

# archipelago

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Vol. 8, No. 2 Summer 2004

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Part I: “Just the facts, Ma’am.”

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## The Charlottesville DNA Dragnet Part 1: Just the Facts, Ma'am

Nell Boeschstein

With the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the reopening, after forty-nine years, of the Emmett Till murder case, racial politics are in the air. Perhaps it is the resonance of these events that leaves us preoccupied by a DNA dragnet that recently targeted young black males in our community, Charlottesville, Virginia, where we live and publish. Prompted by what we have heard and read on the subject, *Archipelago* has decided to try something new: think locally, meaning, within our own city limits. Our hypothesis is that the more we explore our immediate environment, the more we will discover that questions arising locally are applicable internationally. Such queries propose that the dragnet is not simply an isolated news event, but rather the symptom of a greater world climate wherein the word “rapist” can be substituted for “terrorist,” and “community,” “The United States.”

A serial rapist has been active in our area since 1997. Beginning in the winter of 2003, Charlottesville Police Chief Timothy Longo decided to collect DNA samples from (primarily) young black men who, because of various identifying factors, were suspects in the case. The procedure involved collecting a DNA sample by taking a swab of saliva from the inside of the mouth (a buccal swab). Of one hundred ninety-seven suspects, all but ten consented to the swab. The objections of these ten, however, raised a national controversy over conflicting issues: racial profiling, Fourth Amendment rights and how best to protect a community from an attacker—questions which led to the suspension of the dragnet in April 2004.

While the Charlottesville dragnet received a fair amount of coverage in the local and national press, *Archipelago* thinks that the underlying themes have not been sufficiently addressed in other forums. This is the first of a series in which we will explore the events surrounding the Charlottesville dragnet and its aftermath. This installment will lay out a summary of events and main characters, culled from national and local news services, from the start of the dragnet to its suspension. Later, we will explore in depth the personalities and motivations of the “main characters,” and learn what we can about the effect this

dragnet has had on our community. But we will cross the broader bridges when we come to them. For now, it's just the facts, ma'am.

\* \* \* \* \*

The serial rapist who has eluded Charlottesville law enforcement since 1997 has been definitively linked to six assaults in the area, the latest having been in April 2003. Police believe he could be responsible for other, more recent assaults as well. In winter 2003, frustrated by countless dead-end leads in the case, Chief Longo and the Charlottesville Police Department took the step of initiating a DNA dragnet by taking buccal swabs from a list of suspects, hoping thereby to identify and apprehend the rapist.

Their first step was compiling a list of names. Six hundred ninety names were brought into question via five identifying factors:

- 1) A "call for service;"
- 2) A call to Crime Stoppers;
- 3) A call to an investigator;
- 4) The Police Department's Record Management System;
- 5) A policeman's personal encounter "based on reasonable suspicion."

Four hundred suspects were quickly eliminated and never approached for swabbing. While the numbers don't add up, a remaining one hundred ninety-seven were so recognized based on three further criteria:

- 1) Ninety-nine were said to resemble the police department's composite sketch;
- 2) One hundred sixteen had been reported for "suspicious behavior;"
- 3) Seventy-five were so named based on their criminal records.

Over the past year, city police took buccal swabs from one hundred eighty-seven men (one hundred eight-five of whom were black, two of whom were Hispanic). These men complied with the request for their DNA samples. The remaining ten men refused. All those swabbed were cleared of suspicion.

From the start of the dragnet, Chief Longo stipulated that once the swabs had been tested and returned as "negative" from the state DNA labrotory in Richmond (where all DNA

samples taken by law enforcement are processed), the samples would be destroyed and their identifying bar code not entered into any database that could be used at a later date. If the suspect so desired, his swab could be returned to him, although Longo admitted this choice was not always made clear. The greatest complicating factor, however, was that all DNA samples were to be taken on a voluntary basis.

The implications (and complications) of the word “voluntary” became apparent when two students at the University of Virginia, Michael Townes and Steven Turner, refused to submit to swabbing. The two men argued that the request was not necessarily “voluntary,” and so, raised Fourth Amendment questions. They maintained that when a man refused to give the swab, he was branded more of a suspect than those who readily complied. By speaking up, Townes and Turner drew national attention to the issue, put pressure on the local black community to voice their objections to the dragnet, and forced the police department to rethink their procedure. Said Turner, “Because the suspect is black, every black man is a suspect. What are we going to do about this as a community?”

Criticism came to a head in April 2004. Together with M. Rick Turner (of no relation to Steven Turner), Dean of the University of Virginia’s Office of African-American Affairs, Chief Longo organized a forum at the university to discuss the situation and growing national criticism. As a follow up, Chief Longo and Dr. Turner, arranged a closed meeting for community leaders at the Mount Zion Baptist Church to discuss the city-wide effects.

According to accounts, Chief Longo was receptive to criticism. As he said at the forum, “I’m not a black man. I haven’t stood in Steven Turner’s shoes. I don’t pretend to.” It was the chief’s willingness to compromise and rethink his policies that left Dean Turner more optimistic about the situation, despite his having been wary going into the meeting. When asked to describe Chief Longo, Dr. Turner said, “I think he’s decent man. I think he has a good heart. He’s not how you would depict a Southern police chief of old.”

Chief Longo proved Dr. Turner right when, on April 16, 2004, he suspended the first stage of the DNA sweep and revised the criteria for taking a buccal swab. While “officer discretion” will still be allowed “where an arrest or investigative detention” has led police to believe that the person in question is a suspect, such “discretion” will no longer be based solely on individual citizens’ reports of men resembling the police composite. Instead, said Chief Longo, the police will be responsible for independently determining whether a reported person is acting suspiciously or resembles the composite.

After criticizing the police for not making suspects fully aware that they were not legally bound to submit to the swabbing, Kent Willis, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, praised Chief Longo’s response. Following the community

meeting at Mount Zion and the suspension of the dragnet, Chief Longo also earned praise locally from Mayor Maurice Cox and Pastor Bruce Beard of the Transformation Ministries First Baptist Church. But how, in the coming months, the residual effects of this dragnet will unfold in Charlottesville's black and white communities, and how (and if) Longo decides to continue the dragnet are the questions that remain to be answered. This is what we will address in coming issues.

*Further reading:*

“Chief Longo’s Memo Regarding Buccal Swabs/Citizen Contacts”

[http://www.noblernational.org/news/publish/article\\_1023.shtml](http://www.noblernational.org/news/publish/article_1023.shtml)

“City of Charlottesville: Charlottesville Police Defend DNA Testing After Allegations of Racism”

<http://george.loper.org/~george/trends/Apr/978.html>

“Will DNA dragnet affect college diversity?”

