, "No, Emory, you can't leave me."

But he just turned his back on me. He just turned away and went to his room.

So at that moment I'm no longer thinking about being cheated on. My fury has now turned on the prospect of losing my son. I go in to Charlie. He's laying on the couch. No more blood. His nose is swollen but it's all right. And I say to him, "Please, Charlie, don't send our boy away. He's sorry. I know he is. He won't do it again."

Charlie put his hand on my hair and stroked it. He gently touched my lip. He said, "Now Rosie, the boy and me have decided. It's for the best. He needs to know what working for a living is before he comes back in this house and raises a fist at me." He said it kindly, so reasonably, like he was explaining why he wanted black car mats instead of white.

I shook my head. "No, Charlie, I won't allow it."

Charlie sat up, grinned. "Rose, you're not involved. The boy who thinks he's a man has decided." And then Charlie got up and went to bed.



Two days later I just sit here in my empty house, without a son, knowing that Charlie will be home tonight. Knowing that I put my son on a Greyhound bus headed for Lake Okeechobee and some god-awful sugar-cane farm yesterday. All because I stood up to Charlie about the wrong

things. I stood up to him about his cheating when I really didn't have a shred of evidence. But I was too weak to stand up to him about my son. A speck of anger starts to break through my numbness and I think that come hell or high

water I'll get the evidence against Charlie. I'll prove to myself and him that he was lying to me. That he was cheating. And how do I know this so well? I think I've always known it. I've never trusted him. I close my eyes and a picture of my mother comes to mind. I'm eight years old and Mama is beautiful even though she's so sick with fever, so close to dead. She whispers in my ear, "Your daddy did this to me."

It wasn't until ten years later that I discovered what she meant, that I learned what syphilis was. I was living in Richmond, having run away from our Grundy home three years prior, due to Daddy's horrible temper. When he got drunk he liked to beat me. So I found myself getting a job as a counter girl at the drugstore's soda fountain. Uncle Mason sent a notice to me. In a short note he spelled it out. Your daddy is dead. Syphilis. You probably know it had been eating him away for years.

Finally I knew what Mama had meant. Daddy really had killed her. Injected her with death as they were making love.

I never let anybody get close to me after that. I just stayed stony. Alone. Afraid of night and day and everything in between.

But then I met Charlie. I'd come down to Florida thinking a single woman would be able to survive better in a gentler climate. I was sitting on a bench in St. Augustine, looking out at the bay, when this motorcycle racket started behind me. I turned around. And there he was. Atop this monster cycle. Charlie Looney the cop, in his knee-high black leather boots and his sharp, close-fitting uniform. He whipped off his helmet and flashed me that drop-dead grin. Above the rumble

of the cycle he drawled, "Howdy, miss, I hope you're having a wonderful day." And then he sped off. But I saw him again, and again, and again. And soon I didn't have any other thoughts except for those that involved the strong, gentle, kind Charlie Looney. He seemed my haven, my salvation, my knight riding a roaring cycle who would take me in his arms and keep away all the pain.

I get up from my kitchen table and glance at my red-rooster clock that ticks so loud you can hardly ever forget it's there. It is just past four.

Charlie hates that clock. He keeps asking why don't I throw it away and get a new one. I say because I like it. I glance at the broken glass in the corner. My impulse is to go ahead and sweep it up. To put my house back in order. I know if I do this Charlie will know I've started to forgive him. But I don't know what else to do. Where else do I go? So I walk over and pick up my broom. I look around at my yellow walls, my sunshine walls, and it hits me that I'm in a prison. I laugh out loud. Yes, that's exactly it — my house is a prison. But as I go over and clean up the glass, I realize I don't know who built its stifling walls — me or Charlie. □

Connie May Fowler is a native Floridian who lives with her husband Mika on the Florida coast. She holds an M.A. in English from the University of Kansas. This story is excerpted from Sugar Cage, her first novel, which will be published this January by Putnam.

Duke Out

Louisianans rejected the politics of hate. Will the rest of the nation?

By Barry Jean Ancelet

It has been three days since the Louisiana gubernatorial election, and the sun has come up all three days, so I suppose it's true that life goes on.

It was only two months ago that former governor Edwin Edwards and white supremacist David Duke placed first and second in the primary, qualifying them for a run-off election. Incumbent Governor Buddy Roemer, who had been systematically self-destructing for the past four years, found himself in third place, wondering what had happened to his self-styled "Roemer Revolution." The rest of us found ourselves facing a dilemma: whether to vote for a man with a reputation for playing it fast and loose, or for a former Klan wizard and neo-Nazi who not so long ago was burning crosses and celebrating Hitler's birthday.

Many voters agonized over the decision. Some, I suspect, went into the polling booth and put a finger on each button before making a choice. In the end, Edwards — a man who bragged that

he is "also a wizard ... under the sheets" — won with 61 percent of the vote. Reason prevailed over anger.

It is ironic that this bitterly divisive race occurred in such a culturally and ethnically diverse state. Louisiana is, after all, one of the most exciting places in America. Here, Europeans and Africans met by chance and by force on Native American land, and the three cultures blended to produce such highly original expressions as jazz, blues, and rock and roll. The architecture and cuisine and oral tradition in the southern part of the state are so different that the area has been described as "south of the South" and "the northern tip of the Caribbean."

Today, people of all these ethnic backgrounds are frustrated with the failure of their government to address their real needs. Indeed, the rise of David Duke has been enhanced by the grinding of several gears in our social machine. First and foremost, our politics have failed to produce an honest response to the twin evils

of poverty and racism. When Duke blasted "welfare abuse" and "racial quotas," he touched a chord among frustrated hard-working people and the over-burdened and dwindling middle class.

Many of his supporters are racists. But others are simply fed up. They want to let the system know it, and Duke offered a chance to send a message to the powers-that-be. Unfortunately, much of their legitimate anger was cleverly misdirected by Duke. He pledged to reform the welfare and tax systems, yet state taxes are not exceptionally high in Louisiana, and welfare abuse accounts for a minuscule part of the state budget.

Duke's success underscores the failure of the Democrats to speak directly to the anger among voters. No viable candidate — and certainly no Democrat — offered voters such a clear outlet for their frustration. Duke simply picked up the fumble and ran with the ball. If another candidate without Duke's past had run on a similar platform, he would undoubtedly have been elected.

But no one did, and white voters in Louisiana continue to flee the Democratic Party and join the GOP. State registration figures show that since 1987, the Louisiana Democrats have lost more than 116,000 white voters and the Republicans have signed up 96,000.

That trend continued this fall — even after Duke climbed aboard the GOP ballot. In the six weeks following the primary, a record 13,000 white voters registered as Democrats. But even more — 15,223 — flocked to the Republicans.

The increasing political polarization

in Louisiana — and across the region — means that the Democrats are going to have to reassess their century-old role as the party of conservative Southern whites. To counter the white flight, they will have to fashion a message that will broaden their support — a message of racial unity and economic equality.

Louisianans are familiar with demagoguery. But unlike Huey and Earl Long, who used similar tactics to haul us forward, Duke is trying to push us backward. He claims to repudiate his past, but his literal and political facelifts conceal an ugly agenda.

Here it was the media that failed. Television stations and daily newspapers across the state did little to explore Duke's hidden agenda until the panic of the final days before the vote. He got everyone to dance on the only plank in his platform. Only his past was questioned, and he almost succeeded in parrying that attack by claiming to have changed, even to be a born-again Christian. His present went virtually unexplored.

Jason Berry, a writer based in New Orleans, complained about this "lazy coverage" in a *New York Times* op-ed piece. A few hip, Yuppie weeklies like the *Times of Acadiana* in Lafayette, *Gris Gris* in Baton Rouge, and *Gambit* in New Orleans tried valiantly to expose Duke, but even they focused on his past. The real issues were seldom raised. What real experience at governing does Duke have? How would he run the state? How would he handle the myriad responsibilities of being governor? And what are the real solutions to the few problems he did raise? Exactly how does "workfare" work in an economy crippled by recession and unemployment? Why was no one asking these questions?

Some voters insisted it was okay to cast a protest vote for Duke because it didn't really matter: The legislature and

the law would prevent him from doing anything terrible. But in Louisiana the governor appoints commissions, boards, department heads, even the superintendent of education. Who would have been head of the state police under Duke? What would happen to the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism? To the Black Culture Commission? To the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana? These questions went unasked and unanswered.

Ironically, Duke often complained that the media treated him unfairly. In fact, they hardly laid a glove on him. It wasn't until the very last days of the campaign that people began to fill in some of the gaps left by the media. The head of the Louisiana National Guard appeared in a television commercial to point out the absurdity of having a former Nazi sympathizer as the commander-in-chief of Louisiana troops. My own father, a barber, said in an interview that, though he had thought he would never again vote for Edwards, he could not bring himself to vote for a man who once proposed sending the French-speaking Cajuns to northern Maine as part of an "ethnic relocation program."

The media also failed with Edwards, satisfied to simply characterize him as a crooked politician indicted on racketeering charges. He was never convicted, but many considered him guilty by accusation. Voters were not reminded that his progressive

and reform-minded first term had brought real change to the state. We were only reminded of his scandal-plagued third term — a message clearly reflected on the bumper stickers sported by frustrated Duke opponents: "Vote for the crook. It's important."

Yet for all his foibles, real and exaggerated, Edwards did not fail. He took Duke on head-to-head in televised debates, pointing out his opponent's present inadequacies as well as the sins of his past. In the final debate, the former governor noted that while Duke was burning crosses in people's yards, he was building hospitals. He suggested that if Duke has really changed, he should begin by helping to heal the communities he intimidated for two decades. Edwards even owned up to his own sins, admitting that he has made mistakes and insisting that he wants to reform.

He seems keenly aware of the chance he has been given. In his victory speech, Edwards thanked those who had voted for him — "willingly and unwillingly." He went on to declare that Louisiana had faced the darkness and chosen the light.

As I watched him, I felt great relief and pride. Edwards was right. Louisiana had undergone a terrible struggle as the

rest of the nation and much of the world watched. But we came down on the right side. We rejected the politics of division and hate — something the rest of the nation has yet to do. Next time, those politics may not be wearing a swastika or a white hood. They may be harder to recognize. □

Barry Jean Ancelet is a folklorist at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette.



To Protect and Profit

Florida police are cashing in on a law designed to penalize drug dealers — but innocent citizens are paying the price.

By Mike Billington, Berta Delgado, and Tom Lassiter

The Sun-Sentinel



This story began with a phone call from an outraged citizen whose car had been seized by Florida police on a trumped-up

charge. In the end, the team of Fort Lauderdale reporters who investigated the incident uncovered widespread misuse of police power.

Law enforcement officials are making enormous profits—and questionable expenditures—using a law designed to fight the drug trade. Along the way, innocent victims have been hurt as both enforcement and oversight of the law have been left in the hands of the police, who routinely ignore its nominal guidelines.

FT. LAUDERDALE, FLA. — By 1980, drugs had a choke hold on Florida. Cocaine flowed virtually unimpeded from South America, and drug use was rampant. Drug gangs operated with impunity, gunning down competitors and bystanders alike in parking lots, in shopping malls, in broad daylight.

The public, outraged and terrified, had had enough. The federal government demanded action. Police begged for help. The state legislature's answer was the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act, which gave police the power to strip drug dealers of money, cars, planes, and boats and to use those resources for law enforcement. The law was designed to hit powerful drug organizations where it would hurt them most.

A decade later, drugs are still a scourge. The kingpins are still in business. But the Forfeiture Act is stronger than ever. The *Sun-Sentinel* has found that the law has evolved into a money-making venture for cash-strapped police agencies. While Florida police reap enormous profits through the law, the people who most often lose money or property in forfeiture cases are not international drug dealers but small-time crooks —

and innocent citizens. The findings:

▼ Police have seized \$100.4 million in property and cash since 1987. At least \$92 million more was taken before 1987, but no one knows the exact total because police were not required to keep records until 1987.

▼ Many people who lose money or property in seizures are never charged with crimes. Some are clearly innocent. Even so, police routinely keep the seized property, returning it only when the victims pay "storage fees" and other charges or agree to settlements for thousands of dollars.

▼ Police use forfeiture profits to buy high-tech weapons and equipment and to build things such as firing ranges and jails, all touted as free to taxpayers. But some of the purchases later lead to bigger police budgets because they must be maintained and staffed using tax dollars.

During the past decade, police have grown sophisticated in their use of the Forfeiture Act. And as their knowledge has grown, so have profits.

