

Revelations

Summer time is supposed to be a time in which you can catch up on your reading. According to the advertising, you lie in a hammock, mostly tucked by a breeze and read a good book. Most of the books advertised as ideal "summer reading" are light, frivolous, frothy stuff, not worth reading in the first place. You'd get more pleasure from sleeping, probably will go to sleep anyway.

Ask yourself what you mean by a good book or a good story. If you mean a story that will allow you to escape from reality for the time you read it, well that's something else. It might do that, but a week, a month, or a year after you had read it, you couldn't remember a thing about it, could even read it again with only a vague awareness that it was somehow familiar, that you had met the characters before somewhere, that you knew in a fashion what would happen to them, and really you didn't care much one way or another.

A good book, a good story is hard to find. You can read hundreds of pages, dozens of slick magazines and not find a story worth the name, and certainly not worth the good space it occupies. There are few good books being written these days, and even fewer great ones.

I read constantly, I search hungrily for something worth reading. Most stories leave me with a deep sigh of regret for the time I wasted. But once in a while, every now and then, in places where I least expect it, I find a really noteworthy story, one that is not only interesting and entertaining but which is worth reading again. That is the critical test, is it worth reading again?

One night recently I was tired and took a magazine to bed not to read but to glance through. I turned to a story, not the lead story but one tucked away in the body of the magazine, opposite an article that I did intend to read later about the Philadelphia Athletics. The story which is in the Statepost for June 12 is called Lonely Journey. It is a writer new to me, one Lawrence Williams. It is the most satisfactory and touching short story I have read this year. Read it yourself and find out why.

It is a tale of a lonely boy who is the one realist in a family of adults who are lost in a fog of dreams and unreality, adults who escape to a world that never existed. It is sensitive, beautifully written, almost shocking in its impact. It is a story that is so true it hurts, a story that is a devastating commentary on the grown-ups of my generation, those thousands of us who can't face life as it is and who live in some never-never land most of our waking hours.

It is a story I find really remarkable for its insight into the heart of a boy, a boy who has been disillusioned too often by adults who promise him things that are never delivered, trips that never materialize. It points by suggestion a vivid picture of the shoddy sham and pretense of those weak individuals who can't face the truth, who never dare look at themselves and their pitiful lives as they are. They must have delusions of grandeur to live their pathetic lives.

The boy would rather look at life as it is, would rather work on a garbage truck than pretend he is traveling to some far away place. He must fight constantly against the fog of this dream world lest he become as lost as his parents and his relatives.

It is such a powerful story that I wish every adult had to read it, every adult who came in contact with a child, even those who don't. Who knows? They might even see themselves mirrored in the clear eyes of the boy Jumbo. It wouldn't be a pretty picture, but it might show them a whole new way of life and living.

A few lines from the introductory paragraph will explain why I think this story should be listed among the best stories of 1954. "Jumbo had got himself a job, his first, and it had changed the face of his life. He knew he was supposed to be ashamed of his job. His family was ashamed of it. But their dreams for themselves had

always been very grand dreams, so Jumbo didn't really blame them for being ashamed. He only knew the rolling white fog banks which had always mysteriously hedged in his brief years seemed to have cleared a little since he had got his job. He had always wanted to fight his way right through the fog, clear it way forever, but it still kept coming back. What Jumbo didn't know was that a fog bank is the toughest adversary on earth - many times tougher than a stone wall."

Although Jumbo was a little boy lost, there was at least hope for him. You feel that he will fight his way through the fog and clear it away. You know, too, that his parents, his aunt and uncle, his shallow sister will remain lost in the fog. They couldn't stand the bright glare of the sunlight if they ever pushed the fog away. They don't want to see the world or life in sharp focus.

We condemn alcoholics for their inability to face life, their compulsion to escape in a fog, to remain there, refusing to push away the misty clouds that surround them. What they do to themselves is tragic, but what they do to their families is criminal.

This refusing to grow-up, this immaturity of mind is, alas, not confined to those who drink to hide reality. Too many adults, so-called, run away from the truth, from themselves, remain lost in a fog of self-delusion. Even those who know they have lost their direction lack the courage to try to get their bearings.

It is especially evident in those pathetic middle-aged people who talk constantly of what they will do some day. I often wonder if talking your plans out doesn't weaken the resolution that would make those dreams come true. The enterprises of great pit and moment that lose the name of action through doubt, lack of courage are not confined to Hamlet.

Somehow our training is wrong, our system of education is faulty. We are so naive about life that when it doesn't meet our romantic expectations we say that our luck is bad, the stars are against us. We want everything to be like an old fairy tale, the vicious doctrine of the live-happily-ever-after school. We want the world and life handed to us on a silver platter without lifting our finger to earn it. When life doesn't turn out to be a fairy tale, then we seek refuge by living in a dream world where dreams do come true, where a prince comes riding by on a white horse and rescues us from the dragon of reality.

It is bad enough for us, but it is far worse for our children. We prepare them so poorly for the life they must face. We surround them with the fog of superstition and unreality. We give them exaggerated ideas of what life owes to them, cheating them of their right to reality. Perhaps those children who grow up on farms are far more fortunate than the rest. Those kids know what life is about, know that a crop of beans will not grow overnight and make a ladder to a Jack-And-The-Beanstalk treasure. They know it takes hard work to hoe the beans if they grow at all. They know that you earn your food by the sweat of your brow and the ache in your back and the blisters on your hands.