<http://cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/05/12/uva.diversity.ap/index.html>

“City of Charlottesville: Police to Restrict DNA Testing”

<http://george.loper.org/~george/archives/2004/Apr/937.html>

“City of Charlottesville: Police in Charlottesville Suspend ‘DNA Dragnet’”

<http://george.loper.org/~george/archives/2004/Apr/944.html>

## A STORY GOES WITH IT

George Garrett

The whole of our art is to double our witness and wait.  
Ben Bellitt, "Xerox"

. . . . The world began  
without us. It can live on any grief.  
Louis Coxé, "Revival"

**FADE IN**

**INSERT: BERLIN 1941**

**EXT. BERLIN DAY**

We establish the city scene, busy and prosperous, lively. Except for a scattering of men in uniforms there is no indication that there is a war going on.

**EXT. MILITARY STAFF CAR DAY**

We follow the progress of a military staff car, weaving its way among light traffic.

The only sound we hear is music. Someone out of frame and off-camera is whistling a tune, a child's tune or a little folks song.

The sound of the whistling dissolves into a flute playing the same tune, as the car pulls up and parks in a space directly in front of an imposing building (the Reichs Chancellery), well-guarded, flags, including the swastika, flying. A young junior officer jumps out of the front passenger seat and moves quickly to open the right rear door. He clicks his heels and salutes smartly as a medium-sized, middle-aged, high-ranking Naval officer, wearing a heavy, full-length overcoat, steps out of the car, tosses a vaguely casual return salute to the young officer and then moves briskly forward toward the guarded main entrance.

The young officer has to hurry to catch up. Which he does just as the guards at the entrance pop to attention and present arms.

**INT. CHANCELLERY: DAY**



To the continuing flute music and the quick rhythm of their boot heels, the two men march down a high-ceilinged hallway. They are directed by another junior officer who leaves his desk to point them towards a doorway.

**INT. MAPROOM: DAY**

They enter the chamber to see a group of uniformed men, men of high rank and importance, wearing dress uniforms, glittering and beribboned. All but one, who is wearing the brown and simple uniform of a common soldier. (Which, after all, is all that he ever was, a corporal, when he was a soldier.) All are gathered in close around the map table, their backs to the door, listening intently to the man in the plain brown uniform, who uses a pointer like a conductor's baton.

There is also present, close by the legs of the man with the pointer, a small dog, a wire-haired terrier.

The dog reacts and barks once. All turn toward the door.

The music, that lively and cheerful little tune, dies instantly as if cut off by a switch.

**CLOSE SHOT: HITLER**

Complete silence. Freeze frame except for slight fixed smile of recognition.

\* \* \* \* \*

Word had come to Admiral Canaris that the Führer wanted to see him right away. Needless to say Canaris dropped whatever it was that he was doing at the time and hurried away to report to his boss immediately.

This would probably have to have been in late December of 1941, Christmastime coming on, after Germany had declared war on the United States, and close to the time when Churchill came over to the United States to try to help Roosevelt persuade a doubtful Congress that we had to fight the Krauts first and then to take care of the Japs later. One at a time. All in due time. Europe first, Asia later.

The Führer had come up with an idea. He wanted to try it out for size on Canaris. Canaris would recruit a dozen or so German-Americans. These men would be trained as saboteurs and then sent over to America on a couple of submarines and secretly landed there. They would then proceed to bomb some factories and buildings and dams and so forth and so on and scare the living shit out of the Americans who may have sincerely

believed that three thousand miles of Atlantic Ocean would keep them snug and safe from any real danger. He would show them a thing or two.

Hitler wanted to do this just as soon as possible. He would turn over all the details to Canaris. Acting on a direct order from the Führer, Canaris could then do pretty much anything he wanted to or needed to. Just get it done. Spend a few weeks – a month or so ought to do it – training these clowns in your basic sabotage (for dummies), then stuff them on the U-Boats and dump them out on the beach over there.

What do you think, Admiral?

Canaris knows exactly how to answer that question when it refers to a project that has originated with the Führer, himself. With affirmative enthusiasm, that's how.

Back then in 1941 Canaris was still riding high in the hierarchy of the Third Reich. He would – probably not to his surprise – rise even higher. Meanwhile, even though he had his share of rivals and enemies, his apparent close and good relationship with the Führer gave him the power and resources to do all kinds of interesting things. Whenever he told somebody, anybody at all, that he was acting on the direct orders of the Führer (which was, in fact, true much of the time), they snapped to attention and shut up.

Thus Canaris replied to the Führer that it sounded like a fine idea, a really swell idea, a neat plan, to him and that he would certainly be able to take care of it right away.

Then get on with it, Hitler told him and waved him on his merry way.

Canaris knew that it wouldn't work. He knew it was going to be a complete disaster from the get-go. Even assuming that he could find the right German-Americans to fill the Führer's requirements, then what? Of course he couldn't and wouldn't depend on or trust these people; but they wouldn't learn anything of value, anyway. More to the point, they could not possibly be trained and turned into effective spies or saboteurs. They were all going to die.

And what if these people had sense enough to run off and forget about the whole thing? Or if they turned themselves in to the Americans? So what? Never mind. No harm done.

Still, Canaris thought, in the staff car on the way back to his office, there was definitely a plus side. For one thing, and always a serious consideration, there was an excellent chance that Hitler would now proceed to forget about the whole thing. As was often the case, a brand new and interesting idea would soon pop into his head like a melody and take its place. Chances were good, really, that nothing would ever come out of this one. Canaris would have to cover his ass, to be sure. Well, he would set things in motion and then see what, if anything, came to pass.

Meantime, using the marvelous blank check of a direct order from Hitler, himself, he took over some nice farmland to serve as a special base and training camp, not just for the stumblebums that he would be sending to their certain deaths, but for his own, much more serious intelligencers in the Abwehr. This secret base, with a wealth of equipment and training facilities, could pay off in many other ways.

His people recruited some men who more or less fit the Führer's requirements and then set to work, in a very casual way, training them for their deadly mission. They all played at being saboteurs during the daytime and partied well into the night. Everybody might as well have some fun while they were at it.

And it could have gone along just like that indefinitely, right up until the end of the war, maybe, if the Führer hadn't suddenly sent for Canaris and asked how things were coming along on the operation, now officially named Operation Pastorius.

