

Book Forces Southerner to Reconsider His Heritage

Like many freshmen starting at UNC this week, I spent part of my summer reading "Confederates in the Attic" by Tony Horwitz. As I read, Horwitz seduced me into reconsidering questions about my "Southernness" that I skillfully had been avoiding for years. How should I think about my Southern heritage? Are we really still fighting the war? I didn't get to these questions over coffee at Starbucks one morning.

No, they go back 22 years to when I was a 12-year-old visiting my grandparents in Florence, S. C. Much of my Southernness was shaped by my grandparents, Charles and Mae O'Neil. Like folks in most small Southern towns, they spoke when they passed others on the street, carried their well-worn Bibles to church and, immediately after, headed straight to the K&W Cafeteria for Sunday dinner.

My grandfather taught me about my family's connection to the Civil War. I couldn't count the times "Da-da" told me the story of how his granddaddy, Eli King, had been shot in the arm with a little lead ball. I learned that his two great uncles died, probably from dysentery, after having signed their "X" on Confederate

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registration documents. The Confederacy even occupied a place in my grandparent's home. "The Last Meeting" is a print that portrays the parting of two Confederate generals, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, before the Battle of Chancellorsville. Horwitz refers to it several times in his book. My grandparents proudly displayed it in their living room.

I loved that picture, too. Soldiers, horses, ghosts - what wouldn't a young boy love? The fall after I turned 12, my grandmother rather nonchalantly posed to me a haunting question. "Pat-pat, what would you like from our house when we die?" The average 12-year-old might not have responded so coolly when asked such a horrifying question. But I had heard it many times before and watched as my older cousins, brothers and sister claimed the bounty of their home like pirates taking a galleon on the open sea.

Now it was my turn. To make a good show of it, I thoughtfully surveyed the room, noticing the antique roll-top desk, a fine bronze sculpture and various items of ivory, porcelain and brass. But I knew exactly what I wanted and staked my claim to "the two generals."

Twelve years later, my grandparents had passed away. The print was mine.

I didn't give the picture much thought until after I moved to Chicago in 1993. I hung the black-and-gold-framed memorial prominently in my apartment. When I was homesick I looked at it and saw my grandparent's house. I heard the melodic drawl of their Southern accents and tasted my grandmother's mouth-watering butter beans. Then, the ghosts in the picture began to haunt me.

The ghosts whispered to my conscience and gave me reasons for contemplation. They told me that it is honorable to fight for what you believe. Yet they reminded me that tens of

thousands of men on both sides died for what they thought was right - even though one side was clearly wrong.

In 1996, the ghosts took me to Ghana, West Africa. There they escorted me through the remnants of inhumanity - the castle-like prisons where many thousands died and through which every African passed on the way to becoming a slave in America, their ways of living destroyed before a single shot was ever fired on Fort Sumter.

The ghosts wouldn't let me display the two generals when I moved back to North Carolina. The picture no longer represented who I was or who I had wanted to become. But the ghosts still lingered until Horwitz helped me put them to rest.

Four weeks ago, I was at the beach visiting with my brother and his family, who now live in Maryland. I was almost finished with the book when my 10-year-old nephew, Stephen, asked me what I was reading. I showed him the

soldier on the jacket cover and explained that the book was about the Civil War. He paused for a moment, turned his head quizzically and asked, "We won that war, didn't we?"

Startled by his question and fearful of my answer, I thought deeply as if this child's entire life depended on my next words. In an instant, I recalled that the war ended slavery. I decided that no family value or Confederate pride could ever supersede the basic rights of freedom and truth. Without hesitation, I looked my nephew square in the eyes and said, "Yes, we did."

A couple of weeks ago I boxed up the two generals and put them away in my attic. I imagine I'll look at the picture from time to time to remember my grandparents. And maybe I'll look at it just to say "thanks" to those ghosts.

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"I thought deeply ... In an instant, I recalled that the war ended slavery. I decided that no family value or Confederate pride could ever supersede the basic rights of freedom and truth."

Make Your Mom Happy; Find Mate at Sangam

My dad grunts happily as he dumps the last of my 24 plastic crates on my dorm room floor, but my mom shakes her head disapprovingly at me, because she has realized that there is only one Indian prospect on my hall, and not only is he considerably younger than me, but, more importantly, he is not a pre-med.

"Why the South?" she lamented. "Why not University of Maryland at College Park, there are 10,502 Indians there." (Trust me; she's done detailed research on this subject.)

"You could find a nice Indian boy, in computer science, or business or medicine." And the loving tirade continues, as it always has.

Mom began her requests subtly and early - we're talking prenatal. She would casually weave marriage into the dinner table conversation, commenting on how much easier life would be if I found someone with the same cultural and religious background as myself. "Think of the kids," she'd say.

Meanwhile, all I could think was I wasn't adult enough to watch "90210" or "Baywatch" without their supervision.

