

TOBACCO BECOMING JUST ANOTHER INDUSTRY; NO LONGER THE ROMANTICIZED WAY OF LIFE

By Jack Rider

"Tobacco Road" has become a part of the folk legend of America and although the brutalized caricature that was etched so deeply into the Southern conscience by an assortment of its poets in residence is now rapidly fading into the industrialized New South it is still not so far away that most Southerners old enough to remember the voice of Franklin Delano Roosevelt have forgotten it.

"Tobacco Road" was many things to many people.

To some it was riches beyond their simple understanding but for many more it was unremitting drudgery and poverty beyond description.

"Tobacco Road" was a short stretch of Americana that reached to heaven above and to hell below.

In its tender years "Tobacco Road" was not the oppressive, all-consuming tail that wagged the entire economy of so large a segment of the Southland. Tobacco was first a money crop, used by "live-at-home" farmers to supplement the ancient habits of life with a few luxuries and assorted dissipations at auction time.

But then in the Terrible Thirties government involved itself in tobacco, and most other endeavors of the mortal taxpayer and to help that "Pore Soul" who erratically feasted and famined in Tobaccoland a "program" was instituted.

And the program almost overnight changed the gentle farmer folk into a greedy soil destroyer, whose total 365-day-to-the-year passion was to see how many pounds of tobacco he could persuade to grow on a measured acre of tobacco.

That was what the honest one's did.

The thieves in the trade bribed government measurers, hid fields in wooded areas, stole from their neighbors, snatched bundles off warehouse floors, picked up loose tobacco from the streets; in short, did anything and everything to get one more pound of tobacco sold under their marketing card.

And while the average farmer became a tobacco hand, and the below-average farmer became a professional thief there were others preying on them.

Wherever the rich smell of sudden money appears thieves will come like flies to honey, and they came to Tobaccoland, USA.

Every known kind of Flim-Flam artist ever conceived by the wicked mind of man, and a few that were spawned in hell itself arrived, seasonally to fleece the briefly-rich tobacco hand, who lost his perspective in September and largely remained bankrupt the rest of the year.

There were raw-bony "Elmer Gantrys" with their tents, their dog-eared Bible, their piano-pounding hypnotist and the ever-ready collection buckets to extract coins and occasional sweaty bills from the frightened poor soul who was being told how wicked he had been all the rest of the year and how close he was to eternal hell if he didn't get his soul right with The Lord and put a little something in the collection to protect the evangelist from some fate such as honorable work.

And there were long-legged, bosomy wenches who'd left their professional pursuits around Navy bases and Army camps long enough to "work the tobacco season" in such worldwide infamous institutions as Sugar Hill and Happersville and Goldboro's Glass House and many another of less glamorous acclaim.

And there were pale shift-eyed men whose hand fitted cards and dice better than a plow handle or tobacco stick. They came to bait their several traps with the promise of even greater wealth than that accentuated by the auctioneer's stuttering chant. But the bait was never lost and many a dull-witted tobacco hand spent a long winter and late spring trying to figure out the intricacies of stud poker and rolling dice. Some did, and when they did they left the tobacco patch and joined the other parasites who sucked their sustenance from the man who cropped those nicotine weeds, climbed those hellishly hot teir poles and grew red-eyed and restless from night-long tending tobacco barn furnaces.

And there were thieves on the grand scale who moved into the tobacco business itself. They fattened and grew old on the comfortable premise that it was respectable and right to steal just a little bit from everybody they did business with but not to be so hoggish as to try to break the poor goose who was laying those golden weeds.

And so for that brief time between the opening of the Florida-Georgia tobacco sales to the Christmas-time closing in the Belt a billion dollars was pumped briefly into the hands of those who worshipped at the tobacco shrine.

And as in every other business the wise grew rich, the stupid became poorer, and they all grew older together and each inherited the same small slice of suburban real estate; oft-times called the grave.

But now in a different time the choking poverty and the cheating chicanery seem to vanish like Glen Gray's famous "Smoke Rings," when it was legal to speak and sing kindly of tobacco and the products it spawned.

Today for those old enough and sentimental enough it is the happier moments that boil to the surface of one's memory. Chicken stews around the tobacco barn, roasting corn in the shuck, a big barbecue when the crop's all in, watermelons cooled in a creek or deep in a dark well pit, money jingling in bib overall pockets, new bicycles to ride the sand-rutted roads with when selling time has come and "Pa" has paid off his family hands with their allotted tithe of what was left when the time merchant, the hired hands, the tax collector and mortgage holder had first collected their pounds of that tired tobacco flesh.

Riding to town on a pile of tobacco stacked high on a two-horse wagon, hearing the crunch of the heavily loaded wheels on the sandy roads and, as town came nearer, the grinding roar of steel on asphalt and cement.

And in town the musty smell of cavernous warehouses, the long rows of stables where farm team waited on the sale of the heavy load they had dragged to town. The profanity and leather and plug tobacco smell of livery stables where "Pa" looked over a new pair of mules with an indifference that never fooled the sharp-eyed horse trader, who could tell with a certain instinct just when a farmer had fallen in love with "the finest pair of mules ever to come out of Missouri."

And fair time. The sights, sounds, smells and taste of the dusty midway, the cool exhibit halls, the stables where glossy race horses pawed impatiently and worldly outsiders snickered openly at the parading "hicks."

