

GUY'S GONE

By Lew Barton
The South's brightest contemporary literary light has been extinguished.

Guy's gone.
"Tell our friends in Robeson the family's holding up pretty well," John, his son, told me on the telephone shortly after Guy's passing, Thursday, July 23, 1981. I'd called to encourage and comfort the bereaved family, near Raleigh. But it's difficult to do that when you're broken-up and weeping yourself.

"Teacher, poet and author Guy Owen, the creator of 'The Flam-Flam Man' stories who was lauded by colleagues as a major force in Southern literature, died Thursday of liver cancer at the age of 56," a crisp AP press release announced.

"The... North Carolina State University professor of English died at Rex Hospital after a long bout with the cancer," the sloppy AP release which mentioned his age three times in short order, continued.

Even in my grief, it oc-

curring to me that Guy wouldn't have stated the matter that way! Guy Owen was a writer!

He was also the humanest human being I ever knew. He used to come to my humble quarters in Pembroke, North Carolina, where we'd both just slouch around, talking shop. I could've been living in a palace instead of a hovel, and Guy wouldn't have acted any differently. He had his own ideas as to what real worth consisted of. And they all had to do with people, not their circumstances. Somehow Guy redeemed the whole Caucasian race for this Lumbee, without even trying. I was happy that we both belonged to the same human race. That was close enough for us both.

Guy Owen was my friend and I was his. He was also my benefactor and I was his protegee. We both worked in the "Poetry in the Schools" project. And when he was writing and promoting *Journey for Jodel*, a novel about a 13-year-old Lumbee Indian

boy, we talked shop, more than usually.

Guy could make me laugh when I didn't feel like it. Like the time he related his adventures--or misadventures--with the lady in the publisher's establishment in New York City. She it was who'd been detailed to trim-down one of Guy's books. No writer wants anyone deleting some of his beautifully-descriptive passages, and I guess Guy least of anyone. Anyway; when she'd finished cutting his work, Guy looked at her and shook his head sadly. "Lady," he remarked dryly, "I'm glad you weren't the one who circumcised me!"

Guy loved folklore and was North Carolina's foremost folklorist. But to really understand and appreciate it, Guy felt one had to get out among the people who created it all in the first place. And so he got out among them. He loved them, they loved him, and everybody had a great time during the process of learning and gathering.

As a writer, Guy thought I was the real thing. And I knew darn well he was. He wrote not because he wanted to be rich and famous, but because there was something human that he wanted to convey. When you read



him, look out, because he appeals to all your senses simultaneously.

He was not a William Faulkner. He was not an Erskine Caldwell or a Tennessee Williams. He was Guy Owen, 100% original, and in all past eternity there has never been another. Nor will there be in the endless ages ahead. Guy was one of a kind. Everyone down here who ever knew him, probably feels lucky for having done so, because he never failed to impart something human and priceless.

Dora Chavis from Pembroke returns to delight the audience for her sixth season as Aunt Mary in 'Strike at the Wind!' See story on page one.



The first President to ride in an automobile was Theodore Roosevelt.



The building on the back of a nickel is Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson.

FAITH KEEPS THE CONTINUITY IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE

The fact that some sort of family unit has always existed is evident from the earliest records of human society. This conclusion is reinforced throughout the Bible, in which the rules for the conduct of family life are laid out in explicit detail. Somehow the family unit has survived to the present time, despite differences of opinion resulting from the changing lifestyles of each succeeding generation; including the so-called "new morality", with its rising tide of unmarried and/or deliberately childless couples. Nonetheless, with the help of faith the family structure will continue to prevail; and there is no more challenging nor rewarding human relationship in the area of love, compromise and the development of character; both our children's and our own.



My soul knows that I am part of the human race... I am part of my family.
— David H. Lawrence

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— 1 Timothy 3:12

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