I'd quickly retort that I was just looking for love - be it black, white, Himalayan or Cajun. That never went over well. But after time, and an Italian and Jewish boyfriend, her attempts became a little less subtle.

She invited Indian med students from John's Hopkins over for dinner, hoping to gently shove me in the right direction. Soon after, she decided it was time for me to take a "vacation" to India, during which she conjured up PROJECT DESIS: Date(s), Engagement and Settle Indian Style and promptly e-mailed her specifications to my relatives.

Though in the larger picture, my mom is fairly tame: She hasn't asked me to attend any Indian conventions yet. Imagine, if you will, 5,000 Patels, Shahs or Jains, basically a super-sized family reunion in which various Indian families attend lectures and cocktails and meet and greet all in the hopes of finding an eternal, or at least rich, Indian mate. Unfortunately for the vast majority, the only thing attached

MONICA MODI POINT OF VIEW

to them at the end of the conference is the grease from overindulgence in samosas (Indian-style egg rolls, minus the eggs).

Of if you don't want to attend a convention, technology has come a long way to help Indians find love. BIO-DATA, a glorified personal ad stating only the vital statistics (name, age, sex, fertility rate, education, salary and green card status), is posted in newspapers, on the Web, and in all mothers' wallets - where it can be easily whipped out as soon as any pre-med student enters within a five mile radius of her.

Lucky for me, there weren't any prospects for her to approach on that day, but she has heard about the mad Sangam mixers and has instructed me not to leave without a cute South Asian, preferably someone from Gaam (the village in India where my parents were born).

As the final goodbyes are being said, she not-so-casually leans towards my ear and whispers, "Just one nice Indian boy; is that so much to ask?" And I begin the quest all in the name of my mother - or at least 90 percent in her name.

Come learn more about interesting and quirky South Asian traits, foods and culture at the Sangam general body meeting on Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the Forest Theater (Union 208-209, in case of rain). Everyone is welcome.

You can enjoy some refreshments, entertainment and learn how you can impact the South Asian community in and around Chapel Hill. And don't forget your bindis to throw down at the Sangam Welcome Back Mixer on Saturday, September 9 at 8 p.m., at the Hideaway.

Will you meet your mate? Who knows, but would you want to miss the chance to make some fun-loving new buds and be a part of an organization that brings its unique culture and creativity to this campus?

Monica Modi is a junior business major from Columbia, Md. To any of those who are interested in this crazy writer, e-mail her your comments, questions or BIO-DATA at modi@email.unc.edu - all requests will be considered, with preference given to those with high fertility rates.



Lieberman a Good Man, His Party's Best Candidate

What is this country becoming when there is an Orthodox Jew that might turn out to be the most powerful man in the world - once removed?

What is this country doing giving this morally justified, faithfully religious and genuine human being an opportunity to be the vice president?

You know what this world is doing? We are realizing that it is time to break the racist, segregationist walls down and unite this culturally diverse society - like it or not. The last stained-glass ceilings in American life have been shattered.

Vice President Al Gore's selection of an Orthodox Jew, Joseph I. Lieberman, as his running mate will be remembered as an enduring landmark in both American and Jewish history.

The selection of a man who, except in extraordinary circumstances, does not work on the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday and who has a wife named Hadassah is an emblem of national openness, a sign of cultural change - and a political gamble of the first order. But it's a gamble, nevertheless, worth taking.

Simply by appearing on the stage of the Italian Center in my hometown of Stamford, Conn., Sen. Lieberman was transformed instantly into a symbol of national diversity, placing him in the ranks of Jackie Robinson, John F. Kennedy and Sally Ride as a pathfinder in the search for a new high ground in American life.

For Jews, the very top of political life always seemed an unattainable peak.

Until now. Lieberman's selection comes in an age when political leaders of both parties are beginning to open the floodgates to understanding and tolerance for differences.

Only recently, Republican Presidential nominee George W. Bush vigorously courted a black man, retired Gen. Colin L. Powell, to be his running mate.

Americans should celebrate the breakthrough of a group that helps provide the American stew with its richness and spice. The celebration, however, is causing a stir - albeit an unnecessary one.

Gov. Alfred E. Smith of New York won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1928, but it wasn't for another 32 years that a Catholic won the White House.

And to do so, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts had to appear before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and argue that if the election of 1960 were decided based on the day he was baptized, "then it is the whole nation that is the loser."

I hope Lieberman and Gore will not have to make that plea to the local Baptist church any time soon.

Attention American people: No need to worry; Joltin' Joe is the right and only man for the job. Of course, the position in that big house on Pennsylvania Avenue would suit him as



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EDITORIAL WRITER

well as a pasta dinner does Don Corlione. He has made Connecticut a proud state for more than 12 years. Gore has a running mate who has two Yale degrees and has held public office for nearly three decades.