Some say that's only fair. "This is capitalism," said Jeff Hochman, legal advisor to the Fort Lauderdale police. "This law lays a lot of golden eggs, and rightly so." But Hochman, who teaches police how to make

OTHER WINNERS

For investigative reporting in Division One (circulation over 100,000):

Second Prize to Lisa Getter of the *Miami Herald* for documenting how state legislators spent millions of dollars, with no accountability, for "turkey projects" that benefited political cronies, in-laws, and pet organizations.

Third Prize to Fred Schulte, Jenni Bergal, and Nancy McVicar of the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel* for their painstaking research that uncovered a pattern of deceit and abuses in health insurance schemes sold to the elderly.

money from the act, also cautions them to know the limits of their powers. "Don't be stupid and kill the goose that lays the golden eggs," he said.

Of Florida's top six seizing agencies, five are in Broward, Palm Beach, and Dade counties. Since October 1987, those five agencies have confiscated at least \$41.7 million in cash and property. Smaller agencies in three counties picked up at least an additional \$19.4 million.

That police use the law to make money hasn't concerned state legislators or the public enough to reform or even monitor it. "I think [any investigation] would show law enforcement 99 percent of the time is doing exactly the right thing," said state representative Fred Lippman of Hollywood. Some people might be bludgeoned by the law, but those cases are "anomalies," he said.

Enough anomalies have cropped up to prompt questions about the fairness and effectiveness of a law that gives police a financial incentive to take away people's property.

LEGAL ROBBERY

David Vinikoor, a former assistant state attorney, lobbied for the law when he led investigations of organized crime in Broward County. "The concept was real simple: It was intended to make it costly to be what we considered a major drug trafficker." But now, Vinikoor said, "The police are allowed to take people's property without an arrest. You have no recourse. It's like blood money."

Larry Nixon, a Daytona Beach lawyer and former prosecutor, said the law gives police an easy ride. "It allows the government to do great harm with very little investigation. A lot of the process in which the forfeiture law operates deprives people of what we have always considered fundamental rights."

Most Americans think they are innocent until proven guilty, but that doesn't apply in Forfeiture Act cases. The law allows police to seize property without proving that the property was involved in any crime. Citizens must prove their innocence to get it back. Moreover, the law contains no penalties to punish police who make wrongful seizures, and it does not require that attorney's fees or other expenses be paid to innocent victims of the law. That means police have nothing to lose by pressing borderline cases. By doing so, they have steadily expanded the limits of the law.

"It's legal robbery," Broward Circuit

Judge Stanton Kaplan said. "People have an uphill battle to get their property back. That's not due process. Due process is when the person taking your property has an uphill battle to keep it."

Two aspects of the Forfeiture Act are particularly troubling: Neither police nor victims have to appear in court to settle a case, and police don't have to file criminal charges to seize property.

"As long as we seize property, we know the person's not going to walk away scot-free," said Captain Tommy Thompson of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. "We're not just doing it so we can seize the man's money. We're doing it because the man broke the law."

Too often, though, the law hurts people who had no intention of committing crimes. And with forfeiture proceedings heavily weighted against property owners, even the innocent sometimes find it cheaper to settle with police rather than fight in court. In Fort Lauderdale, 92 percent of seizures during the past seven years were settled out of court.

Tom Guilfoyle, head of the Metro-Dade Police Department forfeiture unit, thinks there is too much room for abuse with out-of-court settlements. "It just doesn't look right," Guilfoyle said of settlements that are not reviewed by a judge. In Metro-Dade, a judge reviews all settlements. But the law's other glaring weakness is easy to see in Metro-Dade: only 30 percent of seizure cases are accompanied by criminal charges.

FARMWORKER LOSES \$7,000

Antoine Belizaire committed no crime, but the law still made him pay. The Haitian farmworker was stopped for speeding on Interstate 95, and the Volusia County Sheriff's Department took \$17,925 from his car. Belizaire said he was planning to take the money to his family in Haiti. No drugs were

found. He was not charged with a crime, but the Sheriff's Department kept \$7,000.

Similar cases were found throughout the state. "Are they really stopping crime or fattening the coffers?" asked Broward Circuit Judge Robert Lance Andrews. "They use [the law] as extortion."

Paul Steinberg, a former Miami Beach state senator, co-wrote the legislation but said the intent was never to use it against innocent citizens. "When I proposed it, it was supposed to be balanced to get at the wrongdoers' pocketbooks. [But] I think the government in several specific instances has attempted to seize property when they know the individual is an innocent person," he said.

Although Steinberg and others say the law needs reforming, no serious legislative attempts have been made to do so. Only two major reforms have come in the past decade. Police now must file a forfeiture case in court within 90 days of the time they seize cash or property, and they must submit quarterly reports to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement



BEST OF THE PRESS

Each year, the Institute for Southern Studies presents the Southern Journalism Awards to honor reporters whose stories broaden the range of issues, voices, and sources found in the region's daily newspapers. By asking tough, often imaginative questions and by probing untapped sources of information, these journalists have demonstrated the potential of the media to analyze community problems and contribute to positive change.

In this, the fifth year of the contest, a panel of 36 judges selected winners from 127 entries in three divisions based on the size of the newspaper's circulation. The panel included editors, reporters, scholars, authors, and community leaders from across the region:

Bill Adler, Richard Boyd, Ann Clancy, Sybil Dorsey, Meredith Emmett, Robin Epstein, John Egerton, Evangeline Ellison, Judy Hand, Jerry Hardt, Roger Hart, Diana Hembree, Lois Herring, Neill Herring, Chip Hughes, Celestine Hunt, Ruby Lerner, Marc Miller, Jim O'Reilly, Dee Reid, Carol Reuss, Linda Rocawich, Derek Rodriguez, Al Sawyer, Carolyn Schwartz, Mab Segrest, Robert Sherrill, Bertha Sims, Vernie Singleton, Elizabeth Tomquist, Lori Vertura, Lester Waldman, Hollis Watkins, Nayo Watkins, Barry Yeoman, Gordon Young.

And special thanks once again to Marc Miller, who helped edit the excerpts presented here. Taken together, these five first-place winners provide a broad view of some of the problems and potentials facing the region today — a riveting look at the very best of the Southern press.

(FDLE) detailing forfeiture transactions.

Critics say 90 days is still too long for police to keep property or money belonging to innocent victims. Moreover, the record-keeping reform is flawed. The legislature did not establish penalties for failing to keep and file detailed reports, and it did not give FDLE authority to enforce the requirement.

The result? Few departments submit complete information; others submit no records at all. In some reporting periods, fewer than half of Florida's 400 police agencies sent in records — even after receiving delinquent notices from the state. That leaves FDLE's records woefully incomplete, hampering any attempts at oversight.

Other attempts to reform the Forfeiture Act have failed in the face of intense lobbying from police. Fort Lauderdale Police Chief Joe Gerwens, whose department's forfeiture unit is used as a model by other agencies, said the act has helped "dismantle major criminal organizations and leave them financially devastated." But Gerwens and other Florida police chiefs and sheriffs concede that most of the criminals are small-time. Gerwens says that sophisticated criminals have learned to shield themselves from the law: Drug kingpins no longer own boats, cars, or homes in their own names.

While the law has evolved into a weapon against small-time crooks and casual drug users, life in Florida may actually be less safe now than it was in 1980. Crimes most often associated with drug use — particularly robbery and car theft

— have climbed sharply. In a decade when the state population rose about 35 percent, robberies jumped 50.5 percent and motor-vehicle thefts rose 124 percent. Meanwhile, police powers under the act have expanded. Last year, the legislature gave police the authority to seize houses and real estate.

Critics say reforms are overdue because police have become greedy. "The police — they're like kids in a candy store," said Vinikoor, the former Broward prosecutor. And West Palm Beach defense attorney James Eisenberg said, "I see the forfeiture law as being abused and probably the worst law for the purpose of justice that's ever been enacted. Police appear to be more interested at times with making money and getting forfeitures than in taking drugs off the streets."

THE TOY CHEST

For many Florida law enforcement agencies, the Forfeiture Act is the key to the toy chest. They have used it to buy electron microscopes and helicopters and night-vision goggles and portable computers.

Police often spend confiscated money with little oversight. The few guidelines covering Forfeiture Act profits are so vague as to be meaningless. Purchases are limited by little more than a police chief's or sheriff's imagination.

"No one really has oversight on the money," said Rodney Gaddy, a lawyer with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. "The only authority lies in [the law], which says the money needs to be spent for 'law enforcement purposes.'"

Under the law, county and city governing boards must approve purchases, but it is left to sheriffs and police chiefs to define "law enforcement purposes."

"They're the experts. You have to listen to the professionals to get the best advice," Broward County Commissioner John Hart said. Broward commissioners, with the guidance of the Sheriff's Office, have approved spending \$66.7 million in forfeiture money since 1980 to buy a wide range of equipment, including three

helicopters (\$2.5 million), an automated fingerprint-identification system (\$409,000), and Deputy Wendy, a safety-demonstration robot (\$20,500).

Other agencies have been just as imaginative:

▼ North Palm Beach police paid \$1,995 for a night-vision scope.

▼ The Volusia County Sheriff's Department paid \$117,000 for an infrared system for nighttime aerial reconnaissance.

▼ Hialeah police paid \$67,000 for portable computers.

▼ Greenacres police paid \$1,975 for 10 air guns that shoot paint balls.

▼ Coral Gables police paid \$34,000 to build a shoot/don't shoot simulator.

▼ Metro-Dade police paid \$430,000 for a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer to identify drugs and a scanning electron microscope to identify gunshot residue and other trace evidence.

Police say effective law enforcement is not cheap. "If we don't update our equipment, we're not holding ground with the people we're combating," said Joel Cantor, the Hollywood police legal adviser. But even with exotic weaponry, police have done little to stop the well-financed drug cartels the act was designed to hurt. Instead, the weapons and equipment have been used against lesser criminals and in routine law enforcement.

And the fiscal reality is that these high-tech expenditures would never be approved if taxpayers had to foot the bill. "If I had gone to the county commissioners with those requests, they probably would have laughed me out of the room," Broward Sheriff Nick Navarro said. Local officials might not have laughed, but, said Davie Mayor Kathryn Cox, "We'd have had to cut officers to pay for them."

TAXPAYERS PAY

One of the problems with the Forfeiture Act is that it leads to purchases that ultimately cost taxpayers anyway. The law forbids using forfeiture money as "a source of revenue to meet normal operating needs of the law enforcement agency." But it does not prevent police from buying equipment or building things that later must be maintained or staffed with tax dollars.

One example is the 94-bed, minimum-security jail opened by Fort Lauderdale in 1983. The jail's construction and first-year operating expenses — about \$2.5 million for both — came from forfeitures. Since 1983, taxpayers have

Photo by Eliot J. Schechter/Sun-Sentinel



OAKLAND PARK POLICE SPENT CONFISCATED MONEY TO BUY RAID JACKETS AND SPECIAL HELMETS. COST: \$4,796.24.

ROAD TO RICHES

The Volusia County Sheriff's Department thinks the highway to South Florida is paved with bad intentions.

Working on that premise, a special team of deputies that prowls a 50-mile stretch of southbound Interstate 95 has seized \$5 million from motorists since April 1989. The Department contends the cash is drug money, contraband that can be taken without arrest or criminal charges under the state forfeiture law.

"The thought was that if narcotics are running north on I-95, why not cash running south?" said Sergeant Dale Anderson, head of the Selective Enforcement Team. "We found that was true."

Critics say the only thing the team has proved is how easy it is to take

away someone's money under the Forfeiture Act. "I think the average person would be astounded to realize how easily they can be separated from their property," said Donnie Murrell, a West Palm Beach lawyer who has represented clients whose money was seized in Volusia County. "It's getting to the point where I wouldn't travel with cash."

Larry Nixon, a Daytona Beach lawyer and former state prosecutor for the Volusia County district, said deputies there are "trained to ferret out that money and then justify taking it." Volusia deputies are among many officers in the state who use a 1987 court ruling as their guide for seizing cash. The case, *Lobo vs. Dade-Metro Police Department*, opened the door to cash seizures without requiring an arrest or direct link to drugs.

The court ruled that police have probable cause for a cash seizure if they

find a large amount of money plus "other persuasive circumstantial evidence." That evidence can include conflicting or vague explanations of where the money came from, odd methods of packaging and transporting the cash, and the detection by drug-sniffing dogs of possible drug residue on the cash.