This second conversation about the saboteurs would probably have taken place in early 1942, say a month or so following the earlier one. We know that Hitler was in Berlin during most of January of '42. He probably met again with Admiral Canaris before the 30th, because on that day we knew for sure that Hitler was host for a luncheon for a few close friends (not including Canaris) on the ninth anniversary of his succession to power in Germany on 30 January 1933. We even know some of the things he talked about at lunch – rambling anecdotes about his days in prison and some thoughts about his present puppet government in Czechoslovakia. He doesn't seem to have mentioned or referred to his secret plan to send saboteurs to the United States.

Now then. Please take a minute or two to consider that there were terrible things taking place all over and around the globe, any number of which – the war on the Eastern Front, for example, the back and forth battles in North Africa, the Battle of the Atlantic where German U-Boats were busily sinking hundreds of ships and maybe winning the war – could have claimed the full and undivided attention of both the Führer and the Admiral. It is hard to remember, it requires an act of the imagination and maybe a fact or two, since we, here and now, can't quite be unaware of the eventual outcome, that things weren't going all that badly for the Axis or all that well for the Allies in late 1941 and early 1942.

Out in the Pacific our huge fleet (all but the aircraft carriers, thank God) was mostly resting at the bottom of the sea. Everywhere – Malaya, the Philippines, Indo-China, the East Indies, the South Pacific, the Japs were really kicking ass. It looked like nothing in the world could stop them or even slow them down a little.

As a result of the strategic decisions by Roosevelt and Churchill to fight and (if possible) to defeat the Germans first, the Japanese were going to be able to take over

enormous amounts of valuable real estate and to kill or capture many thousands of Americans and their allies while they were at it. Consider that, living in a very different world than our own, the American people, democracy or not, were not going to be allowed to participate in that strategic decision or any other. Or, for that matter, even know that such a decision was being made. We would fight, basically, a rearguard action in the Pacific, throwing away our assets piecemeal, holding on as best we could until the war in Europe was over and done with.

Was this the right decision? Who knows? It was probably the only thing we could do at the outset. We did not yet have the means to fight on all fronts. Surrender or a separate peace with the Japs doesn't seem to have been a serious option. These days somebody might try to cut a deal, but not then.

How about the other side – Hitler's decision to declare war against the United States? Of course, he had a treaty obligation to join with his ally, Japan. But, like most thoughtful leaders of that era, and of ours as well, he was never wont to let some old treaty stand in the way of what he perceived to be his immediate best interests. Truth is (I think), Hitler knew that sooner or later he was going to have to fight a war against the United States, anyway. Sooner the better, because he was fully aware of our enormous potential; in fact he probably overestimated it. Meantime, like almost everybody then and since then, including the American Government, he greatly underestimated the courage and resolve of the American people, betting the farm that after he finished off the Soviet Union, he could cut a favorable peace deal with Britain and America.

Meanwhile, in late 1941, there is plenty going on, plenty of trouble all around.

In North Africa the war goes back and forth, like a yo-yo, but whether they are advancing or retreating, the Afrika Corps under Rommel are clearly the force to be reckoned with. Sooner or later, they could go all the way to India and line up with the Japs, if the Japs don't get there first. No kidding. Meanwhile the Mediterranean is nobody's lake and the Atlantic seems to belong to the German U-boats.

On the Eastern Front the Germans are in the suburbs of Leningrad and Moscow, and deep into Russia everywhere else, by early December; though they are soon to be driven back by some Russian counterattacks. Trouble was, though, for the Russians, anyway, they had already lost something like five million men killed in action (and another three million captured) since the Germans invaded in June. They had also lost many thousands of their tanks and artillery pieces. If there is no real breakthrough by the Russkies, come springtime the Krauts will surely rock and roll again.

Of course, bear in mind always that nobody except the leaders at the very highest levels among the Axis, the Allies or anybody else, certainly not the ordinary people, the informed citizenry, knew anything about any of this. Like ourselves, they were at the mercy of the press. Lest the people should lose heart, it is a time for some bold symbolic gestures, a little good publicity. The Brits are commencing to bomb some of the German cities late at night. No real harm done, but it's a thought, a beginning. They also make some little commando raids on the Lofoten Islands (in late December) and manage to blow up some local radio stations and a couple or three fish oil factories. Not a whole lot of big help (or much harm either) in the overall, worldwide war effort, but at least it is a little bit of cheery news for the stay-at-homes at the year's end.

It also hinted, if it did not demonstrate or prove, that it was at least possible that the Allies might some day or other decide to come ashore again on the European continent. Maybe . . . . Folks at home could take heart. Meanwhile, however, the Krauts were not exactly quaking in their shiny jack boots.

And not to mention the irony, of which Canaris, as chief of German military intelligence, would probably know all about as soon as anybody else did, i.e. in April of 1942, of the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo with 16 B-25 bombers. Its purpose was essentially identical to that of Operation Pastorius.

In any case, here the Führer was at it again, still harping on his cockamamie scheme of carrying the war to America, in a symbolic way at least, by means of the saboteurs. Like the Doolittle Raid it would serve chiefly as a little gesture to brighten up folks on the homefront.

When Hitler asked him how things were coming, what do you think Canaris said?

He of course said that everything was coming along fine and dandy, right on schedule, my Führer. Just the way you wanted. Just the way you told me.

Good, said the Führer. I'm very glad to hear that. And now I want you and your people to stop farting around and get this operation underway. Do you understand me, Admiral?

Yes, sir.

I want the operation to take place immediately. You understand that?

Yes, sir. Like immediately, if not sooner.

(Let me pause here long enough to say the chances are that the Führer did not say "farting around"; because, as you may very well know, Hitler suffered from serious flatulence problems and was more than a little sensitive on the subject. Moreover, I seriously doubt that any of them talked the way I have them doing here. My German, not

used since my Army days, is pretty rudimentary. So? As long as we get the gist of it, who cares?)

You understand exactly what I'm saying to you, Admiral?

Yes, my Führer. I fully appreciate and understand and will take care of it at once.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even though I am the one telling you this tale, it's really Eddie's story as he told it to me and as I remember it, a long time ago. Eddie, my old and good friend, is dead and gone now, I'm sorry to say. We miss him. And so, for the time being, you are stuck with me, with my voice and my version of what, once upon a time, he told me, and as it was recorded at the time and has been preserved and maintained in my old man's fallible and slowly fading memory.

You are warned.

