



# The NEW BERN MIRROR

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Lucy in death needs no epitaph, carved on cold marble, to keep her forever enshrined in the hearts of those who loved her. If you've ever had a dog that became a cherished and highly respected member of your family, you know whereof we speak.

These lines from the pen of Lord Byron would have been peculiarly appropriate, had we seen fit to inscribe something on stone for the passerby to gaze at and reflect upon: "Near this spot are deposited the remains of one who possessed Beauty without Vanity, Strength without Insolence, Courage without Ferocity, and all the Virtues of Man without the Vices."

To Lucy, the editor of The Mirror was God. We didn't remotely deserve the pedestal she placed up on—that's why the worship in her expressive eyes never failed to humble us and make us uncomfortably aware of our human frailty.

Her faith never faltered. Conscious to the last, she wanted to be close to us in her final moments. Instinctively, with the strange unexplainable wisdom that the Creator gives the animal kingdom, she sensed death an hour before it came. For the first time during her three-day illness, she whimpered softly. This was it, and she knew it.

It wasn't a whimper of complaint or pain, but an expression of apprehensiveness. She was walking through the valley of the shadow of death, and even as humans do, she needed reassurance as she crossed over into the Great Beyond.

There was a look of apology in her eyes that broke our heart in the early gray quietness of that chilly January morning. It was just as if she were saying, "I've kept you up all night, I've worried you, and I'm sorry."

Lucy died as she had lived, with true dignity. Something died in us too, when the joyous animation that was part and parcel of her passed from her body. People always die a little themselves when someone dear takes leave. It's the price you pay for loving, but who wants to live a life without love, and tenderness and compassion?

Because she always made the rounds with us, in New Bern's business district and elsewhere, a great many citizens knew her by name. We used to say, jokingly, that a lot of folks spoke to Lucy who didn't speak to us. It's true that some people did just that, but it didn't hurt our feelings.

So far as we know, she never had an enemy, unless you want to count the occasional cats she gave chase to, and the squirrels she barked at when they scrambled up a convenient tree to evade her.

Actually, Lucy didn't hate cats. We were convinced of that on one occasion when she encountered a defensively little kitty, and was kindness itself. To tell the truth, she was rather on the timid side, and a prostrate June bug, squirming on its back on the sidewalk, was sufficiently omniscient in appearance to intimidate her.

We were often asked what breed of dog she was, but that was something no one could figure out with reasonable certainty. She was given to us by someone who didn't want her. The man who wished her off on us had fallen heir to her in similar fashion.

When we first saw Lucy, she was tied to a tree and looking very dejected. We untied the rope, and she licked our hand in gratitude. From that day until the morning she died, we could do no wrong as far as she was concerned.

It has always been a matter of conjecture in our home as to whether Lucy ever realized she was  
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NEW BERN'S OWN—Pictured here is the Sudan Patrol, a crack drill team that brightens Shrine Ceremonials here and elsewhere in eastern North Carolina. There were at

their sparkling best before the home folks yesterday, as Sudan Temple's Winter Ceremonial reached its colorful climax with a parade and the Potentate's Ball.

## Most of New Bern's Citizens Are Against the Gas Chamber

It came as no surprise, during the January term of Craven Superior Court, when two youths who admitted the brutal slaying of an elderly man, got off with life imprisonment.

Theirs was a vicious crime. They went to the home of the intended victim under cover of darkness, with robbery in mind. One was armed with an ice pick, and he plunged it into the old man's breast repeatedly as soon as a knock on the door was answered.

A single thrust was enough—it ripped the victim's heart open. The additional violence, including an arm wound, was simply to make sure that the man wouldn't live to point a finger of guilt at his two young neighbors.

As he sank to the floor in a corner of his shanty, the dying man slumped against the wall. Seated there—helpless—he bled to death internally while the accomplice of the pick wielder bent over him and robbed him of a wallet containing over \$400.

The two youths, in business-like fashion, carefully locked the door behind them as they left the scene of their cold-blooded murder. The old man's body was discovered next day. The youths, flashing their blood money and spending it with reckless abandon, had only a few cents left when apprehended by authorities.

Because it was clearly a premeditated murder, admittedly planned for two weeks, the two slayers were tried for their lives. One of them—the wallet grabber—testified that it had been debated whether to stab the victim, shoot

him or knock him in the head.

When the jury was being selected, a majority of the prospective jurors frankly and honestly admitted that they were opposed to capital punishments in all cases, regardless of the circumstances.

Finally, several men and women who said they were against sending a fellow human to the gas chamber ended up on the jury. Obviously, there was virtually no chance of a death sentence after this occurred.

When the verdict was rendered, it proved to be life imprisonment as anticipated by everyone present in the courtroom. Actually, the two murderers, if they remain on good behavior, can be free after serving a fraction of the mandatory sentence meted out to them by the presiding judge.

After the trial, one of the jurors told The Mirror that at no time were the lives of the two slayers in jeopardy. "All of us voted against the death penalty on the first ballot," he said. Their deliberation from that point on concerned the amount of punishment they felt the youth who didn't do the actual stabbing deserved. They decided that he was as guilty as his partner.

If you favor capital punishment, when evidence merits a first degree conviction, you'll probably regard this as a miscarriage of justice. That the jury, composed of respectable and intelligent citizens, acted in good conscience, there can be no doubt. Whether they rendered a wise decision can be argued.

However, there is no assurance

that you would have held out for the death penalty, had you been on that jury. Many a citizen talks big, until he gets on a murder jury, and then turns squeamish about sending the convicted party to the gas chamber.

Facts revealed in a sample survey of law abiding citizens, made by The Mirror, indicates conclusively that only a small percentage of New Bern and Craven county citizens favor capital punishment today. So pronounced is the general sentiment against taking a man's life legally, that the death chair at State prison in Raleigh seems destined to gather cobwebs indefinitely.

Far be it from The Mirror to criticize the Craven jury we've been talking about. It is too much to expect of anyone sincerely opposed to death in the gas chamber to ask them to be a party to snuffing out a life.

Is the steady decline, and apparently eventual extinction of capital punishment encouraging murder and other capital offenses? It's a question not easily answered. Having covered murder trials for 30 years, we're convinced that very few murderers consider the possible punishment for their crimes when they perpetuate their act.

And, contrary to popular belief, there is no such exact category as a "murder type." A few murderers look the part, and act the part—they have discernible homicidal characteristics. But by and large, some of the most vicious slayers we've ever sat within arm's length of, before the bar of justice, were as meek appearing as a mouse.

Interwoven in the fabric of almost every homicide are strands of stupidity. Killings, more often than not, occur without rhyme or reason, and are frequently triggered by trifles light as air. This holds true almost invariably in cases of second degree murder and manslaughter, where there is no advance planning on the part of the slayer.

In addition to first degree murder, capital offenses in North Carolina are arson, first degree burglary and rape. Arson is punishable by death if a residence in which people are sleeping is deliberately set fire to, and first degree burglary involves armed entry of a residence.

Believe it or not, back in 1763 there were no less than 160 offenses that a man might be put to death for in England, extending from the gravest crimes to petty thefts. Today, in most civilized countries, capital punishment is used for only two crimes—treason, and murder in the first degree.

Students of criminology have reached the conclusion that it is not so much the severity of punishment which puts a stop to crime as the certainty of punishment. This too is open to debate, in view of mounting lawlessness in many sectors.

At any rate, the gas chamber at Raleigh won't get many occupants from New Bern and Craven county, if local citizens have to send them there.

Children are all foreigners. We treat them as such. — Ralph Waldo Emerson.