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JANUARY 12, 1956

## Badly Frayed

II

There is widespread feeling that a happy sequel has been written to the story of the two North Carolina former prisoners of war who were denied their POW compensation. The men are going to get their money. So the case has dropped out of the newspapers, and within a few weeks most Americans will have forgotten it.

But is the sequel a happy one?

Is it a happy sequel even for Daniel Lewis Wheelless and Perry McDonald Walker, the Tar Heels whose routine claims for \$2,000 each—for time spent as enemy prisoners—were first denied, and now are to be paid? For remember: the denial was based on secret information that they had collaborated with the enemy. That information remains secret. So while they will get their money, the two still have been given no opportunity to clear their names.

Is it a happy sequel for the other 250 POW's whose claims also have been denied, also on secret information? The anonymous source that sent down word that Wheelless and Walker would get their money was silent about the other 250. So far as anybody knows, their names, too, will remain smeared—and they won't even get their money. (They didn't have the good fortune of Wheelless and Walker, who hired the partner of a powerful U. S. congressman as their lawyer.)

Is it a happy sequel for the cause of good government, and for those freedoms our government was created to assure? The entire proceeding, time after time, openly flouted the plain, basic mandates of the Constitution of the United States. But has there been any hint of repentance, any suggestion the same thing won't happen again?

Is it a happy sequel for the thing the army was trying to protect, internal security? Since it is virtually impossible for a person to disprove a charge on which he is denied all details, presumably Wheelless and Walker have not disproved the charge—though they have vigorously denied it. Why, then, isn't the secret information that was so damaging before equally damaging today? If it proved these two men collaborators then, doesn't it still do so? Yet they are given their compensation!

Is it a happy sequel for the standing of the armed forces in public opinion? On a basis of secret information, the army said one thing yesterday; with identically the same secret information in the files, the army, through the Foreign Claims Commission, says the exact opposite today. The conclusion is inescapable that the army has changed its mind, not because it thinks it was wrong in the first place, but because it finds itself unable to buck public opinion and an aroused congress. The suspicion is inescapable that the money was paid these men as a patent, though perhaps indirect, bribe for silence about their "rights".

Is it a happy sequel for you and me and other plain citizens?

Now that these two are to get their money, most of us close our eyes to the violation of their rights.

Isn't that a rather unhappy commentary on our moral sense?

Isn't it a rather severe indictment of our indifference to freedom?

And isn't that indifference rather frightening evidence that, in the United States today, the slender thread by which freedom hangs is, indeed, badly frayed?

Now that we've settled the primary problem of who is to coach football at Carolina maybe we can devote some attention to the secondary matter of who is to be the University's president.

## Symptom

Nobody would have believed it possible, in Franklin. But it's happened:

Somebody stole from a nativity scene!

One of the spotlights used by the Franklin Garden Club to light the scene it puts up each Christmas, in the field just off East Main Street, at the foot of the Town Hill, is gone.

Every circumstance makes the crime a shocking one. First of all, the fixture cost only a few dollars; its slight value suggests the temptation could not have been great. Second, to steal from an organization that unselfishly devotes its efforts to the good of the whole community is a despicable sort of thing. Finally, where the theft occurred is important; to steal from a picturization of something deeply sacred to millions is so low as to be incomprehensible to most of us.

The incident is most significant, though, as a symptom. Coupled with the recent breaking open and robbery of a Lions Club container of funds for the blind, it suggests a question:

Are we in this community losing something rare and very precious—an almost universal honesty? How nearly universal it is is illustrated by the fact that almost nobody here (except newcomers) ever thinks to lock a door.

That question raises another that every parent, every citizen, needs to ask himself: How much attention is being devoted to teaching the difference between what is mine and what is yours—in the homes, and the Sunday schools and churches, and the schools of Macon County?

It is just possible there is a connection between these incidents and the ever-growing number of mothers of small children who work outside their homes. If there is, then we're paying a terrifically high price for a higher standard of physical living.

## Others' Opinions

### Definition

(Legion Monthly)

Home cooking: What more women should be!

### Great Divide

(Greensboro Daily News)

Yet another indication of the vast chasm between white and Negro customs in the South comes to light in Dr. Ellen Winston's report on illegitimate births in North Carolina last year.

Of a total of 9,920 children born out of wedlock in the state, 8,320 were Negro. A vast portion of the State Welfare Department's Aid to Dependent Children allotments, therefore, goes to mothers of these children, white and colored, thereby putting a cash value on degeneracy and making illegitimate child-bearing a profitable undertaking.

Nobody can properly allocate responsibility for this state of affairs in the South. A huge part of the blame stems from the original horrors of slavery itself, perpetrated on the Negro by the white man. He cannot relieve himself of the burden of the Negro's degradation by casually pointing his finger.