Another thing. As it happens, this is supposed to be a true story. More honestly, it was and is *intended* to be a true story. Problem is – if, indeed, it really is a problem, an issue – I honestly don't know for sure what's true and what isn't. In the first place, I don't know the whole or factual truth about a lot of what Eddie told me. Some things have since been confirmed from other and reliable sources, one way or another, over time. But even with the doubtful things, the unconfirmed details, I have to keep always in mind (and I pass this along to you, too, if I may) the fact that Eddie had no good reason of any kind to lie to me or even to exaggerate anything for my benefit. After all, by the time he got around to telling me the story, he was long since finished with it. All over and done with. As far as Eddie was concerned, then, all he was doing at that particular time was talking to me about some of it. He wasn't writing a story, he was having a private conversation. And, on top of everything else, I can categorically say this much. If Eddie told me any lies whatsoever or if, for whatever reason, he chose to exaggerate and hype this story, it would have been the one and only time he ever did something like that to me. In more than thirty years Eddie was always absolutely straight up with me about everything. No question.

I sincerely wish I could honestly claim the same thing for myself. I have to admit that I have always had an almost irresistible urge to sneak some hard facts into the never-never land of fiction. (As witness this story here and now.) Or vice versa. I have demonstrated a desire to take control and to shape real stories as it pleased me to and all-too-often with no more than a casual fidelity to the original facts. Eddie was fully aware of

this bad habit of mine and (I think) he was amused by it. From his point of view it was more like a kind of clowning around than anything else. No serious harm done. A grain of salt was in order.

Which leads me directly to confront another problem in this version of the saboteur story. He talked and I (mostly) listened. Regardless of my ambiguous reliability, I was seriously interested, but not planning, not then or ever after, to “use” this material in a work of fiction or in any other form or for any other purpose whatsoever. I wasn’t even aiming to remember it. So that what we are dealing with here and now, all these years later, is only what I can’t help but remember. Memory plays all kinds of tricks on all of us, as we all know. All the more so when that memory has been stashed away, lying dormant like my old black-and-tan hound dog by the fireplace, snoring away.

You know what Wright Morris is quoted as saying in a lecture at Princeton? He said: “Anything processed by memory is fiction.”

In that sense, this is all fiction. In that sense, a lot of our “real” lives is pure fiction. Even Eddie is a “character” as I imagine him. So? So in honor of the late Eddie Weems and for the sake and memory of our long friendship, I hereby solemnly promise to tell you nothing more or less than what I do truly remember. Except for little things like imaginary dialogue (we already mentioned that they didn’t talk like that.) I plan to stick close to the facts, insofar as I know what they are.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was bound to happen. After lying dormant for many years, our subject – the Nazi saboteurs who came to America in 1942 – is back in the press. Terrorism and the contemplated and controversial use of military tribunals to deal with contemporary terrorists have made the story briefly pertinent at this writing. Somebody somewhere, out there in the ranks of the altricial media, was bound to remember those Nazi saboteurs of days gone by. And, sure enough, my February 2002 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* arrived in the mail, featuring an excellent piece, “The Keystone Kommandos,” by Gary Cohen – thorough and enhanced by photographs of the saboteurs and of the military tribunal that tried them. Not long thereafter (February 17), here came *The New York Times* checking in with a full page article and several relevant photographs – “Terrorists Among Us (Back in ‘42),” by Andy Newman. Also available at roughly the same time was an article in the Coast Guard

magazine, *The Reservist* (Jan. - Mar. 2002), itself excerpted from a July 1997 “World War II Beach Patrol feature”: “Enemies on the Beach: Sixty Years ago, an alert Coast Guardsman stopped hostile enemies from infiltrating American soil.” These pieces inevitably overlap somewhat, since the writers were using a lot of the same primary materials, including various and sundry government documents now finally and fully available for examination, together with the official trial transcript of the Tribunal. In *The Atlantic*, the “In This Issue” editorial page and the contributors’ notes tell us: “Gary Cohen (“The Keystone Kommandos”) recently delved into more than 3000 pages of trial transcripts at the National Archives and the Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York, to unearth the story of their (the Nazis) mission, capture and trial.” And all three of these pieces, though adding some facts and new information of their own, also, as they dutifully acknowledge, owe a very large debt to the basic published book on the subject – *THEY CAME TO KILL: THE STORY OF EIGHT NAZI SABOTEURS IN AMERICA* (1962), by Eugene Rachlis.

From Rachlis to Cohen and Newman and the U.S. Coast Guard you can’t find fault with any of these guys. They have definitely done their homework and their duty and their delving; and, within the limits and the ambiguous authority (and veracity) of the available official documents, their versions are about as accurate and authentic as can be expected.

To be sure Eddie’s version is a little bit different. You’ll see.

As luck would have it – and luck will have it all, after all, in the literary life as well as real life, I had long since finished this fiction, “A story Goes With It,” and, in fact, already published a short version of it in *The Sewanee Review*, when there appeared on the scene a new book on the subject. It is called *SABOTEURS; THE NAZI RAID ON AMERICA* (Knopf, 2004), by Michael Dobbs. Mr. Dobbs, who is a reporter for the *Washington Post*, has done a wonderful job of assembling the basic facts and digging out the important details. Like Eddie, he went to the places and interviewed the people he could find. He writes: “My travels took me from the grounds of a former Nazi sabotage school in Brandenburg, Germany, to a windswept beach in Amagansett, Long Island; from Hitler’s bunker in the lake district of northeastern Poland to the streets of Chicago, where the saboteurs played cat-and-mouse games with their F.B.I. pursuers.” I learned a great deal from Mr. Dobbs’ book. Some of it, both large and small points, firmly contradicts my own (Eddie’s as best I can recall it) version. Other things are confirmed. It is hard to imagine a better factually correct version of this story than *Saboteurs*; for all practical purposes it’s likely to be the last word on the subject.



Meanwhile, for mostly impractical purposes, my story is a work of fiction. If I were writing it in Turkish, I would use what is called “the rumor tense,” beginning: “Maybe it happened and maybe it didn’t.”

\* \* \* \* \*

After finishing some basic training (if you can call it that), at the Abwehr farm, nine men are shipped off to Paris, carrying with them large sums of American money along with a lot of forged identification documents and so on. The plan is for them to go to Paris (then under German occupation), and from thence to a German U-Boat base on the French coast where they can ship out to America.

