

The Last Word

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Overlook On Life
 By WARREN S. REEVE
 The idea of "Overlook" is taken from the Overlooks provided for viewing panoramas along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The discussions pro and con regarding Mr. Malcolm Ross' article about our town and county in the June number of the National Geographic Magazine induce me to offer a brief interpretation of my own, and then to reflect on some of the workings of that human nature that none of us can ever get away from.

My impression, not only from reading the article in the National Geographic Magazine and Mr. Ross' "apologia" in the June 26th issue of The Yancey Record, but also from hearing the talk that Mr. Ross gave the Lions Club one night last summer, is that he gathered the material and wrote his article lovingly, and that the people he described were dear to him. He had within him a strong wish also — so I would infer — to share his love with a wider public, and I would venture to believe that he will have succeeded in this, and that the effect of his article on a large number of readers will be to engender in them a like affectionate interest and regard for these people who are "his love".

Such would seem to me to be the conscious motivation that he had. Whether there were further motivations of which he was not conscious, and yet which may have found some expression in his writing, I cannot say. But this leads to some interesting reflection about the power of the subconscious in the lives of all of us. It makes no difference whether we are plain people who had little schooling, or whether we hold college degrees. We may be cultured or we may be crude and uncouth. An inventory of the motives at work in our subconscious minds would mortify us, perhaps beyond what we could bear.

It is subtly easy for the best intentional people to be proud. Each of us, probably, haughtily nurses the fantasy, subconsciously, that he is inherently superior to people to whom he compares himself. It is part of universal human nature for each of us to have a deeply imbedded sense of his own self-importance. This may crop out at most unexpected times and in unexpected situations. A form that it sometimes takes is a dislike of others whom WE THINK consider themselves to be better than we are.

We might say, then, that a central ethical problem for every human being on earth is how not to be proud in some form or other. If we were to argue that it is possible for a person to succeed through effort in becoming completely humble, the net result is the worst kind of pride: the pride of thinking one has no pride!

Thus, practical ethics for each one of us boils down to the problem of how to have a character worth being proud of and how to live a life in such a splendid way that one might feel entire satisfaction over the achievement — and still be proud!

There are several observations that may be relevant, now, to the reactions to Mr. Ross' article.

First of all, we have need of being reminded that we are not all alike and that we have not been made alike. Saying this may be thought by some to be superfluous, but the fact is, I think, that we oftentimes throw criticisms at others because, unconsciously, we are under the domination of the thought that we all are alike, and that what applies to one must apply to everybody. Let us impress again upon ourselves that it is impossible for all human beings to do the same things, live in the same environments, be blessed with equal

measurements of things material and immaterial. Some have stronger bodies than others. Some have artistic gifts entirely lacking in others. Some have natural skill of eye and hand. Some have amazing memory, while many are habitually forgetful. Some have charming social graces while others are naturally shy and retiring. Some have tempers and inflexible purpose, while others are placid and yielding.

I think we must recognize that we were each born into a certain kind of family and home. It is not my fault that I was not born into an Arab household living a bedouin life in the desert vastnesses of North Africa. It is not my fault that my father was not a millionaire, or again that my grandfather was not a bum or a criminal.

There were times in my youth when I wished I had been born into a different situation. But I have grown to see that I should be thankful — and I am now indeed thankful — that I was put into this world in just the way I was.

Generalizing: I would say that each of us should be himself, and no one of us should try to be somebody other than ourselves. It is proper for us to ACCEPT the status in life and the endowments of nature that we have and to be thankful for them. (Not that we ought not to try to improve ourselves to the best of our abilities in those respects in which we should improve ourselves.)

The temptation of those who are rich is to despise the poor. I recollect hearing a rich man confess that he looked down on those who were not successful in business because he considered that their lack of success was due to lack of brains. And he attributed his own success to the brains he thought he had.

There is, moreover, the pride of those who have had the advantages of going to school and college and perhaps to advanced vocational or professional training. Cultured people are tempted to despise those whose tastes they think are not refined and to look down upon illiterate and so-called backward people.

If it is easy to point out the pride of people who belong to the so-called higher classes, it is as easy to detect just as vehement a pride among the ignorant and the poor. I dare say that there are no prouder people in the world than the Arab bedouin to whom I made an allusion above. Yet I suppose that they are illiterate and unlearned while being fanatical in their prejudices and zeal. From what I have read, one form that their pride takes is a fierce hatred of those who they THINK regard themselves better than they.

Am I not right, then, in saying that the crucial ethical problem for all of us is how to be rid of pride? How may we have something worth being proud of without being proud?

There are several reputable ethical philosophies that avowedly have no answer to this question. Philosophies of hedonism and self-realization are obviously defeatist at this point.

If there is a conclusion, I would set it forth in the following form: The person who is really what God wants him to be, judged not primarily with respect to what he does or does not do, but basically because of what he is, in virtue of an acceptable relationship with God through Jesus Christ, comes nearest to being a pride-free personality. The person whose thoughts are obsessed

Most mountaineers are notorious for having the last word, and I'm no exception. Here are my final remarks on this "feud", and I hope my readers realize that it is a friendly "feud".

