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AUGUST 4, 1955

Double Standard

Last Friday was a dark day for three young men who have known few bright ones.

Billy Cowart, son of Georgia mill workers who separated when he was six, lied about his age and was admitted into the army before he was 16. Otho Bell, Mississippi farm boy whose mother died when he was born, also lied and was accepted by the army a few days after his 17th birthday. Lewis Griggs, Texas youth who never seemed to quite fit in anywhere, enlisted the day after he was 17.

Billy was still only 17 when he was captured by the Chinese Reds; Otho was 19, Lewis 18. They were in Chinese prison camps for periods ranging from nearly three to three and a half years.

What happened during those years, nobody knows. We do know that other men, more mature and intellectually stronger than these youngsters, have succumbed to Communist indoctrination, and in less than three years. But whatever the cause, these three were among the 21 American servicemen who, in January, 1954, finally refused repatriation to the United States.

We do not know, either, what has happened in the year and half since they turned their backs on country, home, and family. But recently these three changed their minds. They wanted to come back to the United States; and last Friday their ship docked in San Francisco.

There they were joyfully reunited with members of the families they had not seen for five or six years. That joy was brief. Within minutes, the United States Army had arrested them, loaded them into the back of a truck, and hustled them off to an army stockade. There they will remain the weeks or months it takes the Army to get ready to try them.

They are charged with seeking special prison favors for themselves, by willingly cooperating with their Communist captors in preaching Communism, and by informing on fellow prisoners. One of the charges is informing on fellow prisoners for stealing.

Quite possibly they are guilty; and no doubt the Army will convict them and sentence them to long prison terms.

Maybe they should be punished. Maybe their youth and their backgrounds should not be taken into account. Maybe the army is correct in saying right is right and wrong is wrong; in saying the law is the law, and those who break it must be punished.

But if that is true, does it not apply to the Army itself, as well as to individuals in the army? What, then, is the United States Army's own record for morality and abiding by law?

On the score of morality, let's go back a bit to the cases of Cpls. Edward Dickinson and Claude Batchelor. Remember them?

At Panmunjom, the United States government was frantically begging American prisoners of the Chinese to come home. Repeatedly, they were promised immunity from punishment for any wrong-doing. Dickinson and Batchelor accepted the promise at face value. And what happened? The army tried them, convicted them, and sent them to prison.

Now consider the current case in the light of law.

The military code says plainly that no American soldier may be dishonorably discharged, except after conviction by a courtmartial at which the defendant is present. But when these men chose to stay in China, the Army promptly ordered them dishonorably discharged.

That returned them, of course, to civilian status. They no longer were in the Army. Yet it is the Army that arrested them, it is the Army that will try them, and it is the Army that will punish them.

Have we come to the point that, once a man has been in the army, he is to be under military control forever? Is the army always to own him, body and soul? And is there any basis in law for this?

Then there are the terms of the Korean truce. It specifically provides that no serviceman, on either side, shall ever be punished for refusing repatriation. It is true that the charges brought against these men have nothing to do with their choice at Panmunjom, but can anyone doubt that what the Army really is trying them for is desertion? Otherwise, why has nothing been heard, these 18 months since the truce, of the charges that are made now?

Last Friday was a dark day — and not for these young men only. It was an even darker day for Americans who believe in a single standard, who prize their national self respect. Because the Army that broke a solemn promise, in the cases of Dickinson and Batchelor, now flouts the very law it invokes.

That Nantahala Road

There are a number of things about the Nantahala road situation that we do not profess to know. We do not know, in the first place, the problems that are faced, now and always, by the State Highway Department, the U. S. Forest Service, and the U. S. Bureau of Roads. We do not know for sure — nobody seems to know — who is responsible for the reported transfer of the funds, that were to have completed the Nantahala road, to the Croatan National Forest in Eastern North Carolina. Finally, we do not know what were the considerations back of that transfer.

Nor are we experts on road building.

But we do know what some of those who are experts say; the head of the Forest Service and the highway engineer and highway commissioner in this area would not urge the completion of the Nantahala road without good, expert reasons.