Joel Robrish, a Miami lawyer who has defended several clients who lost cash in seizures, said *Lobo* wrote a "script they all use." And few use it better than Volusia Sergeant Robert Jones. He has seized about \$2 million, including \$343,000 in one day. Some days he stops several dozen drivers in a 12-hour shift.

"There certainly are great periods of time when it is boring," Jones said. "But at the time you're finding drug money, it's very interesting."

— Tom Lassiter

paid another \$12.6 million for the upkeep and staffing of the jail.

Police sometimes spend the money in areas that have little connection to law enforcement. North Palm Beach police spent \$1,095 on weightlifting equipment. The Broward Sheriff's Office spent \$1,240 on emergency lights for Dania City Hall, an emergency hurricane shelter. And Delray Beach police spent \$4,000 to install hoops at six churches in hopes that youths would shoot baskets instead of drugs.

Even some supporters say the law needs tightening. They suggest putting forfeiture money into a state fund and then handing it out to local agencies. The advantage? "Oversight," said state representative Fred Lippman of Hollywood.

However, the lack of direct oversight can be traced directly to the legislature, which in nearly 11 years has never appointed anyone to monitor forfeiture expenditures. And there seems to be little demand for increased oversight, especially from officials at the municipal level, who seem satisfied with overseeing purchases themselves. "Fundamentally, the buck stops with the Town Council. . . . I haven't seen anything come through that looks crazy," said Cox, the Davie mayor.

Police defend the way they use forfeiture money. "The state of Florida is suffering a budget shortfall," said Tampa Police Chief A.C. McLane. "This helps us go into innovative programs."

Police fiercely protect their right to

control forfeiture money and have worked to kill every proposal that would force them to spend the money on drug education and rehabilitation. Senate Majority Leader Peter Weinstein failed each of the three times he tried to get legislation to earmark 25 percent of the money for school resource officers and drug education programs. "The Sheriff's Association has always opposed it because they want to keep it for their fancy uniforms, SWAT teams, and stuff," Weinstein said.

Volusia County Sheriff Bob Vogel said Weinstein is missing the point. "I don't think governmental bureaucrats who can't find the money someplace else should take it from law enforcement," he said.

But critics say that some portion of forfeiture money could be freed for drug education, because police do not have to buy all the equipment they need to fight criminals. They use the forfeiture law to seize and keep equipment ranging from airplanes and cars to portable phones and digital

paggers. For example, a major with the Tampa Police Department drives a confiscated 1984 Mercedes-Benz 300SD worth \$15,000. It's his assigned police car.

"It was taken from a drug dealer," police spokesperson Steve Cole said. "That's one car the city will not have to buy." □

Photo by Hans Lehman/Sun-Sentinel



VOLUSIA COUNTY SHERIFF SERGEANT ROBERT JONES HAS SEIZED \$2 MILLION BY STOPPING MOTORISTS ON I-95.

The Forgotten River

Procter & Gamble is killing the Fenholloway, the only "industrial river" in Florida.

By Julie Hauserman
The Tallahassee Democrat



The Fenholloway River is where Procter & Gamble dumps treated chemical waste from making cellulose, a key ingredi-

ent in such modern conveniences as rayon and disposable diapers. The costs? Mutant fish, dead seagrasses in the Gulf of Mexico, unknown health risks, and the loss of the river itself.

For 37 years, the people of Perry, Florida remained silent about the pollution. They got used to the smell and stopped fishing in the river. Then, in the fall of 1990, reporter Julie Hauserman stumbled on the Fenholloway while looking for a river to canoe for an environmental feature.

The series caused bitter divisions in Taylor County between "pro-P&G" and "pro-environment" factions. And it created a public relations dilemma for the company, which has been pursuing a "green" marketing strategy.

PERRY, FLORIDA—In northern Taylor County, where the Fenholloway bubbles to life, the river is a magical place, a liquid ribbon graced by fern-studded banks and fluted cypress trunks.

The beauty is short lived. A few miles downstream, the ferns and clear waters are gone. The sprawling Procter & Gamble Cellulose mill dumps 50 million gallons of wastewater into the beleaguered stream each day, with the state of Florida's blessing. "As far as water quality, I can't think of anything worse in Florida," said Jim Harrison, an Environmental Protection Agency scientist in Atlanta.

The river, which runs through Perry 50 miles southeast of Tallahassee, is the only Florida waterway classified as "industrial." In a system that rates the quality of water bodies from 1 to 5, the Fenholloway is the only 5. It has the lowest standards in Florida.

Regulators say P&G's water-treatment system is as good as any in the state. The company, which has won praise from environmentalists over the years for conserving vast tracts of Florida wilderness, has spent millions on pollution controls. Still, the Fenholloway is a small, 35-mile-long river, and P&G officials say the huge amount of water that comes from the plant can't help but have an impact.

But one thing makes the effect worse: Because the plant sits on Florida's only class 5 river, P&G can legally pollute

more than any other mill. P&G has fought to keep that industrial label.

P&G officials say they have no choice. Other Florida mills sit on larger rivers, where pollution is diluted, but the mill's waste makes up nearly the entire flow of the Fenholloway for much of the year. There's no technology, they say, to make the plant's undiluted waste cleaner than industrial standards. It is the price we pay to turn pine trees into sheets of cellulose that will one day return as disposable diapers, coffee filters, and rayon clothing.

There are other, more ominous costs.

Government officials warn people not to eat Fenholloway fish because the fish contain dioxin, a possible human carcinogen. And EPA scientists who took samples in 1989 found some spots in the river where absolutely nothing was alive. People living along the river have pollutants in their water wells so chemically complex that the state can't say what they are, much less say for certain whether the water is safe to drink.

"There are things in that well water and things in that river water that we haven't seen in Florida groundwater anywhere," said Tom Atkeson, an epidemiologist with the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

All this pollution dumps straight into the Gulf of Mexico, as far as two miles out, killing seagrasses that would nor-

mally act as a marine nursery ground. At the government's urging, P&G tested oysters and fish where the river meets the gulf and found no detectable levels of dioxin, but no one has tested crabs, although a Swedish government study indicates that crabs absorb dioxin more than fish do. People who catch blue crabs near the river's mouth say the crabs sometimes turn dark from the plant's waste.

The Perry mill is both the economic lifeblood of Taylor County and the executioner of the Fenholloway, Florida's forgotten river. "There's no bones about it. They [P&G] have a license to kill," said Mark Thompson, a scientist with the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission. "That license is the state's class 5 designation."

"BEARDED LADY" FISH

Thirty-seven years after the mill opened, no one swims here. The Fenholloway is home to mutant fish and not much else. Will Davis, an EPA scientist in Gulf Breeze, found female fish in the Fenholloway that are developing male characteristics. He calls them "bearded ladies."

Davis said the phenomenon has been reported in just two other places: downstream from the Champion paper mill near Pensacola and downstream from a pharmaceutical plant in Italy. "The Fenholloway is the most drastic example we've seen in Florida of these types of hormonal effects," Davis said. "We think the microbial breakdown of the pine oils at the mill is the source of this."

The EPA also ranked the plant among America's top five for dioxin risk. Three years ago, when the EPA tested the plant wastewater, the agency found dioxin levels 1,900 times higher than it considers an acceptable background risk, said Marshall Hyatt of the EPA's Atlanta office.

P&G spokesperson Dan Simmons said the EPA is using "old data." Simmons said P&G has spent \$40 million to reduce dioxin, an unwanted byproduct of the bleaching process. New equipment, he said, will cut dioxin emissions by 50 percent or more. And he points out that the dioxin levels found in Fenholloway fish are well within limits set by the Food and Drug Administration. Under federal law, you can buy fish at the market that have more dioxin than the ones found in the Fenholloway, Simmons said.

Even though many people who live near the mill say the river has improved

since the 1970s, the 22-mile stretch between the plant and the gulf is still the color of too-strong coffee, and it still stains everything in it. According to a 1989 EPA report, "The devastation to the river is also transferred to the estuarine reach. Where seagrasses should flourish, excessive staining of the water column has precluded adequate light."

Other Florida rivers have advocates, but there is no "Friends of the Fenholloway." Few environmental groups have watched over the mill. Surprisingly few people have pestered the state to find out what is wrong with the drinking water. Along the Fenholloway, there is only Perry, a company town where the state's most polluted river is considered the reasonable price of progress.

LOWERING THE STANDARDS

To entice P&G to Taylor County, an act of the 1947 Florida Legislature desig-

nated the rural county as a "manufacturing and industrial area." The county could "deposit sewage, industrial, and chemical wastes and effluents, or any of them, into the waters of the Fenholloway River and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico." P&G bought the Perry plant in 1951 and produced its first pulp three years later.

Today, state regulators say their hands are tied because of the 1947 law and the industrial label. But records show that the Department of Environmental Regulation actually lowered the water-quality standards for the Fenholloway as recently as 1986.

The DER rewrote the rules to allow the plant to dump water with what scientists say is an appallingly low oxygen content. During some of the year, when the Fenholloway is low, P&G can dump water with only .1 milligrams of oxygen per liter of water. A healthy water body has 50 times that much oxygen.

Can fish live in water with so little

Photos by Mark Walheiser/Tallahassee Democrat



SINKHOLES HAVE OPENED IN SOME OF THE PONDS THAT PROCTER & GAMBLE USES TO TREAT WASTE FROM ITS CELLULOSE MILL IN PERRY, FLORIDA.

oxygen? "Not unless it's a type of fish that could gulp air at the surface," said Rick McCann, a Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission biologist.

Like other mills, the P&G plant must monitor itself, then submit the data for state and federal review. According to P&G figures, the plant has had no significant water-quality violations since 1988. P&G officials are proud of that record, and say it proves they run a top-quality shop.

Company officials also make no bones about the fact that when people in Taylor County complained about polluted wells, P&G provided bottled water and drilled new wells, free of charge, even though company spokesperson Simmons says no studies have tied the plant to the pollution. "The bottom line was, people were concerned about their water," Simmons said. "Our response at the time was to take action first and ask questions later."

Everyone agrees that the P&G operation meets state and federal regulations. But both the federal EPA and the state Department of Environmental Regulation are plagued by high turnover and tight budgets. That contributes to regulatory gaps:

▼ Sinkholes have opened beneath two ponds where P&G wastewater is treated before it flows into the Fenholloway, raising the possibility of groundwater contamination. The DER knows about the sinkholes, which appeared in 1988. But a series of calls to the EPA turned up no one at the agency who knew the details about the sinkholes.

▼ The plant produces what one state scientist calls "an almost infinite variety of compounds," but the state requires P&G to track only eight groundwater pollutants. The wells near the treatment ponds don't monitor dioxin, although the EPA has found dioxin in P&G wastewater.

▼ P&G dumps the sludge from its manufacturing process — which contains dioxin and other chemicals — into huge, unlined pits on the plant property. Although Florida is making all counties install expensive liners to keep landfills from leaking, some industry waste pits, like those at P&G, aren't required to have liners.

▼ The woman who is writing P&G's federal discharge permit for the EPA said she didn't know about the drinking-water problems along the river, the sinkholes, or the unlined sludge pits. She also hadn't heard about the dead seagrasses at the river's mouth and the "bearded lady" fish found in the river, even though both studies came from her own agency.

▼ The plant's federal discharge permit expired in 1989, but since the EPA

hasn't written the new permit yet, P&G is allowed to operate under its seven-year-old permit.

▼ Every few years, the EPA requires the state and P&G to prove that the Fenholloway can't be improved. In 1987, the agency said Florida didn't have enough scientific evidence to say the river had to keep its industrial label and gave the state 90 days to either change the classification or prove its case.

Florida sent in another report — but in the four years since then, the EPA has done nothing. "It has dragged on longer than is easy to defend," admitted Phil Vorsatz, chief of the EPA section overseeing water quality in the Southeast.

BLACK MUCK

Believe it or not, there is a fish camp on the Fenholloway, two miles from the gulf. It's a tumble-down place on a dirt road through swamp and cabbage palms. Linda Rowland, who runs the camp, caters to people who want to fish in the gulf.

Rowland knows the P&G plant: She worked there 14 years before a disability landed her at the fish camp. She doesn't know much about government regulations, but she knows what she sees: too-black water and thick clots of foam down the river some days.

At first glance, the Fenholloway near the fish camp looks like North Florida's other blackwater streams, with arching branches, ethereal Spanish moss, and cabbage palms crowded tightly along its banks. It looks fine until you get close enough to see its hard, glassy surface, close enough to see how the inky waters snuff out life.