Yet the vastness of the problem is enough to overwhelm men of good will in both races. More than eight times as many colored as white children were born in illegitimacy last year.

WALTER SPEARMAN

## CAN A CHANGING SOUTH SAVE THE BEST FROM THE PAST?

In New Orleans Item

What is "the Southern way of life"—and are we in danger of losing it in this changing South, 1955?

Realization of the enormous changes occurring around us today may bring increased resistance from those who abhor change, so let us examine our "Southern way of life" and see what it really is.

Certainly the Southern way of life is more than saying "you all," or liking turnip greens and hominy, or being hospitable to strangers, or keeping our womenfolk on a pedestal.

Two contrasting pictures of the South were painted in "James Street's South," in which he wrote:

"Folks can't agree if ours is a land of moonlight or moonshine, Tobacco Road or tobacco factories, Texas Cadillacs or ox-carts, Uncle Remus or George Washington Carver, Hugo Black or Claghorn, hydrogen plants or hot air, R. F. D. or TVA, hospitality or hostility, violence or tranquility."

Contrasts were also emphasized in W. J. Cash's somewhat acid portrait in his book, "The Mind of the South":

"Proud, brave, honorable by its lights, courteous, personally generous, loyal, swift to act, often too swift, but signally

effective, sometimes terrible, in its action—such was the South at its best.

"Violence, intolerance, aversion and suspicion toward new ideas, an incapacity for analysis, an inclination to act from feeling rather than from thought, an exaggerated individualism and a too narrow concept of social responsibility . . . sentimentality and a lack of realism—these have been its characteristic vices in the past."

Perhaps William T. Polk summed it up best in his new book, "Southern Accent":

"The South was rural, agrarian, easy-going, poor and proud of its distinctive way of life. Now it is becoming urban, industrial, hard-working, comparatively prosperous, and relatively standardized."

What IS this Southern way of life?

It is a life of the senses—or at least of these following senses:

Sense of place. Even when a Southern family leaves its plantation home to tenant farmers or to the winds and the bats and the owls, or when it allows its city home to be converted into a boarding house, its roots are still deep in Southern soil. This feeling for a homeplace, so strong in the stories of William Faulkner and Eudora Welty, underlies Southern thinking,

## FORESTRY-U.S.A.



**EVERYMAN'S EMPIRE**

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU OWN A SLICE OF VALUABLE FOREST LAND? YOU DO—YOUR SHARE OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS IS SLIGHTLY MORE THAN ONE ACRE, ABOUT THE SIZE OF A FOOTBALL FIELD.

YOUR ACRE, ALONG WITH THOSE OF YOUR FELLOW-AMERICANS, MAKE UP A PUBLIC FOREST RESOURCE, PROVIDING MANY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. TRULY, EVERYMAN'S EMPIRE.

## VIEWS

By

BOB SLOAN



Farm policy will certainly be one of the big topics of discussion for the next several months. Articles will be written by many who are better informed on the subject and much more astute in giving or attempting to give a solution to the problem than I. However, I would like to make the following observation, concerning one phase of the program that is being advanced by President Eisenhower.

Years ago, as a means of promoting better conservation practices, Henry Wallace and others advocated the development of a soil bank. Under this program, farmers would be paid to retire from production a portion of the poorer land on their farms. This land would then be cared for according to practices recommended by trained government agents. As a means of promoting better conservation practices, it had its merit. As a phase of our economic system which will help adjust the dropping farm income with the price rise on the commodities the farmer buys, (Eisenhower's purpose in advocating this), it may not work so well.

At least, it doesn't seem to me that the small farmer, called by Mr. Benson the sub-marginal man, will benefit. To begin with, the amount they would receive for retiring an acre or two of their small tract of land would be too small to materially affect their economic circumstances. On the other hand, the large farmer, who could possibly retire several hundred acres from production, would receive a substantial check.

Actually, if put into being at this time, it seems to me that this will be nearly the final step in eliminating the small farmer for the benefit of the larger producer. Whether he is, as Mr. Benson says, sub-marginal, we will do well to realize that since the beginning of our country this same man has been regarded as the backbone, particularly in times of stress.

Shall we now say to him: "Economically, you don't produce top production. Since the pace is too fast for you, we are going to kill you off and put you out of your misery of trying to keep up?"

## Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

### 50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Miss Margaret Bryson went to Asheville last week to become a trained nurse in the Mission Hospital.

"Sandy" Munday sold six head of mules to Mr. Looney Zachary Monday. Mr. Zachary will take them to his home in middle Georgia.

The mail hack on the Dillsboro route broke down Monday and the carrier came in packing the mail bags and harness on the two horses. Part of the papers were soaked with rain.