He has led a political life with a quiet walk and a big stick. Pushing for proper legislation and constantly concerned about what is right for the American people, Joe is a robust defender of the "New Democrat"

brand of politics. He is a respected political figure, a credible opponent to former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney in debate and in stature.

Forget that political mumbo jumbo for a minute. Mr. Lieberman, trading his political cape for khakis and a Carolina cap (yes, he is a fan), is a good man. He is a man who possesses that rarest quality which every Democrat wants: distance from Bill, for during his impeachment, he commented that his behavior was "not just inappropriate," but "immoral."

He represents Stamford, the state of Connecticut and soon the United States with dignity and honor.

The day Joe came to Stamford to speak to his hometown, his campaign invited some community members who might have a place in the crowd.

Sen. Lieberman invited my father - a man who is not much of a political activist, but obviously is a person that Sen. Lieberman respects.

The Senator gave me a nomination to the U.S. Military Academy several years ago, an honor the Hoffman family will never forget.

Lieberman took the time out of his now more-than-hectic schedule to invite a man who was more than grateful to be part of this fantastic moment in U.S. history.

This Senator not only kisses the babies; he makes sure they are taken care of and will go to any extent to ensure their health.

Joe is not an act; he will soon make a righteous vice president.

So to all you out there giving me your attention for these brief minutes, know Joe for the man he is, and understand he will benefit this nation to the nth degree.

I saw a license plate yesterday that read, "Illinois, the Home of Abraham Lincoln."

Soon Connecticut license plates will read, "The Home of Joe Lieberman."

Are these optimistic, fantasy-based ideas? Maybe. But I know Joe is not a fake - he is the proverbial man in this race, and Mr. Gore is lucky that Lieberman is his running mate and not his competition.

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Pride Sweetens Time at UNC

Rule Number 1 is, don't sweat the small stuff.
Rule Number 2 is, it's all small stuff.
And if you can't fight and you can't flee, flow.

-Robert S. Eliot

This is for all you freshmen out there about to begin your first full week of classes as Tar Heels.

It was only three short years ago that I began my career as a Carolina student. Common to most freshmen, I was wide-eyed and full of optimism. Like you, I was embarking on something new and exciting. I envy you.

Remarkably, and to my amazement, through it all, I've been able to retain that wide-eyed, optimistically hopeful view of life. As I now prepare for my final year in Blue Heaven, I reflect back over three years and offer you, the class of 2004, my two cents worth.

There are going to be some bad days here at Carolina. You, as a college student, will encounter those times when you really don't have the will or the wish to get out of bed because there are three papers due that day in addition to that damn biology lab.

There will be lonely days, and stressful days, and in-between days, and the line at Lenoir will only get longer while the food gets older. You'll inevitably walk past a Pit preacher on one of those bad days, only to be



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informed you are going to hell because your skirt isn't ankle-length.

Beware the ideoes of March (Madness); Big Brother (the Carolina Athletic Association) is watching.

You'll finally get around to visiting with your psychology professor, only to find a note on the door saying office hours are canceled that day. Your adviser will only "advise" between five and six in the morning on Monday.

You'll have to pull some all-nighters studying, and the next night will be spent drinking, effectively canceling out the study night. That's pretty much par for the course.

There will be times, as you walk around the construction-ridden Student Union, that you'll miss your hometown, your friends and your family. That remarkable human need for companionship will invade your life.

You'll go on some good dates, and some bad dates, and you may even have your heart broken.

But cheer up. You'll come to realize that it's not all that bad.

When you do have one of those days, which you are sure to have, get up early and take a stroll through campus, past the stone walls, and the Bell Tower, and the majestic oak trees. Sit on the steps of Wilson Library, and gaze out over the green that permeates Polk Place. You might catch that faint smell of a warm Southern rain approaching, and all will be right with the world. You'll fall in love with the

place because, well, you just can't help it, and you will eventually call it home.

On one of those Carolina autumn days, when the air is crisp, and the leaves are bright crimson, and the sky is especially Carolina Blue, take a break under the Old Well, and you just might think there's no better place on Earth to be at the moment.

You are one of the finest institutions in the world, and no matter what happens, for the rest of your life, you can always say, "I'm a Tar Heel." Not everybody can say that.

Take a walk through the graveyard on campus, and look at the people who once graced this campus; those ghosts of yesteryear adding to this place that holds such grand mystique.

You are part of that now. Treasure every moment of it. Smile a lot, and every now and then, stop and smell a rose or two.

Meet as many people as you can. Some of the people you come into contact here will become life-long friends. That's just not something you can find around the corner every day.

By the time November rolls around, and you are at your first basketball game, you will have forgotten a lot. You will have forgotten many of the problems you were faced with early on. You definitely will have forgotten whatever you learned prior to your first midterms. You might even have forgotten what I wrote in this column.

But when the lights go dim in the building named after Dean Edwards Smith, and the band starts playing the fight song, and the boys with "North Carolina" written across their jerseys come running out the tunnel, don't forget the goose bumps.

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