Plenty happens on the train to Paris. First of all, these guys get all drunk and rowdy and boisterous. They tell other people, employees and fellow passengers, anybody who will bother to listen to them, that they are German spies on a top-secret mission. When they finally get off the train in Paris, they somehow manage to leave behind them the whole kit and kaboodle of American money, I.D. cards, maps and instructions etc. The French Conductor, who sometimes does a little part-time amateur, after hours, spying on the side for the Resistance, picks up this trash and immediately turns it over to his superiors. So the French know all about it from the outset. And, indeed, they take note of this information. But you must always bear in mind that the French are a lot more subtle and nuanced than we are. They will not be fooled by anything that obvious as this. They figure it’s a dumb Kraut trick. So they deep-six the materials and don’t bother to mention it to anyone else at the time or even (especially) later.

As for the saboteurs. They now have to wait around for a little while, maybe a week or ten days, while a whole new package of bogus materials is put together by the Abwehr and then brought to them. They spend most of their time in Paris bar-hopping and sight-seeing and chasing tail. And they continue to tell all kinds of people, in public and private places, that they are highly trained, heavy duty German saboteurs getting ready to go to America and to blow a whole lot of important infrastructure sky high.

Naturally their behavior and their claims came to the attention of the French and even to Allied intelligence. All of whom promptly disregard it as just one more bonehead German trick.

One of the saboteurs manages to get himself a serious dose of clap while screwing around in Paris. Lucky for him, he is scrubbed from the mission.

The others, eight of them, now re-equipped with the money and papers and maps and plans, are taken down to a submarine base and put aboard two U-Boats there, lone wolves of the new Type 9. At the very last minute, just before the subs slip out and away, here comes a special motorcycle courier, driving wide open and practically airborne, with a special personal message to them from the Führer himself.

This cheerful farewell message advises them that, while they are at it, they should be sure to try to blow up a few Jewish department stores in New York City.

Ends with the Nazi equivalent of “Have a Nice Day!”

\* \* \* \* \*

The late John Edward Weems (born 1924) was, among other things, a first-rate journalist and writer. Beginning with *A Weekend in September*, an account of the great Galveston hurricane of 1900, he published, by my informal count, some fourteen books on a variety of subjects. Among them two fine books about Admiral Peary – *Race for the Pole* (1960) and *Peary: THE EXPLORER AND THE MAN* (1967); several books of solidly researched and well-written popular history: *THE FATE OF THE MAINE* (1958), *DREAM OF EMPIRE; A HUMAN HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS* (1971), *TO CONQUER A PEACE: THE WAR BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO* (1974), *DEATH SONG: THE LAST OF THE INDIAN WARS* (1976); another book or two about stormy weather – *THE TORNADO* (1984) and *IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WEATHER* (1986). One of my favorites is a wonderful book about some early American rascals and scoundrels – *MEN WITHOUT COUNTRIES: THREE ADVENTURERS OF THE EARLY SOUTHWEST* (1969). These three rogues were spies for Thomas Jefferson – or maybe against him. We'll never know for sure. Here Eddie introduced me to a character, James Wilkinson, I would love to turn loose in a picaresque novel or a movie or an opera or a comic book, about chicanery and hanky-panky and hocus pocus among the Founding Fathers. Wilkinson was an American general at 21 in the Revolutionary War. Made a quick fortune, married a Biddle, and was, in the words of the book jacket, “an incorrigible double-dealer.” He was also, we soon learn, a spy for Spain even while serving on the southwest frontier as commander of U.S. forces there. Wilkinson was something of a writer in his own

right, covering his ass and his tracks in a three volume memoir – MEMOIRS OF MY OWN TIMES (1816). I plan to read it some day if I live long enough.

Meanwhile I have Eddie's book.

At one time Eddie was also an editor and the associate director of the University of Texas Press. Which is how he happened to be my editor and how I first got to know him. While he was there, Texas published two books of mine – THE SLEEPING GYPSY AND OTHER POEMS (1958) and IN THE BRIAR PATCH; A BOOK OF STORIES (1961). These books were beautifully made – one won a design prize – and I was and remain proud and grateful.

Some years later in 1971, a little magazine called *The Mill Mountain Review* did a special issue, "In Appreciation of George Garrett," about my work. And, hey, that was fine and dandy with me. I enjoy appreciation as much as the next guy. It was all very nice and satisfactory, some poets contributed poems, some people submitted stories or essays. Eddie Weems sent along a loosey-goosey sequence of anecdotes (oddly appropriate to this piece I am writing more than thirty years later). Which I now shamelessly quote:

*Your recent request for "critical essays, poems, stories, memories, anecdotes and whatever else comes to light, all concerning George Garrett – his career, his work and himself" left me bemused. The request evoked happy memories of years ago – most of them funny, a few even hilarious (which I regard as an intrinsic compliment to George Garrett), but at the same time hardly material for critical essays, poems, or stories. Many of the happenings would, in fact, be better kept in strictest confidence between George and me, rather than be used in any literary tribute to George. An instance of this is the time when, as promotion and advertising director of the University of Texas Press (George was an author of ours), I drove him from Austin to Fort Worth, where he spoke at a writers' day luncheon at Texas Christian University. That night, while returning to Austin after partaking festively of chocolate milk and Jack Daniels (which does not represent depraved taste, as so many people have believed), we had a flat-just south of Waco. The tire-changing process of fitting those holes in the wheel to the lugs was made even more challenging than usual, and I spent fifteen minutes, in absolute darkness, trying without success to put on the spare, while George stood by wondering what the trouble could be. Finally he struck a match, and we saw our difficulty: I had been trying to put the spare on backwards. Now, as I said, these remembrances would not make any sort of tribute to George, but I suppose this one might: it commemorates his helpfulness. Had he not struck that match I probably would have been there until sunrise trying to put the spare on backwards.*

*As I said at first, I had not intended to write a tribute to George Garrett from these recollections of years ago, but the more I think about them the more I see that they do illuminate George's good qualities, after all. There was, for another instance, the time I saw his inherent honesty displayed – at a crowded bar-*

*and-billiard parlor near the beach in Venice, California. I had stopped over in Los Angeles (en route home from a university presses meeting at Stanford University) to visit George, who was then in Hollywood writing the screenplay for "The Young Lovers" for Samuel Goldwyn, Jr. We had sallied forth to the beach during the afternoon – it was one of those days of unusual Southern California heat – and had removed ourselves to the bar-and-billiard parlor for several hours to escape the blistering sun. Leaving, we were already outside the door before realizing we had left change for a ten-dollar bill on our table, and we hurried back to retrieve the pile of money before the waiter thought it was all meant for a tip. Blinking in the now-unaccustomed dark interior and disconcerted anew by the din and general confusion of the place (as well as the mist that seemed to hang over everything), I nevertheless thought I had found the change, still on the table – bills and coins – and had just picked it up when a group of mean-looking pool-shooters rushed toward us with cues and bottles in their fists, shouting, "Look! They've come back – and they're taking our money!" After I had dropped their change and quickly picked up our own money from the correct table George – exhibiting his usual honest appraisal of any situation – said to me (after we had again made our exit), "That was their money. We're lucky to be alive."*