Rowland points to black muck at the river's edge. "See this? It looks like mud, but it's not. It's chemicals," she says. There is a metallic, chemical smell coming off the Fenholloway, and with it, the ripe odor of the mill.

Although she's spent her life along this river, Rowland is surprised to hear that the Fenholloway is Florida's only industrial river. She wonders why no one works to clean it up. "We had four sets of environmental men here. We never hear back from them. I told them, 'Why do you come down here and do these tests and get so mad and then do nothing?' What's the use of all these pollution controls if they don't do what they are supposed to do?"

Grantham McMillan is a salty crabber with a face as weathered as the dungaree overalls he's wearing. He pulls into the



GRANTHAM McMILLAN SAYS POLLUTION SOMETIMES CHASES CRABS AWAY FROM THE FENHOLLOWAY FOR DAYS AT A TIME.

fish camp with a load of blue crabs. "When they dump, you see foam down the river, and it chases the crabs off in the gulf for two or three days," he says. "They done took tests and all for days out here. They said how bad it was and didn't do nothing about it."

Rowland has crab traps in the gulf, too. She climbs into a boat and sets out to check her catch. As the boat putters from the fish camp toward the gulf, the engine churns up water that is opaque and sewer-brown. The Fenholloway widens near its mouth, and the forested banks give way to vast, pale marshes.

"My granddaddy was an Indian, from right around here," she says, scanning the choppy ocean waters for her crab traps. A few miles out, she finds one and hauls it up. "Whenever they are dumping, your crabs and your bait will be real dark looking," she says. This time, the crabs look healthy.

"They say they are not hurting the people, but they are. They are taking our wildlife away, and they are taking our fish away. The bad thing about it is, you live right here on this river, and you think, 'Boy, I could be fishing today.' But you can't.

"Some of our catfish have got big sores on them. There ain't no way I'd eat them, but some people do... My cousin caught some bass in the river once. He put them in a frying pan, and you couldn't even stand it, it smelled so bad. We put it out, and the dogs wouldn't touch it."

She sighs.

"They'll always have to dump it. But when they dump it, it should be clean. They can do it. Other paper mills can do it."

As she turns the boat back for the short trip up the Fenholloway, Rowland appraises the marsh and the way the river narrows into the forested corridor, where no houses mar its banks. "Just look at it, and think how pretty it is," she says. "Look how pretty it is. And how polluted."

THE COMPANY TOWN

Until recently, few people in Perry were willing to speak up about the pollution. This is a company town in a rural county with the highest unemployment rate in Florida.

P&G put Perry on the map. It pays half the property taxes. It has a payroll of \$40 million and contributes "several tens of millions" more to the local economy each year, said company spokesperson Dan Simmons. About 1,000 people work at

SAFETY FIRST?

The state knew about high levels of dioxin in fish in two North Florida rivers, including the Fenholloway, for 18 months before warning people not to eat the fish.

The reason: State health officials said they didn't trust information from a nationwide study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. But despite promising that it would check more fish for dioxin in the Fenholloway and Eleven Mile Creek, where a Champion International mill dumps its waste, the state has done no further testing.

The EPA calls dioxin a "potential human carcinogen" because it is linked to cancer in animals. The federal agency said dioxin levels in fish from the Fenholloway and Eleven Mile Creek were so high that people shouldn't eat them. In February 1989, the EPA sent that information to Florida, but the state kept the data to itself for a year and a half, said Marshall Hyatt of the EPA in Atlanta.

Finally, in September 1990, after waiting 18 months, the EPA sent Florida officials another letter, urging them to tell people about the dioxin risk. A few days later, the state issued an advisory: "We have information that suggests there may be a health risk from consuming fish" from the two rivers, it said. "This health advisory is being issued as a precautionary measure while additional information is being obtained. Florida's public health policy is 'Safety First.'"

Why did Florida wait so long?

"We have a fundamental difference with EPA on the threat posed by dioxin," said epidemiologist Tom Atkeson of the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. "They have almost no data. We would never, for example, consider issuing an advisory for mercury in fish based on the scant information EPA has on dioxin in fish. Left to my own devices, I would still have not issued that warning. We don't know how much, or how little, dioxin there is in those fish."

But the state has made no progress in pinning down that risk. "Both DER and HRS tried to find the money to analyze enough fish" as promised, Atkeson said. "We would be only too happy to pin this down and investigate the health risk to people. We just don't have the \$150,000 it would take."

— J.H.

the plant, and another 1,000 work in related industries.

Over the years, people in Perry have been reluctant to say much about the mill's pollution for fear it would cost them their jobs. Andrew Wood, a Taylor County commissioner for the past six years, said simply, "We would be in a terrible fix without them."

But Wood believes Taylor County can have both a clean river and industry. "They've improved the river," he said. "When they first came here, everybody called it the Stink River. It was so bad you had to hold your nose when you went over the bridge.

"Then again, the people that worked out there said it smelled like money to them. I reckon it depends on where your paycheck comes from."

Now that so many wells have gone bad, now that the government has told

people not to eat Fenholloway fish because of the cancer risk, people are speaking up. Some worry that their benefactor may be poisoning them.

Gwen Faulkner has a weekend place along the Fenholloway. Last year, the water started to smell funny. It had an oily film. "When you dry yourself off, you can't really dry off," she said. "P&G says the pollution's not coming from them, and of course they are going to say that. They are the livelihood of this community. Yes, they have done good for the community. Does that justify what they have done to the environment?"

"Once the environment is gone, they can afford to pick up and move and leave us with nothing. If we don't have our environment and our drinking water, what else have we got?"

"I want to live in Perry. I just want to be healthy." □

The Nuclear Forest

Two decades after it closed, a nuclear lab still exposes Georgia hunters and hikers to high levels of radiation.

By Karen Kirkpatrick
The Gainesville Times



Through relentless digging and paper chasing, reporter Karen Kirkpatrick produced an in-depth look at the dangers to hunters

and residents around the former Georgia Nuclear Laboratories near Dawsonville, Georgia—an abandoned, unguarded lab that should have been cleaned up two decades ago.

The lab once operated an unshielded nuclear reactor known as “the monster” that was supposed to help design and test an atomic-powered war plane. But the A-plane project turned into a billion-dollar boondoggle, and the reactor was used to irradiate an entire forest to simulate the effects of a nuclear attack.

Today the forest around the lab remains radioactive. But thanks to Kirkpatrick, the state has strengthened security measures and ordered an independent taskforce to investigate continued health risks.

DAWSONVILLE, GA.—Radioactive debris from a nuclear laboratory dismantled more than two decades ago continues to endanger people frequenting parts of the Dawson Forest recreation park. One spot is so polluted that its radiation level easily exceeds current safety limits set for nuclear plants operating in the United States, state records show.

A state health department report in 1972 said the forest—once home to the Georgia Nuclear Laboratories—had been decontaminated by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation employees and contractors, and therefore was safe for public use of any kind.

But four years later, the state Environmental Protection Division (EPD) returned to the forest some 20 miles west of Gainesville and found that five areas were contaminated with radioactivity. Two spots were so polluted that state officials ordered them placed off limits to the public by enclosing the areas with four-foot-high hogwire fences topped with barbed wire.

Signs warning of danger were also

posted, but residents and state officials tell of repeated trespassing at the forest's two most radioactive sites. Both fenced areas have repeatedly fallen prey to vandals and the elements. Some community leaders and nuclear scientists say permanent steps are needed to rid the forest of radioactive debris—and the unseen danger it poses to the public.

A three-month investigation by *The Times* has revealed that:

▼ Radiation from one site exceeds accepted levels at licensed nuclear facilities. Radioactive wastes have been found in the soil and vegetation. Even very small amounts of cobalt-60—once manufactured at the forest—pose the risk of cancer, health and nuclear-industry experts say.

▼ The EPD concedes that some of the remaining debris is so “hot”—or radioactive—that it can't be removed without spreading it, endangering both workers and the environment. The price tag of a cleanup would be in the millions, said the state's top nuclear watchdog, James Setser of the EPD.

▼ The highly radioactive areas were

OTHER WINNERS For investigative reporting in Division Three (circulation under 30,000):

Second Prize to Dan Morse, Elizabeth Hayes, Steve Prince, Katherine Bouma, Robert Anderson, Brian Ponder, and Jordan Gruener of *The Alabama Journal* for their exhaustive and graphic examination of the deplorable pollution and lackluster regulation of Alabama's rivers.

Third Prize to Peter Shinkle of the *Baton Rouge State-Times* for his unsettling revelation that an incinerator operator was illegally burning or burying millions of pounds of hazardous waste laced with radioactive material.

open to the public for nearly five years before a 1976 state inspection identified the hazardous remains. The security fences posted around the two most dangerous sites in 1977 have holes big enough for a person to fit through.

After talking with *The Times*, the EPD notified the Georgia Forestry Commission to replace the fence around the hot-cell building — where irradiated materials were tested and examined — and to repair the fence at the cooling-off area — where those materials were kept in an open environment after they were irradiated.

State officials say they plan no additional action at the former reactor test site, other than maintaining existing security measures. John Braden, a spokesperson for the property's landlord — the city of Atlanta — also says he's satisfied with the status quo.

A THORNY PROBLEM

Shortly after the city acquired the property from Lockheed in 1972, Atlanta officials ordered workers to block entrances to the only remaining above-ground structure — the hot-cell building — and to remove surrounding topsoil to reduce potential radiation exposure. Crews also buried entrances to a maze of underground tunnels, said Braden, marketing director for the Department of Aviation, which oversees the site for the city.

But those safeguards have not worked, admits Braden, who said that visitors hack away at the hot-cell building and continually break through tunnels and fences. "We've even planted roses hoping the thorns would keep them out," Braden said. The city always knew there was radioactivity at the site, but state officials assured Atlanta the levels met standards. "There is an acceptable level of radiation," he said.

As for the state, environmental officials acknowledge the existing and past problems at the site, especially the radioactive waste left after decontamination efforts in 1972.

"There's no way I can defend what went on there," said Setser, chief of the EPD program coordination branch and chair of the state Environmental Radiation Advisory Committee. "I would just as soon not have this problem. We've spent a lot of money monitoring that site," he said, estimating the cost at about \$250,000 since the EPD came on the scene in 1976.

"There is no question two areas are still contaminated," Setser said. "I firmly believe the only radioactivity we're going

to find is confined to those areas."

That doesn't satisfy Forsyth County Commissioner Barry Hillgartner, who has expressed concern that he and others may have been exposed to radiation when they explored the site as teenagers in the 1970s. He wants the site cleaned up to remove any risk of exposure to present and future generations.

But what action, if any, will be taken remains unknown at this point, nearly two decades after the state of Georgia declared the site radiation-free.

THE MONSTER

Once envisioned as a \$100 million state-of-the-art defense complex in 1956, the Georgia Nuclear Laboratories was a joint venture between the U.S. Air Force and Lockheed to create a supersonic atomic jet. The remains of that vision are what some people call a radioactive graveyard.

The complex's labyrinth of tunnels and concrete structures was designed as a test site for what ended as a billion-dollar government boondoggle — the so-called "atomic war plane," a Cold War nuclear aircraft that was never built. The complex was designed to test aircraft components that could withstand enormous amounts of heat and radioactivity.

The facility, initially called "Air Force Plant No. 67," had been scaled down to a \$15 million version when it opened in 1958. After the official demise of the A-plane project in 1961, the laboratories were used for other radioactive experiments and for the manufacture of radioactive substances.

The site included above- and below-ground structures, two reactors, and an on-site railroad to transport irradiated material from the big, unshielded "Radiation Effects Reactor" across the Etowah River to the cooling-off area and back across another bridge to the hot-cell

Photo by Tom Reed/The Times



ONLY BARBED WIRE KEEPS VISITORS TO DAWSON FOREST AWAY FROM THE RADIOACTIVE HOT-CELL BUILDING AT THE FORMER GEORGIA NUCLEAR LAB.

building. Neither the rail cars nor the irradiated materials were covered during these journeys. In the hot-cell building, workers in the adjoining "Radiation Effects Facility" examined the radioactive cargo by remote control.

The unshielded reactor — lab employees called it "the monster" — normally rested in a pool of water. When fired up, it rose above ground to send radioactive waves and particles into the test materials — and the environment. The reactor sat inside an aluminum building, similar to a warehouse.