We do know that common justice demands that the people of the Nantahala area, cut off for generations, get one road, complete, at long last.

We do know it doesn't make sense to build two ends of a road and leave a little unbuilt link in the middle.

We do know, if there are compelling considerations for ignoring all these factors, that the people of the Nantahala area are entitled to be told what those compelling considerations are.

Relief---And A Challenge

"Our aim is to make men, not criminals," declared Supt. John E. Cutshall last week, when announcing that the Macon County Prison Camp is changing from a felon's prison to one for youthful first offenders.

Mindful of the superintendent's sincerity and qualifications, citizens of the county are confident he and his staff intend to prove out this ambitious statement through a strong rehabilitation program, with special emphasis on sports, something all young men, regardless of circumstances, understand and enjoy.

Since the announcement, most have been quick to admit they welcome the change. The nearness of the camp and its more than 60 long-termers and lifers always has produced uneasiness, particularly for those living in the vicinity of the prison.

This new rehabilitation program should ease these tensions, and, Supt. Cutshall hopes, spark the spirit of cooperation in the public. The real test of this program will be the number of young men who find themselves and become useful citizens, he feels.

"We're going to need a lot of help from the outside," the superintendent declared.

Macon County has never turned its back on a worth-while project, Mr. Superintendent. If it's cooperation you want, you'll get it.

Resounding

"The difficult, we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer."

That wisecrack seems applicable to Macon County and its forthcoming fair.

"It can't be done", we were solemnly assured when this newspaper started advocating a fair, some eight years ago: "it can't be done unless you finance it with gambling and cheap shows", a group interested in a fair was solemnly assured by an "expert" some four years ago.

Well, it is being done. The wisecracks and the experts are about to be proved wrong. Just how badly wrong will be revealed by the fair itself, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of next week. Judging by the way Macon County people have been working together in recent years to do other "impossible" things, we'd guess the proof will be resounding.



AN OSTRICH WITHOUT A NECK? — Silly idea, isn't it? Makes the rest of him rather useless.

Well, that's just about what we'll have on the Nantahala road, if that little link in the middle is left unfinished.

Letters

'Kept For Posterity'

Dear Mr. Jones:

Congratulations on the recent Centennial Edition of The Franklin Press. It was super and we loved every bit of it. My copy is being kept for posterity.

Sincerely,

MRS. CHAS. H. (KATE) PERRY

El Reno, Okla.

Tribute To Franklin

In a letter to a friend, Mrs. Edward Eaton, who left here years ago to return to Cambridge, Mass., pays tribute to Franklin.

Mrs. Eaton's son, Ted, wrote a paper for the United States on isotopes; as a result, the U. S. State Department requested him to go to Geneva, Switzerland, as a consultant to the conference on peaceful uses of atomic energy, which will open there today.

Commenting on the honor to her son, Mrs. Eaton wrote:

"You see, Ted received his education from the Franklin schools during his six most susceptible years, and I want Franklin to receive credit for it. This is my way of expressing my admiration for Franklin."

STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WEIMAR JONES

I always am filled with wonder by the marvel of flying.

And I was amazed again the other day when Mrs. Jones and I flew from Knoxville, Tenn., to Carbondale, Ill.

We didn't, but we easily might have had, lunch in Franklin and supper west of the Mississippi River. The only reasons we didn't, in fact, were that we weren't hungry when we left here at noon, and so took along a lunch; and our destination was east of the Mississippi, but our route took us via a town in Missouri, so that we were on the other side of the Mississippi long before we sat down to supper in Illinois, on this side.

Thus we crossed the Mississippi twice. And I must say, seeing it from a plane, the Father of Waters was a great disappointment. From an altitude of some 2,000 feet, it looked about like the Little Tennessee!

How big some of the commercial airliners are can be appreciated only by comparing them with familiar things. When a big truck, carrying baggage, drives up to the side of the plane, the truck reminds you of a child's toy, and men working on the wings resemble ants.

That those huge ships, carrying 30 or 40 or 50 or more passengers, with all their baggage, can get off the ground, and once up, can remain aloft, seems incredible. Less impressive is the speed, because, at 250 miles an hour, you are hardly conscious of motion at all.