And now tobacco is retreating to that reasonable place in the farm picture when it provides a part — still a major

part — of Tobaccoland's living, but not the totality it was in the years between the end of World War Two and the jungle-rot of Vietnam.

Farmers unchained from that relentless effort to squeeze one more pound of tobacco from that measured acre now have accepted the poundage allocation concept and their energy and ingenuity are concentrated on less glamorous but more stable ways of making a living from the good rich soil.

In some parts of Tobaccoland poultry now provides a year-round income, and in others it is hogs, beef cattle, turkeys, truck farming, soybean cultivation, and just plain high-produc-

tion corn farming.

Nobody except the strawberry farmer, the grape farmer or the trellis tomato cultivator has yet found a crop that will gross as many dollars per acre as tobacco. And none has found a crop that costs as much per acre in dollars and in ulcers and in sweat as tobacco.

Tobacco for much too long hypnotized farmers into forgetting and in all too many instances neglecting 85 per cent of their land while they slaved over less than 15 per cent on which tobacco was planted.

The modern more highly educated young farmer understands — although he may not like it — that farming is a highly spec-

ialized business in which the best use made of each acre under his stewardship and that it is impractical and now impossible to afford for himself and his family a fair share of the things this affluent society offers unless he works throughout the year rather than just for that brief, terrible tobacco time.

Tobacco is still there and it's likely to be a major factor in the farm economy of Tobaccoland USA for as far into the agricultural future as the guessing eye can see, but now it is a part and not all of the economy for those who have the intelligence to survive in the fiercely competitive and highly specialized world of farming.

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Jones Arrests

Four arrests were made during the past week in Jones County. They were: Ira P. Bulard of Lumberton for driving while his license was revoked; Augustus Willoughby of New Bern for driving without an operator's license; Willie Mundine of Trenton for assault; and, Billy Quick of Maysville for assault on a female.

Maysville Girl's Husband at ROTC Training Camp



Robert B. Dulaney Jr. of 1372 Axondale Ave., Jacksonville, Fla., is participating in an Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (AFROTC) field training encampment at Otis AFB, Mass.

His wife, Sandra, is the daughter of Mrs. Kathleen Jenkins of Maysville.

During the encampment, cadets become familiar with the life and activities on Air Force bases and can examine career opportunities in which they might wish to serve as officers.

Other highlights include survival training, aircraft and aircraft indoctrination, small arms training and visits to other Air Force bases.

Cadet Dulaney, a 1966 graduate of Robert E. Lee High School where he was a member of the National Honor Society, is a member of the AFROTC unit at North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

Billion-Dollar Plan Unveiled for 70 Communities and 36 REA Co-ops

Last week the 18-month planning of 70 North Carolina cities and towns and 36 REA Electric Membership corporations was unveiled and it calls for a billion-dollar interconnected power system to serve all parts of North Carolina. Kinston and La-Grange were among the 70 communities and every REA co-op in the state is a party to the planning.

The plan calls for a major hydroelectric generating plant to serve the mountain end of the state and a series of both nuclear and coal fired plants in the Piedmont and Coastal Plains area, with all systems connected with a high-voltage line.

The towns involved would finance their pro-rated portion of the system by the issue of revenue bonds and the REA co-ops would borrow money from federal sources or issue similar bonds.

It is estimated by the consultant engineering firm which did the study the first 10 years in operation of this system would represent a minimum saving of \$100 million dollars over rates presently being paid to Carolina

Power and Light Company, Duke Power Company and Virginia Electric Power Company, from whom these 70 towns and 36 co-ops now buy a majority of the power they distribute in their systems.

Very few of the cities on the list have any generating capacity left, but Kinston and a few others do have plants that supply a small per cent of the power they are presently using. All of these small plants would be phased out under the statewide system recommended in this study.

Something in the order of 10 years would be required to fully implement the plan, but major portions of it might be operative in as little as five years if the groups involved decided to go ahead with the plan.

School to Start

Jones County Schools will open their doors for student orientation day on August 29. The following Monday which is Labor Day will be a holiday and the first regular school day will begin September 2.

Senator Sam Ervin Explains His Vote on Anti-Ballistic Missile System

The month-long Senate debate over the deployment of the ABM system has focused in the main on the discontent growing out of our involvement in the Vietnam War. When all is said, however, this part of the debate strayed from the crucial questions relating to the safety of the nation in case of enemy attack.

In reaching a judgment in favor of the deployment of the ABM system, I weighed the arguments pro and con relating to what seemed to me to be the supreme questions involved in this controversy, and have come to these conclusions:

First: Can the Soviets by the mid-1970's acquire a capability sufficient to endanger our strategic missile deterrent? The weight of the evidence clearly indicates that they can — if they continue on their present course and we take no further action now to increase our presently planned strategic offensive forces or to improve their survivability.

There is general agreement

that the Soviets can by the mid-1970's acquire a force of SS-9 ICBM's and submarine-launched missiles large enough virtually to destroy our entire land-based missile and manned bomber forces in a surprise attack.

Some have argued that our Polaris-Poseidon forces alone will be a sufficient deterrent, but they overlook the point that it is the height of folly, considering what is at stake, to depend for our deterrent upon only one of the three major elements of our strategic offensive forces (bombers, ICBM's, and submarines), no matter how invulnerable that force may appear to be today. Common prudence dictates that we must do everything possible to hedge against technological surprises in the future.

Second: Will the Soviets continue on their present course? No one knows the answer to this, but until we have some proof to the contrary we must assume that they will. All doubts must be resolved in favor of the

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