Located 750 feet from the Etowah River, the monster generated 10 megawatts of power capable of irradiating large quantities of materials in a natural environment — including the forest, according to Lockheed and other records. Compared to large commercial reactors used today, such as Georgia Power's 1,100-megawatt Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, "the monster" would appear tame, but the Dawson reactor was used in a different way. All its power was directed freely into test items and the environment.

NUCLEAR AFTERMATH

The monster reached self-sustaining atomic chain reactions in 1958. It ceased operation July 16, 1970, as Lockheed ran out of contracts for its unique service.

Two years later, the city of Atlanta, scouting land for a possible new airport, hooked up with Lockheed and paid the defense giant \$5.1 million for the 16-square-mile site. A stipulation in the contract required that the land be fit for public use by the contract's expiration date, June 23, 1972.

To meet that deadline, Lockheed and its contractors spent months digging up and shipping out tons of contaminated earth and other materials to radioactive waste disposal sites, including the military's Savannah River Plant in South Carolina and the Oak Ridge Nuclear Laboratory in Tennessee.

The huge concrete lab and the office complex next to the hot-cell building were destroyed by Lockheed — for undisclosed reasons — before the company sold the site. At least part of the lab building had once been contaminated — and then cleaned up — following a 1967 accident when fans in the pressurized hot-cell building reversed, drawing radioactive particles into the lab, said former lab health physicist Mark Ham.

The hot-cell building, which had been built to test the effects of radiation exposure on materials, was used in later years to manufacture large quantities of radioactive substances for industrial and university use. It proved too hot and too solid to tear down, former employees said, and still looms over the site.

The reactor itself was dismantled and transferred to its final resting place at the Savannah River Plant in 1971. But even after it was shut down, according to Lockheed files obtained from the EPD, the reactor was still pumping out radiation levels up to 500 rems per hour — a dose that could swiftly kill a human.

Water from the Etowah River routinely had been used to cool the reactor, Lockheed reports show. The resulting liquid waste was demineralized and then dumped into an on-site seepage pit near the reactor. Another pit was used to contain radioactive waste from activities at the hot-cell building.

During the 1972 cleanup, the liquid wastes remaining in the 100,000-gallon pits were sucked out and shipped to an undisclosed nuclear waste area, according to former lab administrator Don Westbrook. A second reactor — in use for just a few years — was much smaller and was removed as waste material in 1971, Lockheed reports show.

On June 22, 1972, the state health department ruled that the area now known as the Dawson Forest was fit for any use. The next day, it became the property of Atlanta. One month later, a memo issued by the state health department said, "This department and Lockheed, both with moral and legal obligations to the public, have agreed to remain liable for any decontamination that may be called for in the future at the site."

Officials at Lockheed headquarters in Marietta refused detailed comment on the lab site. Director of Communications Dick Martin was given a list of questions,

Photo courtesy The Times



WHEN THE DAWSONVILLE MONSTER WAS OPERATING, SECURITY GUARDS KEPT THE PUBLIC AWAY. TODAY THE GUARDS ARE GONE — BUT THE DANGER REMAINS.

as well as a summary of what *The Times* had discovered. In a prepared statement, the company said it sold the site to the city of Atlanta nearly 20 years ago and is therefore no longer responsible for additional cleanup or other action.

THE 1976 REPORT

After Atlanta purchased the property, the public had free access to the site, and in 1975, the city made an agreement with the Georgia Forestry Commission to manage the land. But in 1976, a representative of the Natural Resources Defense Council—an environmental group—began asking questions about the former lab site.

That same year, the state Environmental Protection Division inherited radiation monitoring duties from the health department, and began an exhaustive survey of the site. The EPD uncovered five hazardous areas:

- ▼ The ground surrounding the spot where the large reactor was based.
- ▼ The hot-cell building where irradiated material was tested and manufactured, as well as the surrounding land.
- ▼ The outdoor cooling-off area, including several acres across the Etowah River where high-level wastes were temporarily stored, low-level wastes were permanently buried, and irradiated materials were taken until they decayed to lower levels.
- ▼ The reactor seepage pit where waste waters from the reactor were stored.
- ▼ The hot-cell seepage pit where other liquid wastes were stored.

In its report, the state survey team informed EPD program coordinator James Setser and then-division director J. Leonard Ledbetter that it had found hot particles distributed in the soil with radiation levels up to 850 millirems a year at the reactor seepage pit. Levels of up to 2,278 millirems a year were found at the hot-cell seepage pit. At the cooling-off area, one spot measured 8,760 millirems per year. The current federal standard for acceptable radiation levels at nuclear power plants is 100 millirems per year.

The probable dose of radiation that most people receive from the environment each year is about 100 millirems, experts say. With an added dose of 100 millirems, "it's unlikely you'd see any discernible health effects. You couldn't measure it," said Bill Cline, chief of nuclear material safety at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission office in Atlanta. But the NRC and other nuclear agencies agree that any addi-

tional dose above environmental radiation should be avoided because of possible health risks.

There is not yet an agreement on where the line is drawn. Some say even the lowest doses—including those received from the environment—can cause cancer over a period of time; others maintain there is probably a threshold level that humans can withstand, said Ken Clark of the NRC regional office in Atlanta.

FENCES AND SIGNS

Because of the high readings at the hot-cell building and the cooling-off area, the EPD recommended installing the four-foot-high hogwire fencing topped with barbed wire. On the fences, they advised posting standard "no trespassing" and "hazardous area" warning signs. The Georgia Forestry Commission poured dirt into tunnel openings and around the hot-cell building, according to the EPD recommendations. Workers also stashed the radioactive hot-cell slabs that forest visitors had used as picnic tables back inside the building and boarded it up.

EPD officials felt the other three areas of contamination fell within regulatory guidelines for public access and were not dangerous enough to warrant concern—even though the 1976 report shows the two seepage pit areas to have levels above 500 millirems per year. "I disagree there were levels that exceeded standards," EPD official James Setser said recently. Following the fencing and posting of signs, EPD officials—including Setser—went on to tell area residents that no danger existed.

The decision to fence in two areas to keep the public away from the highest levels of radioactivity was made by Setser, DNR Commissioner Joe Tanner, and EPD Director Leonard Ledbetter. "I made the recommendation the site be closed," Setser said. "I don't remember the details of how the discussion went. The final consensus was that a four-foot hogwire fence with two strands of barbed wire would be a sufficient deterrent."

But that hasn't been the case, said Winston West of the Georgia Forestry Commission. The fences are constantly vandalized. "They fight their way through the barbs," West said. Former lab administrator Don Westbrook said that someone had once used dynamite to blast a way into the hot-cell building.

"GROSS FAILURE"

The state's security efforts, explanations, and testing procedures don't satisfy Ivan White, a scientist and nuclear expert with the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurement. The Maryland-based group sets state and industry radiation standards and decommissioning guidelines for nuclear facilities. Chartered by Congress, the group issued the standards the EPD used when it surveyed the lab site in 1976.

After learning from *The Times* of the 1976 state report detailing remaining contamination and of the subsequent reports issued by the EPD, White said, "No wonder industry has such a black eye. They're going to have to decontaminate that whole thing. They need to go in there and remove that stuff and put it in a radioactive waste disposal area."

White said that according to standard techniques used in cleaning up nuclear facilities, the radioactive materials never should have been left on a site where the public risks exposure. Warning signs and fences are not enough to protect the public.

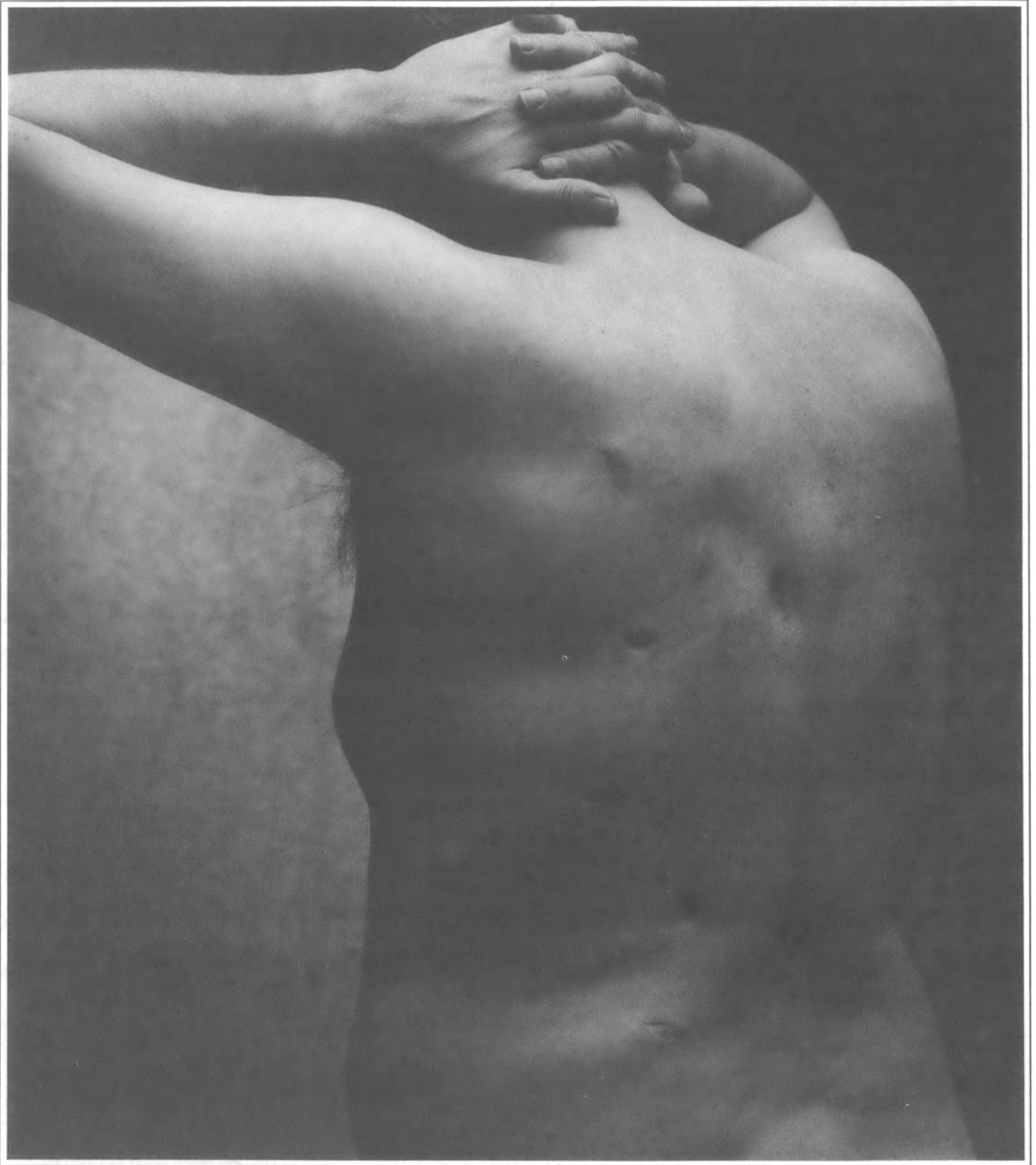
"I wouldn't walk around in there," he said. "You don't know what's in there until you really evaluate it and they didn't do an adequate job of evaluating it. The least they could have done was concrete it over."

Instead, the 10,000-acre forest has become a prime hunting and horseback riding spot and attracts year-round outdoors enthusiasts. The former lab occupied three areas of at least several acres each in the center of the forest. Residents say that portions of the forest where the laboratory and reactor sites once stood are frequented by area families, hikers, and others who eat and drink near the radiation sources.

Yet camping and eating near the contamination are the worst things people can do, White said. Both pose the risk of ingesting or breathing airborne radioactive particles. "Today when we look at these situations, one of the first things we look at is how likely we are to have human intrusion," White said. Anything fenced or locked or unguarded is considered an invitation to some people, he added.

"This is a mess as far as I am concerned," White said. "A gross failure of the state of Georgia." □

Photos by Mark B. Sluden/The Charlotte Observer



KEN SCHELL STILL BEARS THE WOUNDS OF THE ATTACK THREE AND HALF YEARS LATER. "I'M NOT GOING TO LIVE OUT OF FEAR," HE SAYS TODAY. "I HOPE OTHER GAY MEN WILL BE LESS AFRAID TO BE WHO THEY ARE."

“Somebody We Can Get”

Ken Schell was knifed 27 times and left for dead. Why? He's gay.

By Diane Suchetka
The Charlotte Observer



Violence against gay men and lesbians has been on the rise in the South, jumping 27 percent last year in North Carolina. Yet most

newspapers have paid little attention to brutal incidents of “gay bashing,” preferring to ignore the hatred behind the crimes.