I might mention, too, that we felt considerably less uneasy at 5,000 feet than at 1,000. At the higher altitude, you often can't see the earth; only great masses of clouds, like soft pillows, below you, a bright blue sky above, with perhaps a storm some where down under you.

At the lower altitudes, seeing the earth below you, you realize what a long way you'd have to fall.

Watching the earth pass beneath is fascinating, though. It's an entirely new and different perspective. Always interesting to me are the geometric patterns of the farms and woodlands and subdivisions and colleges and army camps. In the agricultural areas, there is a variety of figures—squares, rectangles, triangles, and occasionally something very close to a circle. The farther west we went, the more frequent the squares.

Impressive, too, are the organization, the careful timing, and the speed with which everything is done. A plane lands at a port, discharges its passengers and their baggage, takes on new passengers and their baggage, and sometimes refuels — and is off the ground again three minutes after it lands. The bus companies and trains might well take a tip from aviation. They might, too, in courtesy; the airline folks go all out to make everybody happy.

We were particularly interested, one morning, in watching the stewardesses "fix" breakfast. We (See Back Page, 1st Section)

News Making As It Looks To A Maconite

By BOB SLOAN

The question of what to do with the three American boys who once elected to stay in Communist China, but have now decided to return to their native land is in many ways a difficult one, and still is with me.

Since these men have been accused by their fellow prisoners of betraying their fellow soldiers in an effort to improve their own lot, in all fairness to both their fellow prisoners who may have suffered because of their actions and those who have previously been similarly accused and tried, these men



Sloan

must be tried. After all, it is serious business when soldiers attempt in any way to lighten their lot at the expense of their comrades.

If the army took no cognizance of the fact, it would certainly be damaging to the morale of the entire organization, and this thing so precious and necessary to any good organization has in recent years been weakened too much by civilian interference.

However, I feel that there are special circumstances in this case.

First, the very fact that these men at one time chose to stay in Communist China rather than return home, I think, should be considered as evidence that they were emotionally unbalanced at one time.

Second, the fact that they returned voluntarily, even in the face of a possible death sentence, shows that these men now realize that they made a great mistake.

Third, the fate of these men will not only be of great concern here at home, but will be carefully viewed by thousands in many countries. Today a part of our foreign policy should be directed toward selling the idea that our government has as one of its cardinal principles the spirit of brotherly love. If, after a fair trial, our country extends to these men a spirit of forgiveness rather than that of stern and unrelenting captor, will not the rest of the world be more apt to feel that our professions of Christianity are more sincere?

That these men will be found guilty for the most part as charged, I have little doubt. For one thing, they have not denied the charges. In fact, they have practically admitted them. Nor, as previously said, do I see how the Army could fail to try them. (See Back Page, 1st Section)

Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Mrs. J. R. Price, of Albemarle, N. C., and Mrs. George H. Corwell, of High Point, N. C., arrived last Thursday to spend some time with their mother, Mrs. P. C. Gaston.

Mr. H. A. Penland, formerly of this county, but now of Anderson, S. C., is here for a week's visit and to look after some business.

Mr. J. A. Munday sold his lively business last Thursday to Tom Shepherd. Tom can't stay out of the business long at a time.

25 YEARS AGO

Mr. M. A. Mattoon, supervisor of the Pisgah National Forest, and family, of Asheville, were guests the past week-end of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Cunningham.

Mr. and Mrs. L. Hulm and family, of Atlanta, were visiting Mr. and Mrs. T. P. Moses a few days the past week.

Mrs. Arvil Fouts and baby are spending several days with friends and relatives on Iotla. She will return to her home in Winston-Salem in a few days.

10 YEARS AGO

Miss Carlene Jamison, who is doing stenographic work in Asheville, came over last week-end to spend a week with her mother, Mrs. Carl Jamison, at her home on Riverview Street.

Pvt. Carter E. Talley, of the Finney General Hospital, Thomasville, Ga., spent a week-end leave with his family at the Talley home on Spring Street. — Highlands item.

Miss Margie Blumenthal, who attended summer school at Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, has returned to Franklin to spend the summer with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. Blumenthal.