Evidently the "prissy correctness" of my comments in the June 5th editorial made my point obscure to Mr. Ross. If so, here it is, as plain as I can make it, outlined below:

1 — He chose a trite point of view — that of picturing us as backwoodsmen — both in the story itself and the photo captions, as well as in the "fixed" photographs. I, for one, am tired of it, regardless of definition. Nevertheless, here's Webster's: "Backwoodsman, an inhabitant of the backwoods; a pioneer." And Webster defines backwoods as "Woody districts, remote from populous centers." I have been under the impression that Burnsville and Yancey County ARE populous centers. (Incidentally, the words "backwoods" and "backwoodsmen" appear 4 times in the Geographic story. I counted 'em. But the number of times doesn't matter. Once would have been more than enough. It was just an unfortunate choice of words.)

2 — As to the "salty speech", it was NOT the use of old-time words that I objected to, but rather the "atrocious grammar". I love to hear the old and middle English words that have survived here. They are perfectly good words that were used by Milton, Spencer, Bacon, and later Dickens, to cite a few. To me, such words are colorful and reflect the influence of our pure Anglo-Saxon ancestry. These words stemmed from the Gothic tongue, and are the earliest literary remains in any Germanic language. My only objection on this score WAS that the Geographic story made it appear to the rest of the nation that the use of bad grammar is the usual speech heard here. (I would like to mention here that I have searched carefully through the Geographic story and have not found one old-time word, with the exception of a few that are misspelled to give them queer pronunciations.)

3 — Had I been suggesting a "brochure" on Burnsville, as Mr. Ross seems to think, I certainly wouldn't have suggested as I did in the June 5th editorial the inclusion of Penland School of Handicrafts in Mitchell County; neither would I have praised the feature about Roby Buchanan, of Mitchell County, nor would I have praised the section about the late Monroe Thomas, who died several years ago at his Mitchell County home.

4 — Although the general theme of the Geographic story was: — "People whose skills and way of life are survivals from an older mountain era" — (or as I put it, "preservations of our heritage") — Mr. Ross failed to mention some quite obvious and outstanding survivals from an older mountain era. How else could the Nu-Wray Inn be described? Does Mr. Ross realize that the directors and students at Seecelo have done much to encourage the preservation of our native crafts, perhaps in a quiet and unobtrusive way, yet in a very effective way? My point here is that the inclusion of these places "and other quite ob-

vious preservations of our heritage" would have aided Mr. Ross in presenting to the nation a clear picture of this area.

According to the pictorial map, which was meant to help illustrate the Geographic story, the only interesting places that exist in Burnsville are the forge of Daniel Boone VI and the Parkway Playhouse. According to the map the rest of our little village is nothing but wilderness. The list of places both in Yancey and Mitchell counties (which were not mentioned in the Geographic story) is unending — and I realize full well that each of these couldn't have been developed fully in the limited space provided for the story; but they easily could have been included on the map to show their existence.

Although the section on the Yancey Railroad took up a large portion of the space provided for the Geographic story, two men who were not mentioned had worked for almost 40 years each for this railroad and provided financial aid to help salvage it. The names of people who played important parts in the establishment and preservation of the Parkway Playhouse also were not mentioned in the very brief section about the Playhouse.

I respect Malcolm Ross as a writer, but he obviously misinterpreted my objections in my editorial of June 5th. My objections had absolutely nothing to do with his praise of our mountain craftsmen and their skills, as he appears to think. I appreciate our craftsmen and love and admire their skills, probably more than Malcolm Ross does, and I hope our craftsmen are teaching these native skills to their sons and to their sons' sons.

My only objections were, — and still are the four features outlined at the beginning of this editorial (or if you prefer, this editorial-type article.)

Mr. Ross either ignored or completely overlooked the fact that on June 5th, I praised his treatment of Daniel Boone VI, Roby Buchanan, as well as other features showing his love of our mountains; and he overlooked the fact that I thought it commendable that "he recognizes the value of preserving our native skills".

His implication (in his "Open Letter To H. B.") that outsiders, who have bought land and built houses here, are not made to feel accepted really merits no reply. I shall make one anyway, although I don't know what prompted him to bring up the subject. Many of these "outsiders" hold offices in our civic organizations; the majority of them have become members of our clubs and are active in our church and community life; and the majority of them don't appreciate this area's being made to look backwoods any more than we natives do. They, along with the rest of us, like to think that the annual Woman's Club reception for summer residents and visitors is a friendly way of showing our welcome to those who have summer homes here and to those who visit the area each summer. This annual reception has been given for the past 17 years, and the 18th annual reception will take place tonight. The enthusiasm and attendance during these many years speaks for itself. We are not concerned about our manners or our sincere hospitality. These qualities are inborn in the mountaineer.