When Ken Schell was savagely attacked in 1987, The Charlotte Observer reported the assault in a five-paragraph story that never mentioned the motive. Three years later, Diane Suchetka tracked Schell down and convinced him to tell the full story. The result is a compelling portrait of a little-discussed form of violence that is spreading across the region.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Mark Barberree was out of work. He needed money the night he was drinking outside a local convenience store.

“I know somebody we can get,” Barberree told his buddy, Larry Shrader. “This guy’s a faggot. We can get away with it.”

Just before 10 that night, Ken Schell heard a knock at his Chantilly bungalow. When he opened the door, a fist hit him between the eyes. His glasses snapped and flew across the room.

Barberree, 24, and Shrader, 23, elbowed their way inside, shut the door, and slid the chain across the lock. One slammed the 42-year-old teacher into the sofa. The other drew a seven-inch hunting knife and ran the tip down Schell’s forearm until blood dripped.

“What are you doing?” Schell asked. “What’s going on?”

“We’re going to hurt you real bad and then we’re going to kill you,” Shrader said.

Then he laughed.

ANTI-GAY ACTS

Today, three and a half years later, Charlotte Police Officer Bob Cooke still says it’s one of the most violent crimes he’s ever seen. “I never will forget that house or that victim,” he says.

It’s one example of the violence against gay men and lesbians now surging in North Carolina and across America. Anti-gay violence and harassment jumped 42 percent in 1990 in six major American cities, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reported.

In North Carolina, the number of anti-gay incidents rose 27 percent last year — from 1,204 to 1,530 — according to the N.C. Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality. Those statistics include two murders and 70 assaults and robberies. Not included are another 376 episodes of violence committed against gay men and lesbians by their own families.

Charlotte police don’t keep statistics on anti-gay crimes. And gay leaders in neighboring South Carolina say they know of no organization gathering statistics there.

OTHER WINNERS

For feature reporting in Division One (circulation over 100,000):

Second Prize to James B. O’Byrne of the *Times-Picayune* for his sensitive and probing account of a town swallowed up by a sprawling chemical-production complex and the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on black communities.

Third Prize to Cindy Horswell, Patti Muck, and Kevin Moran of the *Houston Chronicle* for their thought-provoking and carefully researched series on youth gangs in the suburbs.

But gays aren't the only ones who say the numbers are increasing. In New York City, where police document crimes against gays and lesbians, they more than doubled last year. In some cases, police say men pretend to be gay and pick up gay men to learn where they live and what they own. Then they rob or kill them.

Violence against gays and lesbians is like rape. Many victims don't report it. Because police reports are public record, gay men and lesbians fear that reporting crimes against them will make public their sexual orientation. Then they could lose their jobs, apartments, or custody of their children.

This is the story of a hate crime. The details come from interviews and court and police records. The men who attacked Ken Schell would not be interviewed.

If Schell had been attacked because he was black or Jewish, the violence would have received much more attention when it happened, says Charlotte lawyer and gay activist Chris Werte. "But gays and lesbians aren't thought of as human beings," he says. "They're thought of as immoral objects."

COMING OUT

Ken Schell grew up in a working-class family in Wyoming, Ohio, a wealthy Cincinnati suburb. He knew in junior high school that he was attracted to boys, but he trained himself to turn his head "like a normal guy" when girls walked by.

He didn't date, but he was bright — bright enough to win an academic scholarship to Earlham College in Indiana. In 1967, he graduated with a degree in biology.

That year, he moved to the Charlotte area for a teaching job, but he kept his sexual orientation a secret. Later, Schell, an art lover since childhood, helped start the Visual Arts Coalition and became president of the N.C. Print and Drawing Society.

In 1978, after a three-month relationship, he learned the man he loved did not love him. His heart was broken and he needed to talk. So at the age of 34 Schell came out. He told his family and friends that he was gay.

No one abandoned him. He couldn't believe it.

Life was easier.

Then, one summer night in 1987, he picked up a hitchhiker. The man told Ken he was troubled and confused about his marriage. They sat in the parking lot of Latta Park for two hours talking. And

when Schell got ready to leave, the hitchhiker said he wanted to go home with Schell. They spent the night together.

For the next few weeks, the man kept asking Ken for money. He called — even came to his house. But Ken always said no to Mark Barberree.

"HE'S STILL BREATHING"

"Where's your money?" Shrader yelled at Schell as he scoured each room. "Where's your jewelry? Don't you have some guns here?"

While Shrader searched for valuables, Barberree punched Schell in the face and chest again and again, pushing him into walls and from room to room. Then he shoved Schell into a bedroom and onto the bed. He held a half bottle of red wine he'd taken from Schell's refrigerator and started splashing it on him.

"You don't have to humiliate him," Shrader said to Barberree. "You know we're going to kill him in a minute."

The men forced Schell into the living room and demanded his car keys. I've got to do something soon, Schell told himself. If they're getting ready to leave, they're getting ready to kill me. This is it.

Schell had nothing to lose. He dove through the living room window.

Three-quarters of Schell made it past the two panes of glass and the splintered window frame, but a shard of glass foiled his escape. It sliced open Schell's leg just below his left knee.

At least the neighbors could hear him now. "Help! Murder! Help!" he screamed.

Before he could say anything else, one of the men grabbed his hair, pulled him inside, and stabbed him over and over again in the back with the knife. They pulled him to his feet and Schell instinctively blocked his face with his left arm. Barberree jammed the knife into Schell's chest.

"You killed me," he said as he fell to the floor. But Schell could still hear voices.

"He's still breathing," Shrader said calmly. "Let's cut his throat."

"No, let's get out of here," Barberree said.

"He's still breathing. Stab in the back of the skull."

"Let's just get out of here."

They lifted \$23 from Schell's wallet and ran out the door.

Schell crawled four feet to the phone in the dining room, his eyes shut tight. I know I'm going to die, he thought, but before I do, I'm going to make sure they get caught. He felt for the last hole in the rotary dial, where the O would be, and dialed.

Police arrived in minutes. Officer Cooke stepped through the broken window and let another officer in through the door. They found Schell sitting on the floor like a rag doll — his legs stretched out in front of him, arms dangling and eyes shut so he wouldn't have to see the blood draining from the 27 stab wounds and the cuts in his body.

During the three-mile ambulance ride to the hospital, Schell never stopped talking to himself. With every beat of his heart, he repeated his mantra: "I will live. I will live. I will live. I will live."

THE TRAUMA UNIT

At 1:15 that morning, August 25, 1987, police found Barberree, apparently passed out, face down in a dog kennel



"GOOD THINGS CAME FROM THAT BAD EVENT," SAYS SCHELL. "IT MADE ME REALIZE MY LIFE IS NOT MY OWN. I LIVE IT FOR THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE ME."

behind his house, a German shepherd lying beside him. Barberree was spattered with blood. His white high-top tennis shoes were drenched in it.

They couldn't find Shrader.

In the trauma unit that night, doctors pumped blood back into Schell's body. They cut him open from his breast bone to below his belly button to check the damage to his organs.

He was lucky. The knife just missed his heart, just missed his lungs, just missed his spine.

For weeks, it hurt to breathe. The incision became infected. And four times a day, Schell endured 30 minutes of torture as a nurse used forceps to pack gauze into his stab wounds.

But he was buoyed by dozens of friends — gay and straight — who came to his hospital room, put his family up, and paid for a charter plane to take him home to Ohio when he couldn't fly on a commercial flight.

About six weeks after the assault, police arrested Shrader. He had fled to Atlanta and a tipster told police he was back in town.

Three months after the attack, Schell returned to Charlotte. There were physical therapy sessions and thousands of dollars in medical bills that insurance didn't cover. By Thanksgiving, he was finally able to go back to work. But not without his cane.

GOING PUBLIC

It is rare, given the strong anti-gay sentiment in the Carolinas, for a gay man to talk publicly about being assaulted. It's even rarer that he allow himself to be identified. Friends have begged Schell not to tell his story, fearing for his life.

But Schell, now 46, wants people to understand the horror. He says fear is constant for gay men and lesbians.

"I'm not going to live out of fear," he says. "For me to live my life publicly as who I am is an affirmation of who I am — the freedom that this country is all about.

"I hope other gay men will be less afraid to be who they are."

Schell has thick graying hair and a bushy handlebar mustache. His green eyes twinkle behind black reading glasses. He has recovered, but his knee still throbs and his chest knots up from the stab wounds.

"I'm not vengeful," he says. "But my expectation was that these guys would be put away for 50 or 60 years."

CRIMES OF HATE

Ken Schell is one of the many men and women in the Carolinas who have been brutally assaulted because they are homosexual — or thought to be.

Last year, two gay men leaving an Asheville bar were beaten up by at least six men in the parking lot.

And Shelby engineer Michael Whisnant, 33, was murdered May 16 in Atlanta by Henry Hodges. Police say Hodges lured men into hotel rooms with the promise of sex, killed them, then went to their homes and robbed them.

Then there's David. The 22-year-old Charlottean has already written his will. In 1990, while he was walking to a convenience store near Westover Street and Independence Boulevard, two men attacked him with a carpenter's knife. "You faggots are going to die," they screamed at David as they cut his abdomen, eye, face, chest, arms, and legs. "You're diseased and you're going to die."

Attackers may be struggling with their own sexuality, says Charlotte psychologist Lenore Jones Deutsch. "So gay men are even more threatening to them," she says. "The majority of these offenders were probably abused or molested as children themselves. They walk around with tremendous anger and rage, which they vent on their victims. They're looking for someone they perceive as being weaker than them."

But you don't have to be gay to be a victim of anti-gay violence. The Shelby III adult bookstore slayings prove that. The bookstore was a gathering place for gay and bisexual men.

Just before midnight on January 17, 1987, several men wearing ski masks entered the bookstore and ordered the clerk and four others to lie on the floor. They shot each man at least once in the back of the head with a .22 or .45-caliber guns, then set the store on fire.

Three of the men died. One survivor was blinded. The other suffered brain damage.

Kenny Godfrey was killed that night while he handed out Bible tracts at the bookstore.

"I lived with him for 29 years and I know he wasn't gay," says his mother, Betty Godfrey of Forest City. "I can't hardly talk about it without crying because I know he was a good boy. He was good to me."

— D.S.

They weren't.

On November 13, 1987, his two assailants appeared before Judge Frank Snapp. Both, it turned out, had criminal records that included arrests for theft and assault. Shrader had been arrested for breaking a man's jaw with a baseball bat. Barberree had been convicted of assaulting a police officer.

The district attorney's office agreed to a plea bargain. Even with that, each man faced up to 60 years in prison. In exchange for a lesser sentence, Barberree and Shrader pleaded guilty to armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon, with intent to kill.

Snapp sentenced each to the minimum prison term: 14 years. In North Carolina, inmates get one day off their sentences for every day of good behavior. That can turn 14 years into seven.

That, says Schell, makes him feel as though he was victimized twice. "It's appalling to me that Jim Bakker was given a

longer sentence than these guys," he says. "I'm an upstanding, law-abiding citizen, except that I'm a faggot. If I wasn't, I have no doubt they would have received longer sentences."

Snapp, who retired in 1989, says he doesn't remember the case. "I heard hundreds of cases," he says. "I only remember sensational murder cases."

But Schell remembers every detail. And he worries about what will happen when Shrader and Barberree are released from prison. "These guys have done this before," he says, "and they'll do it again."

Now Shrader leaves his Charlotte prison to work but must return at night. He is scheduled to be freed on January 12, 1993. Barberree is to be released May 18, 1994.

Both could get out earlier for working while in prison. □

Out of the Madness

Steeled by a childhood amid hunger, drugs, and death, a young man from the Dallas projects confronts his life.

By Jerrold Ladd

The Dallas Morning News



Jerrold Ladd was a teenager when he decided to write a book about growing up in a West Dallas housing project. During the day he attended classes at a local community college and worked for a while as a clerk in a downtown law firm. But at night he sat up late, remembering and writing.

The result is the very best kind of journalism, the kind that newspapers too seldom publish—an intimate first-person portrayal that illuminates life the way no feature writer or investigative reporter ever can.

DALLAS, TEXAS—I knew the voice coming from the living room did not belong in our house. I peeked around the corner of the stairs and saw two men with guns, one against my mother's head, one against Fletcher's head. One of the men looked at me. I dashed past them, running through the back door of our apartment as fast as I could to where my brother and sister were playing. My older sister made me run across the field to get the cops assigned to the fire station. I hoped that since the men had noticed me, maybe they would spare my parents. Many parents had been shot in the head lately.