### 25 YEARS AGO

A concrete bridge will replace the iron bridge across the Little Tennessee River at Franklin on Highway No. 28 and 285, James G. Stikleather, District Highway Commissioner, has told county commissioners W. D. Barnard and C. H. McClure.

Messrs. Hoyt Ledford and Raymond Dalrymple, of Franklin, spent the first half of the week in Highlands.—Highlands item.

Messrs. W. T. Moore, Frank Moody, and Walter Gibson returned last Friday, after a visit of ten days in Crystal River, Fla.

### 10 YEARS AGO

Miss Mary Appley left Wednesday to spend some time in Cocoa, Fla., visiting her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Matlock, of Winston-Salem, came in Sunday for a visit with their mother, Mrs. James M. Morrison, who is ill at her home in the Oak Grove community.

Miss Sue Bryson, who is employed in Tokoma Park, Md., is spending several days visiting her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Bryson, Sr., at their home on Iotla Street.

Yet North Carolina's Negro population is less than one-fourth the white population.

Dr. Winston sees the problem as one for the "character building organizations" of the state which "should be challenged to increase their efforts to deal preventably with this problem."

Dr. Winston is right. North Carolinians, white and colored, should confront the problem like so many others which sometimes seem to overwhelm us in the field of race relations.

## Basic Cause Of Accidents

(Chapel Hill Weekly)

"Vaughan's car failed to round curve and went into a ditch."

This is a sentence from the report of a fatal accident near Durham last Sunday morning.

"Failed to round a curve," "left the road on a curve," "got out of control and left the road." Phrases like these, with the car the subject of the verb, as though the car were a conscious agent, are seen every day in newspaper reports of accidents. What it means is simply that the driver was going at dangerous speed. Of course he wasn't compelled to. He could have gone more slowly if he had so desired. But, when you view the whole frightful picture of automobile deaths and injuries, it is not so far wrong as you might suppose to hold the car responsible.

Every competent person and organization that has ever made a thorough investigation of automobile accidents has come to the conclusion that they are caused mainly by excessive speed. And excessive speed is the result of the high power of automobile engines.

If there had never been made a car capable of going over forty miles an hour, millions of people killed would be alive today, and more millions seriously injured would be whole and well. Would people in general be any less happy if such a speed limitation had prevailed? Would civilization be any less advanced than it is? Answer these questions for yourself.

While the world continues to wring its hands in despair over the killing and maiming, more and more power is put into automobile engines. All the persuasion for more careful driving, all the horrors laid before the eyes of newspaper readers by photographs and realistic descriptions, all the urging for better law enforcement—all these do little good. With the population including such a large element of inconsiderate, stupid, and reckless people, the free use of the modern automobile engine, with its tremendous power, cannot have any other result than a terrible toll of deaths and injuries on the streets and highways.

giving it a distinctive and persistent Southern flavor.

Sense of family. Where but in the South would you talk about "a first cousin once removed"? And where can a Southerner go in the South without soon digging up either "kinfolks" digging up either "kinfolks" or "kinfolks of kinfolks"? Perhaps anywhere else you wouldn't even try. When a Southern girl goes to her first big ball, why is she always told to "remember who you are"?

Sense of oneness. When two Southerners meet anywhere in the world — New York, Paris or Burma — they immediately establish a contact that does not depend upon their mutual Southern accent. It depends upon a shared past, born in the suffering of the Civil War and Reconstruction, nurtured in the poverty of lean economic years and cemented in a period of outside criticism of the South. Will this unity crack up under the pressure of industry, wealth, a two-party system and disputes over segregation?

Sense of proportion. In the past the Southerner has known that graciousness may be more admirable than efficiency, that personal satisfactions are preferable to money, that leisure wisely employed is better than overwork. Will newfound wealth disturb this old sense of proportion?

Sense of humor. Southerners

feel there is a genuine place in life for humor—tall tales about how Great-Uncle Ed outwitted the Yankees or Cousin Ed caught an alligator, Grandmother's little family stories with a humorous twist, amusing incidents out of Negro or mountain or bayou folklore, or just plain rowdy stories for the country club porch or the small-town Saturday night. Did we learn to hide our poverty and heart-break—or do we just relish a good story?

Sense of religion. The South as a region has been known as the Bible Belt for generations. We Southerners have long gone to church regularly to repent our sins and see our friends. But religion in the South has become much less the advocate of "pie in the sky by and bye", for which the churches in the mill town and in the tents on its outskirts were criticized three decades ago.

The abundant life here on earth is now regarded as a vital concern of the church, in its relation to housing, education and other social aspects of everyday life.

What we have we cherish. What we are we do not want to lose. So now the question faces us:

Can we retain what is good from the Old South and still profit, spiritually as well as materially, from the blessings of the New?