But let's get back to the Geographic story. I believe all of us (those who have adopted this area as their home, as well as the natives) were pleased that Mr. Ross found an interesting subject to write about. I believe we realize, too, that a comparative newcomer might not know that we are sensitive about being made to look backwoods since we silently endured this kind of publicity over the years. And we had endured it silently until some of us spoke our pieces in recent issues of The Record.

Malcolm Ross cannot be blamed, however, for all our resentment at this type of publicity — for this resentment has accumulated and grown over the years, and there always comes a time when "enough" is "too much". Mr. Ross just happened to write the article that became the straw that broke the camel's back. The following paragraph explains why this is true.

When Mr. Ross, during his stay

here last summer, told me of the article he was writing for The National Geographic, I was delighted. At last, I thought, we will be presented to the nation as we had hoped to be presented some day by some understanding writer. Eut alas, when I read the article, "My Neighbors Hold To Mountain Ways", it was the same old story. And I know of others who were mis-lead just as I was. For this reason, we were more articulate in our protestations than we would have been had we not expected and been led to believe that the Geographic story was to be a picture of the old, which we love, combined with our modern culture and progress.

We mountaineers, proud of our heritage and our mountain ways, do not wish to be presented to the rest of the nation as anything other than just what we are. Education, modern culture, progress and community pride are NOT foreign to this area as many have made it appear.

How refreshing it would be to have someone write about us mountaineers from this rarely-used point of view — showing that we have preserved our native skills but that we are not living the backwoods life that "Our Pioneer-Forebears Knew", — an article that would show that we have preserved our Anglo-Saxon heritage as well as the fact that modern culture and education have developed in this area.

Even before the Civil War, The Burnsville Academy was founded by the Methodist church to provide higher educational facilities in the area. This school later became a public school, with the Rev. Stephen Adams as its first principal. And more than half a century ago, there were right here in Burnsville such fine schools as Stanley McCormick and The Yancey Collegiate Institute. These schools were founded by such fine and scholarly people as the Honorable E. Frank Watson, El. E. Hawkins, the late Mrs. Stanley McCormick and the late Dr. A. E. Brown. These schools have produced graduates who became lawyers, judges, doctors, teachers in public schools and colleges and universities, superintendents of public schools, and successful

Letters To The Editor

Former Residents Of Yancey, Now Far Away, Want To Resumé Contracts

I would appreciate very much if you will print this in your paper. I lived in Yancey County from January 1, 1937 to September 1, 1945, and I think I have a lot of friends there. I married Lucy Penland (Pollock).

I would like very much to correspond with some one, anyone who might care to from Yancey County. I am alone and very lonely.

Thanks,
 Ellis Donaho
 1209 North 1st Ave.
 Tucson, Arizona

Will you please send to me The Yancey Record for one year. I was born and reared in Yancey County and would like to get the old home town newspaper.

Thank you,
 Mrs. Essie Franklin
 (the former Essie Austin)
 Norfolk, Va.

Burnsville Nice Place To Retire

We are planning to visit your town either in August or September with the objective of making it a permanent home if everything turns out all right.

For ten years, I have been a radio continuity and commercial writer and have been in all branches of the newspaper business all my working life, from the back to the front. Once I owned and operated The McDowell News in Marion.

We have spent every summer in Western North Carolina, including Highlands, Fontana Village, Hendersonville, Waynesville, Breward, etc. Last summer, though, we had no vacation.

I am planning to retire from the "rat race" here and have heard so many nice things about Burnsville that we think it's what we want. Would you send me a copy of your paper?

Sincerely yours,
 Joseph J. Wilson
 P. O. Box 1310
 Plant City, Fla.

Notice Of Public Interest

It is important that all news items and "Letters To The Editor" be signed by the writer. If you wish, however, you may request that your name be withheld when your letter is published in The Yancey Record; but we must know the name and address of the person writing the letter or the news item. This is the policy of most newspapers and is one that The Yancey Record has held to for many years.

We like to publish all letters and news items, and we hope that The Yancey Record will become your newspaper, even more than it is, by your sending us news of yourself, your friends and relatives, letters to the editor with your views on county affairs or any other subject.

businessmen and women, many of whom are filling places of leadership in these fields in all sections of the nation and other parts of the world, as well as right here at home.

Present day records at the State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N. C., show that today Yancey County has a higher percentage of high school graduates who go on to college than any other county in the state of North Carolina. It would be interesting to know how this percentage compares with high school graduates in other states.

But if someone were to write about us from this unique point of view, perhaps it wouldn't sell. On second thought, perhaps it would. I have faith in the intelligence of the American people; and I believe, if the facts about Yancey County were presented to them in a true light, they would flock to this area in droves.

H. B.

(Editor's Note: These are my last words in this friendly feud, unless subsequent misrepresentations make it mandatory that more be said. — H. B.)

Words of Life

Strength
 ISAIAH 40: 28-31

28. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

(Editor's Note: If you have a favorite passage of Scripture which you would like to see printed in this space, please let us know. This is to be a regular weekly feature.)

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