It was remarkable to me, at the time, how

the two officers responded. After being told the situation, they had casual conversations with the fireman on irrelevant subjects. If it had been their parents, would they have felt the same anger I was feeling?

Ten minutes later — it was a one-minute sprint for me — the cops and I arrived at our apartment. There was no blood on the floor, no dead bodies lying around. My parents told the cops everything was OK; they did not turn the men in.

I was no more than 10 years old at the time, and experiences like that were commonplace for me and other children. From as far back as I can remember we had lived in the West Dallas Housing Projects, about 3,000 units squeezed onto a small piece of land. Made of bricks, they looked as if someone took a few old dirty chimneys, molded them together, then cut out windows. In the front and back of each one of them was a small block of dirt. Sometimes there was grass. Most of the units had an upstairs and a downstairs. There wasn't any carpet on the floor, just hard quarry tile, like an old warehouse bathroom floor. All the walls were white — dirty, old, crusty white. Roaches and rats roamed throughout the night, in your icebox, your closets, your beds. Dead, decaying spiders and their webs were in every corner. We had heat but no air conditioning. On long, hot Texas nights we usually tossed, turned, and sweated for hours unless an occasional cool breeze brought temporary relief. My older brother and I would lie awake sometimes, waiting on that breeze.

The tops of the bridges leading over the Trinity River offered a view of the projects that perhaps revealed their real purpose: Endless rows of them dominated the small area they were in. Later in life, when I had the opportunity to see all of the city, I thought of them as a facility to house the maximum amount of people in the smallest, most underdeveloped side of town. Most of the people were black.

There were only two categories of people — poor but not yet without hope, or a bottomless poor where you had absolutely nothing.

The first category was made up of those who had parents or a parent who

worked steady minimum-wage jobs or were on welfare. They sacrificed and allowed their children to dress in fair clothes, have school supplies, and eat hot meals. Caught in the ghetto cycle, being content with day-to-day survival was a way of life.

The latter group was those who had given up — drug addicts, hustlers, burglars and the like. Most of them had kids they didn't give a damn about. They lived keyed-up on heroin, T's, and blues. Dope was a defense against the unyielding reality of an inherited future. Most of them had parents who birthed them into these situations, parents already on drugs or from the projects.

I was born into the latter group.



I'll never forget Pie, a boyfriend of my mother's. He was probably in his early 30s, heavily built and about 6-foot-1. He moved in and became our father.

After he called the first meeting of father and sons and introduced me to personal hygiene, I was so excited. I took a bath with Comet and washed the tub out with soap. He meant vice-versa.

Pie was nice. We had a nice Christmas with real toys that year. I think my mother's drug addiction made him leave. We could have moved up to the first level with Pie — the one where the parents sacrificed for the kids. Many more Pies would come and go.

At that time, I was a kindergarten student at Jose Navarro. I was six and a fast and able runner. The first escape move I learned was to take off at full speed, wait until the pursuer began to tire, and then let him get close enough to sense a capture. When he reached for me, I would suddenly slide to the ground. He would tumble forward, and I would jump up and run in the other direction. With no real will or endurance to continue, most people usually gave up the chase. When I was a teenager I saw films of African warriors on TV doing the same move. I used that move on a lot of people like the bully Biggun, would-be rapists, kid snatchers, and troublemakers. I ran all the time.

After school, we generally played around the project buildings. There weren't any playgrounds, not until years later when they built some sort of block wood fixtures with tires hanging from chains — the type you see the monkeys swinging on at the zoos. We wore those swings out, swinging our souls away late into the darkness of the night, if it was one of those nights when our parents were high and didn't come home.

Sometimes I sat out and watched the drug dealers. From morning until nightfall men mostly in their thirties sat out and pumped drugs into the people. I earned a couple of dollars from them at times by running across the field to a small store and buying cigarettes, sodas, or snacks. There were always at least three or four dope dealers at each corner.

Crippled Jerry was one of the more well-known dealers. His left leg was flawed from birth, and he dragged it when he walked. On several of the corners his workers sold dope. Jerry had money, a lot of money. He bought his 21-year-old girlfriend a new Mercedes-Benz. Some people treated him like some sort of Godfather. Every Christmas he bought all the kids toys and gave all the families hams. If he would not have sold drugs to the families, they could have bought their own hams and Christmas toys.

Gunfights went on all the time. It was normal to see 10 men jump out of cars with pistols and shotguns and come roaming through the projects, looking for their victim. It was both scary and exciting as a kid to see — gas bombs flying inside an apartment, ammunition flying inside a window.

Then there were black parents who rose in the mornings and turned into despaired zombies. They spent their days traveling back and forth to the corner, purchasing a pill or two of heroin and a syringe. They locked themselves in their bathrooms and bedrooms. They tied straps tightly around their arms to make the veins stick out. They sucked a cooked pill out of a bottle top with a needle. With the injection, release eased into their veins, their souls. A few precious moments of freeness were felt.

Perhaps they glimpsed the true inner man. Maybe within this dreamful high

WINNERS For feature reporting in Division Two (circulation between 30,000 and 100,000):

First Prize to Wade Rawlins of the *Chattanooga Times* for his impressive series chronicling the emotions, grassroots leadership, and internal dynamics behind the historic lawsuit that toppled the at-large system of city elections.

Second Prize to Jill J. Landford of the *Herald-Journal* in Spartanburg, South Carolina for her unusual and startling coverage of the "Hidden Homeless" — families who are forced to live in other people's houses out of desperation.

they saw the once proud kings and queens of Africa — saw their forefathers, great mathematicians, construct the pyramids. Maybe they felt the courage of a Marcus Garvey deep within them. Somewhere inside there was a man of intelligence and capability trying to get out.

Or did they see the task as so overbearing that they just refused to fight? So they abandoned their pride and families, their manhood and motherhood, their responsibility to their children. And every day was spent hiding the shame of their refusal to resist behind the guile of dope.

W

ake up Jerrold and Junior.” There was no need to wake up. I hadn’t slept for half of the night — was too nervous to sleep. I forced myself out of the bed.

A pile of dirty clothes lay just inside the closet. I moved the broken door aside; it had come off its slide track.

Sifting through the pile, I managed

an outfit that wasn’t so abhorrent. The shirt was from the early Sixties, the pants dirt-packed.

Somewhere along the way the principles of hygiene that Pie had taught us — bathing at the least — had dissolved. We were probably too young at the time to absorb it — too young to make it second nature.

I left the house and walked to the corner across the street from the graveyard. A few young kids were decent, well-dressed, and from the first group — just slightly more fortunate.

Maybe the bus would have a wreck. Maybe it would forget our street. The big yellow machine rounding the corner spoiled that idea. I was nervous as I boarded, nervous and embarrassed.

Hampton Road led us to a long bridge over a deep valley of grass, shrubbery, and scarce trees. Across the bridge, Hampton turned into Inwood Road. As we descended on the other end, a remarkable change took place.

I had heard rumors of the place we now headed toward. Yet no foresight

could have prepared me, or any of the children, for what lay ahead. We were being bused to the heart of the white neighborhood.

I noticed that the buildings were all pleasant and new. There were a lot of pretty cars. We drove farther. Houses started appearing unlike any I had ever seen. They were nice, new, and clean. As we drove on, they grew larger and larger.

We came around a curve. I saw the biggest house. You could have placed half of a project block on its front yard alone. It resembled a castle, and had a long, twisted road leading up to its front door, then circling back out the other side. Who could have lived in that place? It contrasted with anything that I had ever been exposed to.

The standard of white American life emitted itself along the way. Those same white kids who I would encounter later probably had risen to the scent of new clothes, fresh school supplies, and a hot breakfast. Their parents probably had made them brush their teeth and comb their hair.

Photos by Irwin Thompson/Dallas Morning News



“MADE OF BRICKS, THEY LOOKED AS IF SOMEONE TOOK A FEW DIRTY CHIMNEYS, MOLDED THEM TOGETHER, THEN CUT OUT WINDOWS.”

Thus the odds began from birth.

School was unpleasant. I often day-dreamed. We were some of the filthiest kids. The school bus driver, Mr. Holley, was also our P.E. teacher. He called me into his office one day and made me show him my once-white but now brown socks. He did the same with my underwear. He encouraged me to wash my clothes by hand and to bathe myself — we had forgotten what Pie had taught us.

I made friends with a few white kids. I'll never forget Dean Hurst. He was mature and sincere for his age. He sometimes gave me money for my lunch when I was too ashamed to use the free-lunch ticket. They made the free-lunch kids go through one line; the paying students went through another. One line was all black, the other all white. It was very humiliating.



Fletcher and my mother had been together for about a year. Fletcher was also addicted to heroin. He was a quiet, conservative man and not very smart. Tall and light complexioned, he appeared to be in his late thirties. I remember when he first introduced me to fishing. He took me down to the pond with two rods and reels and a bucket of worms he had dug up from his mother's back yard. Beyond the cattails he cast the lines into the water. He propped them up in the air using a Y stick and twisted the reel until the lines were tight.

We sat for a few minutes. I was told to watch the movement of the tip of the rod, which would signal a fish nibbling the bait. I paid no attention. Then I heard Fletcher say, "There he goes." I turned around in time to see the tip of the rod bend almost to the water. As suddenly as it had tightened, the line slackened. "There are carps in this lake as long as a man's leg," Fletcher informed me. I went on to catch fish that enormous, some so big we had to go into the water and drag them out by their gills.

My mom enjoyed fishing also. She used the activity to combat her drug habit, though it never worked. I'd bait her hook then throw the line far out into the deep, where she liked it. As long as I would bait and cast the line, she would sit there and haul in the fish. Those fish filled our tummies many nights.

Every few months there was a differ-

ent man, as a father, in our lives. You can imagine how confusing this was for us as children. The minute you adapted to the new person, out the door he went, and in came another. Every new man my mother had we called Daddy. That's how bad we longed for a father figure.

I cannot recall one strong male role model in my youth. This was pervasive in every family. Most of the women were husbandless, all the children fatherless. Where was the strong, black, soothing hand in the moments of our uncertainty? Where was his wisdom and guidance to lead us around snares and guide us through tribulations? Where was my father who resists despair and holds high his torch of hope?

The longest my mother stayed with one was about a year, and he was Fletcher. She and Fletcher had started selling drugs for Crippled Jerry's brother, Fred. Fletcher shot up a lot of the dope and fled to California with the proceeds from the rest. That hurt my mother. I remember how she stayed restless and upset after his departure.

Then there were the men who were just basic tricks. It was so embarrassing for all the other children to know your mother was selling herself. She was ashamed of herself, too, yet could not resist the hold of her habit.

If our mom was in a bad mood, it was best to stay clear of her. Kids were a means to release frustration, and loud shouting and cursing accompanied it. Every kid I knew received whoopings. Sometimes, up and down the streets, the kids yelled and screamed, "OK, Momma, I won't do it no mo." Some of them received whoopings in their front yards or the middle of the street. As I had, some children were made to take whoopings with extension cords, standing naked and wet. It bordered on torture.

Although my mom put us through hell, I love her, we all love her. I remember the day I came home and found the house empty. Everything was gone, sold for little or nothing to support her drug habit. I sat on the porch meditating that night, calm and undaunted. I thought deeply, focusing on all the efforts she had given at overcoming her habit, at all the drug rehabilitation hospitals and halfway houses she had visited. I remember how she had wept over her failed attempts. She wasn't to blame. She tried but just wasn't strong enough to defeat the impossible.

No, I did not blame her for being born into the faithless latter group and turning

to the substance that helped her bear the burden of the tremendous odds against her. She never had a chance. At the age of 14 her mother made her quit school and help take care of her seven brothers and sisters — clean, cook, and wash. And when she was 20, she moved into her first project apartment with three kids. It was her mother who gave her heroin as a remedy for a headache. Her own mother handed down the tradition of the latter group. "Here, take this and fail like the rest of us. You'll never defeat these impossible odds anyway."



Late evening sunlight reflected from an eerie, empty project unit. The windowpanes were all broken. Glass and debris were scattered around. I peered out our front door and down the street trying to locate the voice coming through the microphone. It was full of energy and shouted strange words. Excitement was about. Who was causing the excitement? I walked to the corner to find out.

In the front yard of someone's apartment, right there on the dirt, a small group of men and women had gathered. Their faces appeared stern, dry, and serious. All of the women had on dresses or skirts and the men had on suits and neckties. They were black.