*Not only is George Garrett honest in his appraisals, he is (as further reflection shows me) without pretense or hypocrisy. I recall the time when, many years ago, he spoke at a Protestant church-affiliated school in Texas (a description that should indicate adequately the rules and regulations therein) and was quartered overnight in a plush guest room, one of several apartments maintained by the school in its Bible building. That night he invited several of us to partake of more Jack Daniels (with water this time, considering what we had endured after the chocolate milk) then, later, replaced the empty bottle in the bag and tossed it in a trash basket. Weeks afterward I heard from a relative associated with the school that George had created something of a scandal. The janitor, apparently in his routine inspection of trash, had found the bottle and had reported its presence to the administration – a fact of which I believe George is even now unaware. He had put the empty bottle back in the bag, to save their feelings, but he would not hypocritically or cravenly carry it outside and throw it in a large trash bin some distance away, where its ownership probably would have remained unknown, even to inspecting janitors.*

*Humility is another characteristic I have observed in George – on one occasion during a visit to his home in Houston, where he was associated some years ago with the Alley Theatre and with Rice University. While I was there the mail came, including the latest issue of the Princeton University alumni magazine. That publication carried a list of books by Princeton authors, and in this issue mentioned George's book of contemporary poems, ABRAHAM'S KNIFE – listed in a category entitled "Books on the Civil War." I reflected at the time that it required humility to laugh the way George did, but on the other hand – he had not then been selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club.*

*Now that I am caught up in these memories I could go on, but – to repeat – these recollections (and some few George might add) would be better kept confidential. Instead, as a tribute, I have dedicated a book*

*to be published later this year by Simon and Schuster to “some men in the world of books who have been encouraging and helpful in past years” – to George Garrett and a few others. This seems much more appropriate, mutually, to our current professional dignities than written recollections of much younger days – or critical essays, poems, and stories based on those memories. The book might sell only 1,018 copies (taking for an estimate the average sales of five previous books), but the dedication to a talented, lively author is no less sincere. (Mill Mountain Review, pp. 174-175)*

What has all this got to do with those eight saboteurs bobbing and barfing their way across the wide Atlantic in the cramped and stinking and highly dangerous little world of a submarine?

Well, along about that same time, the late fifties or early sixties, Eddie and his agent cut a deal with a major commercial publisher for a book about the Nazi saboteurs. What happened next was that, even before Eddie had finished up his extensive research, the Rachlis book came out. Out of the blue. And Eddie’s publisher soon decided there really wasn’t enough interest to justify two books on the exact same subject. As Eddie understood it, *THEY CAME TO KILL* had sold the paperback rights up front for a lordly sum. There was also a movie sale and so forth. Not much left over, slim pickings (if any), for ole Eddie’s book. The publisher surprisingly enough offered him a pretty good deal to just drop the book and the subject. They didn’t have to, but nevertheless they said he could keep all of the large advance. Moreover, to sweeten things even more, they also proposed that they would pay him something more than that, a kind of “kill fee.” In return he would give them, as their property to use or abuse as they saw fit, all his notes and as much of the manuscript as he might have already written. His agent characteristically advised him to take the money and run. It had all been a kind of an assignment, anyway. Eddie was always a pro, first to last. Win a few, lose a few. He needed the money, and he had plenty of other subjects he was interested in working on. So why not?

The downside was all the time and energy and effort he had already spent on it. Eddie went far beyond the version available from the trial transcript and such government documents he could get ahold of at the time. He had traveled over to Germany and France and all across America searching for and interviewing people who were involved in the story one way or another.

\* \* \* \* \*

As for myself, I had been interested in the story of the Nazi saboteurs for a long time, ever since I was a teenager (1942) living in Florida, and mostly, that year, in an old house, a shack really, set in the sand dunes, facing the Atlantic Ocean near what is now called New Smyrna Beach. It was called Coronado Beach then. We could sit in our rocking chairs on the front porch and watch the Coast Guard patrol the beach every evening. We saw all kinds of wreckage and great gobs of oil and even sometimes dead bodies that washed up on the beach. We witnessed some firefights involving planes, Wildcats from a nearby airport, and German U-Boats as tankers and freighters tried to run safely north or south close along the Florida coast. Jacksonville Beach (Ponte Vedra), where one group of four of the Nazi saboteurs came ashore from a submarine, was north of where we were. But we heard all about it, long before we were ever able to read anything in the papers or in the magazines. We took it to be yet another rumor, only one among many. We saw no reason to doubt it. There were already stories that German sailors, captured or killed, were found to have receipts from grocery stores and even ticket stubs for movie theaters in Daytona, St. Augustine, Cocoa Beach etc., all up and down the east coast.

Why doubt the possibility of some saboteurs?

One of my sisters remembers going to a beach party up at Jacksonville Beach along about the same time that the saboteurs (we later learned) were supposed to have come ashore. On the way back home, they got stopped at several checkpoints. They had to prove their identity and submit to a search of the car. My sister and her friend thought it must be something to do with the abuse of gas rationing. We only had an "A" card, three gallons a week. But the police and soldiers offered no explanation of the checkpoints.

And something else. I knew a woman who was a newspaper reporter. She told me how she had gone up to Jacksonville Beach to see some of the evidence against the saboteurs after the whole thing was known, namely some supplies and explosives that they were supposed to have buried when they first landed. The F.B.I. was there to show off the stuff, to let reporters take some pictures, and to answer any questions. What troubled her a little was the fact that the shallow hole in the sand was obviously very recently dug. Like maybe an hour or so before the reporters arrived. You can tell a thing like that easily in soft beach sand. Moreover the materials were all brand new and some items looked to be American made, not German at all. Surprise, surprise? Well, not really. Everybody knew better than to ask too many questions about anything in those days. Information was carefully rationed, doled out, managed, manipulated (as they say). Like meat and sugar and leather and gasoline. Bear in mind that the first photographs that showed dead American

corpses were allowed to be published in 1943 or 1944. The President is said to have asked that some photographs of American dead should begin to be published in the magazines so that the public could get used to the idea before D-day. Remember, too, that we were years finding out the details of exactly what had happened at Pearl Harbor. We were told it was bad, but we had no idea just how bad it had been until much later in the war.