It is quite a story that Lawrence Williams has written. It is a sincere and honest piece of writing. It is a story that has deep overtones and undertones. It lives. I only wish there were more stories like Lonely Journey. It makes reading so very worthwhile.

HELEN CALDWELL CUSHMAN

ALASKA

Dot Lake, Alaska, June 18, 1954.

The Duplin Times, Kenansville, N. C.

Dear Sirs:

I have been reading with interest the attitudes of Duplinites relative to the recent Supreme Court decisions, relative to segregation. It seems to me that our national government is gradually taking every vestige of local government from the people of our land. It is a high mark of centralization when even our state and local schools and institutions are becoming controlled by the nation. Next comes bans against marriage and social barriers—just as naturally as came the decision relative to schools. No longer will even businesses have the authority to serve whomever it wants. Churches will be next. I'm not advocating or condemning segregation—only surmising the disappearance of American local freedoms. More and more we are becoming governed.

Less and less are the people sovereign. Nine men in robes of black have condemned the sacredness of local initiative. Our government is becoming more and more a bureaucracy that is losing its grip on the public pulse. If we don't elect men to represent us in Washington who will stem the trend we will be governed by some unscrupulous person like Hitler, Stalin or even McCarthy. There are those in America who thirst for such power!

There is nothing we need fear from without half so much as internal decay. Must we call our neighbors or fellow citizens Nazis, Fascists or Communists because we disagree with them? I believe it was Thomas Jefferson who remarked that he might not agree with one but that he'd die fighting to insure that person the right to disagree.

On the one hand our Federal bureaucracy destroys the social traditions of our nation—as in the anti-segregation declarations, and on the other it is responsible for the most abject cases of segregation I ever saw. For instance, here in Alaska the Indian population has been the ward of the Fed-

eral government for three-quarters of a century, yet the living standards of these people have improved little in that time. They have received millions of dollars for relief which they immediately squandered on alcoholic beverages—which further contributed to the squalor of their living conditions. Presently the life expectancy of the Alaskan Indian is less than 25 years.

Segregation? The Federal government maintains separate schools all over Alaska for the Natives. It provides hospitalization for them—which whites are denied if there is to be no segregation what about segregation in these schools. Will the time finally arise when our government will tell bus stations and other public institutions that it can't even operate rest rooms for men and women separately—because it violates the "equality" clauses of the Constitution?

I read everything in the Duplin paper with great interest. Thank God that we can yet speak our minds. Even so it is a very dangerous thing to do. One naval cadet in Annapolis was recently refused a commission because his father years ago bought him an insurance policy with a clause that is now called "subversive." Even now one of our greatest scientists is being denied freedom of following his work—because he visits whomever he pleases. His great talents are thus being lost to our nation. Must this guilt by association continue always?

Sincerely,
ALSA F. GAVIN.

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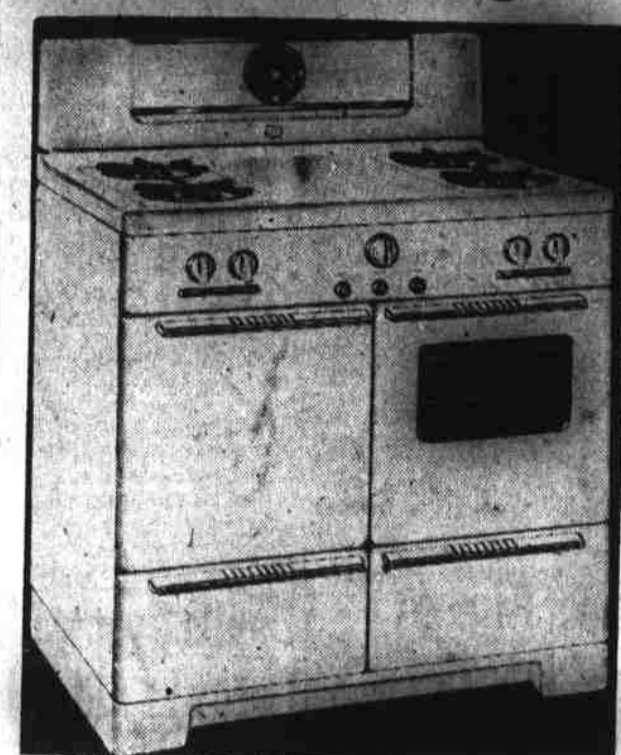
Approximately half the North Carolina cotton fields, except possibly the Piedmont, have enough infestations of boll weevils to justify treatment, according to George D. Jones, in charge of entomology for the State College Extension Service. Jones advised cotton growers to check their fields twice a week and begin treatment when at least one weevil to each 100 plants are seen. When squaring begins, if 10 squares per 100 are punctured, make additional applications of insecticide. Jones reported that aphids have

been present in a few fields but are not a general problem. The numerous lady beetles and larvae on most plants seem to be holding the aphid population in check, said Jones. Trips may also be found in many fields but generally are believed not to present a serious

threat. But the boll weevil is again expected to take a heavy toll in North Carolina cotton if growers fail to apply insecticides according to recommendations. Some growers have already started applying insecticides. When weevil numbers are near

one per 100 plants at the time of squaring, growers may want to begin treatments and continue to make applications at seven-day intervals, said Jones. The entomologist said checking each cotton field regularly is the only safe rule to follow.

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