They had small, round objects with cymbals attached and patted them against their outstretched hands. Others repeatedly clapped or patted their foot to the rhythm. A lady with stubby limbs held the microphone and sang, "Watcha gonna do, watcha gonna do when the world's on fire." After she finished, an old set-faced man stepped forward and began to talk. "The Lord can bring a change in your lives, if you're hungry and worried, if you have bills to pay, if you're on drugs, whatever the problem, the Lord can make a change," he told us.

I felt hurt and wanted this God to help me and my family. When he asked did anyone want to try Jesus, through the laughter of some of the spectators, I stepped forward. Nervous and ashamed, I was led off by a woman. She told me to ask the Lord to save me. I said, "Lord, save me." She shouted in my ear, "Save me Lord." I said, "Save me Lord." "Ask the Lord to save you." "Save me Lord." "Now thank him." "Thank you Lord." By this time, she was hyped and spitting in

my ear. I heard moaning and eerie, ghost sounds coming from around me. I opened my eyes and saw one lady bent forward with her arms outstretched, screaming.

The intensity slowly let up. I was asked my name and told that I was now clean and saved. I now needed to come to the church to learn and grow. The arrangements were made. I went back home, telling no one about my secret.

I soon learned how to pray, all about sin, living holy, the end of the world, and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. God loved me and did not want to see me suffering, hungry, and depraved. Without hesitation, I trusted God. I started going to the church every time they had service, maybe five times a week. Word soon spread around our block that Jerrold was Saved.

I began joining in the shouting and testifying. Allowing the mood of the atmosphere to take me, my feet stomped and my voice wailed. I became well-trained in the Scriptures. I was happy to

know that I could have a good, normal life — never hungry, always happy.

I only had to die before I received it.

After a few months of this, I prepared for my biggest challenge. I turned my faith toward our house. God was going to take my mother off of drugs. I knew he would do it, I possessed no doubt.

That evening I went into her room and opened the drawer where she kept her needles. I threw them in the trash. When she came home and found out, she slapped me around and turned over furniture. I told her that God loved us and wanted to help us. Since she was from a holy family, my words disturbed her. She went into her room and shut the door. I was determined. I sat at the top of the stairs in front of her door. I stayed there all night so that she would not go out.

Around three o'clock, she emerged from the room, then took a seat beside me. I told her that we could do better; she agreed. I told her how God was making me happy and that he wanted to do the

same thing for her. After our talk, we decided that our whole family would go to church the next Sunday.

That Sunday, my mother, sister, brother, and I went to church. When the pastor asked who wanted to be saved, they all went to the altar. They each went through the process and my mother wailed like a seasoned pro. I recall feeling ashamed as my mother went through wild, uncontrollable yelping and screaming.

After we arrived home that evening I noticed a worried look in my mother's eyes. As strong as her desire was, she was still helpless. No matter how hard she tried, her peace of mind came only from the heroin pills.

I kept going to the church for a while. I began to notice things more in depth. I saw how most of the members never lasted long and were always worried, deprived, and depressed. The way the religion was arranged, it didn't answer key questions. I noticed how everyone



"SOMETIMES I SAT OUT AND WATCHED THE DRUG DEALERS. FROM MORNING UNTIL NIGHTFALL MEN SAT OUT AND PUMPED DRUGS INTO THE PEOPLE."

felt naturally disturbed when the sermon hinted around the color of Jesus and the origins of the religion. Their knowledge of the religion was limited, and they could never answer the question: Was it truly ours?

Among the gossiping, boredom, grief, and home-threatening problems, my church activities diminished. One day, I simply left, never to return.



I was around 13 then and becoming restless about improving our family standard. It had gotten to a point where on days that we ate, it was only a small serving of red beans and maybe some corn bread. Sometimes we only ate mayonnaise sandwiches, ketchup sandwiches, mustard sandwiches, or just plain bread. That was all.

Hanging out on the corner one day, this man told me how I could get my family something to eat. He knew some foreigners who lived on the other side of the projects and had a lot of money. He told me that he was going to take their belongings. He would give me a cut if I would help carry the merchandise to his car. I said OK, never giving it a second thought. He was a dope fiend and desperate for a fix. I was desperate for everything.

Shortly after, we arrived at the back door of this apartment. I was nervous, yet the thought of a lot of money kept me involved. He busted the glass pane above the lock and unlocked the door. We both crept inside. A big color TV was against a wall. We lifted simultaneously and carried it to his car.

After another quick trip we were at a dope trap. I helped him unload the TV and carry it into the apartment. That was when I heard this woman say she was going to whoop my ass. I turned around and saw my mother seated on a couch. The man I was with told her he had just asked me to help him carry the TV. He explained that I knew nothing. He gave me \$5, telling me he would have to find change for the \$50 bill — to give me my other cut. My mother told him she would go along and bring back my change. She called it making sure that I would not be messed around, but I knew that I'd never see the rest of the money.

After that, I learned how to shoplift for food. On days when our hunger wouldn't let us rest, my brother and I stole things

that were easy to conceal — cans of sardines, small packages of rice. A bowl of rice and a tall glass of water did justice to our indiscriminate hunger.

Another hustle we learned was to go to the shopping center late Saturday nights. The newspaper companies dumped hundreds of papers on the sidewalk to be delivered the next morning. A couple of us would arrive around one a.m. and sift through the piles, picking out all of the TV guides. Back in the projects we would go from door to door selling our magazines for a quarter apiece.

In those days, my mother made us do everything. Sometimes I thought we were slaves. If she wanted a glass of water we brought it to her room. If she wanted her cigarette lit from the stove or her neck massaged, we did it. She sent us to Ms. Dee's house to buy her pain pills for \$1.50 each. If Ms. Dee was out, we were told to walk miles to other places.

To this day I dislike anyone who pops as many pills as my mother. She took maybe five or six Anacins a day and sniffed Afrin nasal spray. She was as addicted to them as she was to heroin. If she was out of either one, even if it was three o'clock in the morning, we had to walk almost a mile to the shopping center to buy them. If there was no way to buy them, we were told to steal them. The cool words "Do it for Momma" and "That's Momma's baby boy" did me in every time. Kindness was so rare.

Bring Momma's house shoes, go and borrow some sugar for Momma, and it was best not to object or you would receive one of those horrible beatings or get slapped across the head. One time, before one of her blows landed on my face, I darted out the back door while calling her a bitch. I climbed a tree, staying until I thought the action had died away.



"I TRUSTED GOD. I STARTED GOING TO THE CHURCH EVERY TIME THEY HAD SERVICE, MAYBE FIVE TIMES A WEEK."

The mailman delivered the notice that we had 30 days to vacate our project unit. I was 14 and it was autumn 1984. During those 30 days, my mother stayed depressed. We had no money, so there was nothing we could do. We were going to be homeless.

"Jerrold," she screamed. "Yes ma'am," I responded while hurrying up the stairs. I was called into the bathroom where she sat on the toilet. There was a stocking tied around her arm. She gradually brought the needle up toward her arm. She said, "Jerrold, I'm too nervous to hit myself. I'll put the needle in place and then let you hold it. All that you will have to do is squeeze it." I was in a trance — I quietly came in the bathroom and shut the door behind me. She placed my hand on the needle with her nervous, shaking hand and said, "Do it for Momma." A little kid, I understood her torment, her complete dependence. I held her shaking arm still, while slowly squeezing the clear liquid into her. I did it for Momma. □

Mobile Homes

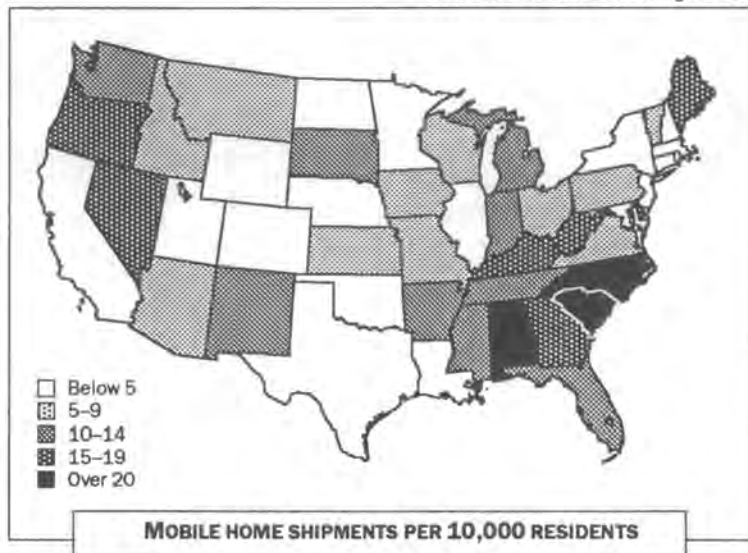
By Leila Finn and Mary Lee Kerr

Mobile homes have become a roadside fixture of the Southern landscape over the past half century. Originally created as playhouses for the wealthy, they have evolved into a \$6-billion industry that provides one of the few alternatives to renting for millions of working families unable to afford their own home.

The mobile home dates back to the Roaring Twenties when aircraft designer Glenn Curtiss began selling luxury trailer homes called "Aerocars" to the rich and famous. In an age of airplane frenzy, his customized "land yachts" sported cockpit observatories, trailer-to-car telephones, separate kitchens, and butler quarters at then-exorbitant price tags of \$25,000.

As cars became cheaper and more accessible, a new cottage industry arose — small, inexpensive trailer homes for the middle class. During the Great Depression, homemade trailers outnumbered factory-built models by two to one. Industrial production finally gained control of the market in 1936, when the National Used Car Market Report listed 800 commercial trailer builders nationwide.

Curtiss had prophesied that if his trailer homes became readily available to middle-class consumers, they would become heavily stigmatized. He was right. Hotel and restaurant owners were outraged by the new breed of self-sufficient mobile home owners, and some even speculated that the motorized nomads were evading property taxes by moving their homes from state to state.



But it was the Second World War that transformed the mobile home into a permanent residence for many Americans. The federal government began ordering low-cost trailers for on-site worker housing, and by 1945 the mobile home offered many workers their only affordable alternative to renting.

Through the Fifties and Sixties mobile homes grew larger and less mobile. The trailer park, formerly a vacation camp ground, became a permanent neighborhood for mobile homes.

Nowhere are mobile homes more prolific than in the rural South. Like the tenant farmhouse and the shotgun shack before them, compact trailers provide a basic form of folk housing, offering economical shelter to low-income families. In mountain areas, parents often put mobile homes near the family homestead so their grown children will have a place of their own to live.

In 1976 the mobile home industry — hoping to overcome the low-rent image of its product — began a marketing

campaign to change its name to "manufactured housing." It didn't work.

"I don't like to hear people call them trailers," complains Bill Clark, a mobile home salesman in Garner, North Carolina. "Manufactured homes are as good as any stick house."

Today the South leads the nation in its dependency on "manufactured homes" as an alternative to conventional "stick houses." Census figures indicate that half of all mobile homes reside in the region, and six of the 10 states

receiving the largest per capita shipments of mobile homes last year were Southern. South and North Carolina topped the list, followed by Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, and West Virginia.

Most modern mobile homes resemble traditional houses, with full kitchens, living rooms, and separate bedrooms. Prices run as low as \$25,000, and more expensive models include options like fireplaces, cathedral ceilings, skylights, and sunken tubs.

Yet the mobile-home stigma of poverty and tornado traps is slow to die. "Most people who come to look at mobile homes are educated about them," says Mack McElheney, who has sold mobile homes for 30 years in Durham, North Carolina. "But once in a while someone will bring their mother-in-law, and they still think that mobile homes attract hurricanes." □

Leila Finn holds a degree in anthropology and lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. Mary Lee Kerr is a research associate with the Institute for Southern Studies.

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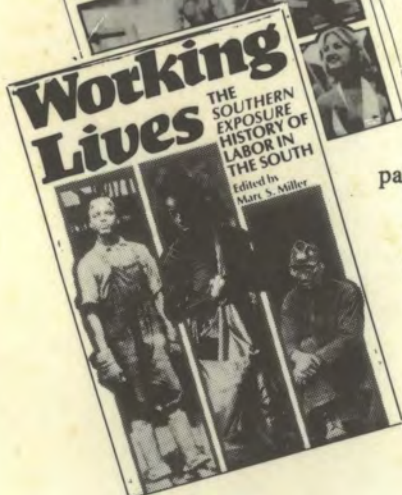
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