So, sometime in the late 1960s, as I recall, I asked Eddie Weems to tell me something about the Nazi Saboteurs of 1942.

\* \* \* \* \*

Have I already mentioned that Eddie and I were drinking? Bourbon on the rocks. I'm sorry to say (or am I?). We did a lot of that in those days and I guess I could tell you a thing or two. However I only mention it here because it is one more factor in the veracity of this story. Eddie was telling me his version, not for posterity or publication, but because I had asked him to. Meanwhile I was listening and sipping some good whiskey and enjoying the story for its own sake and nothing else.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, all right, since you asked, a couple of quick bourbon stories.

Like the time I went up to Austin for the publication of *IN THE BRIAR PATCH* (1961). We had a party at Eddie's house. All kinds of people, friends of Eddie and Jane showed up. Two were honored and prominent Texas men of letters, men I had admired for most of my adult years, but never imagined getting to meet in person – J. Frank Dobie and Walter Prescott Webb. It was wonderful to meet these men and to talk to them for awhile. It was only years later that I heard (I still don't know if it's true, but . . . .) that Dobie and Webb had quarreled and that they never went to any place socially where the other one was likely to be. Only for Eddie Weems would they turn up together. That says something about Eddie Weems.

We had a fine old time, to be sure; and, on the morning after, hangover, but still young enough to be cheerful, I dropped by the Press to see Eddie and to make my manners

to Frank Wardlaw, director of the Press. He and Eddie were going to drive me out to the airport. I brought along a bottle and we sat in Frank's office, laughing and scratching, and talking trash and taking some hits until it was time for us to go to the airport. Got there (safe and sound). It was a terrible looking little airport. Parking lot empty. Tall grass growing everywhere. Not much activity that we noticed. We still had some time to kill. So we sat in the car talking and taking some more pulls on that rapidly dwindling bottle.

About that time a man driving a great big grass mower (a bush hog?), came alongside, cutting a swath of tall grass near where we were parked. He cut down a couple of rows of grass and weeds and then pulled up right next to us and cut his engine so we could at least hear each other.

"You boys waiting for an airplane?" He asked.

"Yes, sir. Going to fly out of here to Houston in about fifteen minutes."

"Well, sir, I don't reckon you're going to make that flight and there won't be another one coming along right away, either."

"How come? If you don't mind my asking."

"Not at all," he said. "This here airport has been closed up tight for the last five years ever since they built the new one across town. I think you might have better luck if you drove over there and waited."

"Much obliged."

It was then that one of us, probably sharp-eyed Eddie, noticed that the roof of the terminal was all caved in and there was a chain and a huge padlock on the front door.

Or, another selected from among many, there is the time Eddie, as a world-class expert on storms of all kinds, was hired by The Houston Post, also in 1961 I think, to go down to Galveston and cover a hurricane that was headed there. He was to go down and weather the worst of the weather, and call in his copy (if he could). On the way down, Eddie swung by my house in Houston, and picked me up to come along with him as company. I was given a camera and some bogus press credentials; and we headed off into the teeth of the storm (as they say).

Eddie wanted to rest his eyes a little and maybe to take a brief nap. So we switched off. I was driving and Eddie was stretched out in the back seat of my old Rambler. He was snoring away like my old hound dog. The road was open and empty (officially closed). The rain was hard and horizontal, the wind was high.

I am peering into it, squinting, leaning up close to the windshield, cocking my head and keeping time with the windshield wipers, driving along at a crawl.



Here comes a Texas State Trooper, blinking and flashing his lights. Pulls me over. Parks and comes around to my window and raps on it. I run it down.

“May I see your license and registration, please sir?” He asks politely. “And if you don’t mind my asking, just what the fuck do you think you are doing here?”

“Going to Galveston, officer.”

“No, you ain’t, sir. This road is closed to civilian traffic.”

“We’re not civilians. We’re from the *Houston Post*.”

“Got any press credentials?”

“Sure. Only he’s got them all with him.”

Eddie, curled up in the back seat like a bull seal or a walrus, is still snoring away.

“He’s the reporter and I’m the photographer.”

“How would I know that?”

“Well, sir,” I tell him. “Here’s my camera . . . .”

It does indeed say “Property of the *Houston Post*” on it. I wouldn’t know how to take a picture with it if my life depended on it. Which, thank goodness, it doesn’t.

“Okay, buddy,” the Trooper allows. “What about him?”

I am struck with sudden inspiration. We do, after all, have a copy of Eddie’s book on the great Galveston hurricane, WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER, sitting on the front seat. It has a nice picture of an unmistakable Eddie Weems on the jacket. I hold it up high so the Trooper can see for himself. He peers at the picture and then at Eddie.

“That is John Edward Weems, officer. He wrote the book on hurricanes.”

Trooper thinks about it, then suddenly waves us on our way.

“If he don’t wake up soon, he ain’t going to write another book today.”

We are off and running, laughing and scratching.

After a while ole Eddie wakes up and stretches.

“Everything okay?” he asks.

“Everything is copacetic, five-by-five.”

Lucky for us it turned out not to be quite so bad as everybody had expected. It was a powerful storm, though. When we finally got to Galveston, the place was pretty much evacuated and abandoned except for (as ever and always) cops and firemen and rescue workers. We looked around. Eddie talked to a policeman or two and took some notes. Then he drove around looking for something familiar, found it, it seemed, and pulled up and parked right in front of an enormous, birthday cake of a Victorian mansion. There were some pale lights, candles probably, from inside.

“What next?”

“We wait right here,” he told me.

So we sat there in the car, pelted by the heavy rain, our car windows fogged over, ourselves passing the bottle back and forth while we waited. For what, I wasn't sure. The end of the world maybe. Maybe a half hour or forty-five minutes later – not a long time, but long enough for us to get ourselves somewhat inebriated, a couple of police cars came sloshing along through the rising water, together with a bus. They pulled into the driveway of the big house, and a couple of cops in wet and shiny slickers clumped up the stairs and pounded on the front door. We kept busy wiping the windows inside, trying to see.

Shortly the front door opened and here came a line of young women, all of them dressed in bathrobes, running for the bus with the cops, like a brace of sheep-dogs, herding them along.

“I knew it!” Eddie said. “I knew damn well this is exactly how it would be.”

He put on the car lights and got out and stood there in the rain watching. Some of the young women did a kind of double take when they saw Eddie standing in the light and waved at him.

“Hey, Eddie!” Somebody called out. “Hey, Eddie! What are you doing here?”

He neither waved nor answered.

“They've got me confused with somebody else,” he said to me.

After the cops and the bus drove away, Eddie got back in the car, wiped off as best he could and took a couple or three major swallows of bourbon, the latter, as he explained to me, so he wouldn't end up catching a bad cold. As for what we had just witnessed, he had nothing to say except this: “Bastards! Wouldn't you know they would keep them waiting until the very last minute to be evacuated. It's a damn shame.”

We drove around until we found a phone booth, one that still worked.

“Wait right here in the car,” Eddie said, taking his notes (already well soaked with rain) and the bottle with him. The light in the booth didn't work, so he had me to jockey the car around where the car lights could do the job. I watched him putting coins into the phone, then talking to somebody. Talked awhile, then hung up. Took another pull from the bottle and walked slowly back to the car.

“Let's go home,” he told me. “Back to Houston. It's all over.”

“What do you mean? What happened?”

“I called in and dictated my story and they took it all down carefully and read it back to me. Then they fired me. Bill Hobby fired me in person.”

“Why did he do that?”

“Beats me,” Eddie said. “It was a hell of a good story, too – how they evacuated the best whorehouse in Galveston in the big middle of a hurricane.”

\* \* \* \* \*

To the best of my recollection (as witnesses always say in courtroom drama) I have only told Eddie’s version of this saboteur story a couple of times before now. Both times that I told it, different occasions, were at the same place – evening on the front porch of my old (1780) house in York Harbor, Maine, overlooking the York river. In the evening that river, with its moored lobster boats and sailboats and large and small pleasure craft, rising or falling according to the tide, glistens with a ghostly light like a wet blacksnake.

Anyway, I told Eddie’s saboteur story (separately) to two old friends – John McPhee and David Slavitt. McPhee seemed to like the story and said so. Slavitt liked it, too, and wondered out loud if he could maybe make a piece of fiction, a novel, out of the subject, creating his own version and not exactly using Eddie’s version or anybody else’s.

I couldn’t think of any good reason why not.

Slavitt, a brilliant and prolific poet, novelist, story-writer, critic and translator (author of more than eighty books at this writing and more are in the pipeline), gave the story of the saboteurs his own inimitable twists and turns. RINGER (Dutton 1982) tells its own story, based, as he allows in his “acknowledgments,” on Rachlis’s *THEY CAME TO KILL* (1961), but also clearly and boldly a work of fiction. “I have merely extended the truth into what I hope is a plausible and entertaining story.” He used few of the details from Eddie’s version (as remembered and told by me) but he was wonderfully faithful to the spirit of Eddie’s unwritten story. On the one hand, RINGER is a fast-paced, page-turning, classic thriller deftly plotted and enhanced by the usual required ingredients of sex and violence, murder and mayhem. Just as it is, it would make a swell action movie. In his blurb, Richard Elman called it “a movie in words.” If Eddie’s version calls for the Coen Brothers, RINGER might be perfect for Tony Bill.

On the other hand, there is a gracious plenty of “comic relief,” of slapstick and pratfalls. Ringer is a Shakespearean mix in the way that Eddie’s version is a mix (and if you insist, as mine is here and now. As, alas, real life is.) Slavitt produced a very clever, original, and complex piece of work. Playing fast and loose with many of the facts, he nevertheless managed to follow the true history fairly closely. The biggest change in Slavitt’s version, was

to make the mission a double-barreled plot. The saboteurs, all of them hopeless and hapless amateurs, are supposed to blow up Jewish department stores in New York City. That is their one and only suicidal assignment. Among them, however, and unknown to any of them until late in the story, there is the “ringer,” a real professional, a “hit-man” by trade, who has the special assignment of murdering Albert Einstein. This leads up to a wild final sequence in Princeton during the annual Princeton Reunions where, among other things, two men disguised as Princeton Tigers in tiger suits pull each others’ tails and shoot it out on stage in front of a large crowd of drunken alumni.

I have to believe Slavitt put that in as a little thank you tip of the hat to me – I went to Princeton, as did John McPhee, who was a class behind me. Slavitt also has a character who is a Master Sergeant, my old rank, by the name of Garrett, who appears briefly and is celebrated for his “style of invective.” Never mind. We have our little private jokes from time to time.

I have read most of Slavitt’s books, but somehow had not read RINGER until right now, right in the big middle of doing my own version. There probably have been others, too, but so far RINGER is the only work of fiction that I know of about the Nazi Saboteurs of 1942.

You ought to read it sometime.

\* \* \* \* \*

From here on Eddie’s version of what really happened in the saboteur story differs significantly from the other accounts that I know of. If there is any truth, or even a serious probability in Eddie’s version, then you wouldn’t expect the people who were involved – the Coast Guard, the F.B.I., the President, the Attorney General, the Supreme Court, etc., to confirm it unless they got caught and had to. Otherwise they almost certainly would, as is the habit and wont of all governments, large and small, local and global, have attempted to cover it up as much as possible.

Real people with real names were duly honored with medals and with public praise, J. Edgar Hoover among them, for the bold and efficient way they dealt with the challenge of the Nazi Saboteurs. People have had buildings and streets named after them. Let it be. Let them all rest in peace. From here on, with the exception of some of the dead saboteurs, and maybe a few others, I won’t bad-mouth anybody.

The Jacksonville Beach landing went well, everyone agrees. No problem. The four men who landed there scattered at once, and didn't get caught until later on.

The other group landed on Long Island.

On the quiet and foggy night of June 13, 1942, near midnight, four saboteurs paddled a rubber boat towards shore. They wore German uniforms so that if they were captured while landing, they would legitimately be taken as prisoners of war, not spies. Army or Navy uniforms? Nobody can agree on that now. I, myself, prefer to imagine them (why not?) in regular Wehrmacht uniforms with those heavy and distinctive German steel helmets. Who knows?

As luck would have it, they paddled right up to a pier that was part of the Amagansett Station of the U.S. Coast Guard. Happens there was a Coast Guard seaman there, too, out on patrol. This seaman was a kind of a discipline problem and was pulling this night patrol duty as a punishment. He saw the four men paddling up to the pier and snubbing a line on a cleat there. He pulled out his .45 pistol and pointed at them. The four men dutifully raised their hands. The sailor stepped over to a field telephone that directly contacted the Duty Officer at the station.

"Sir," he said. "I got me four guys down here, all dressed up like German soldiers, tying up to our pier. What you want me to do about them?"

"What I want you to do, you little shit, is to hang up that phone and get your ass out on beach patrol immediately. And if you ever call me again with some kind of a crazy story like that, I will personally see to it that you stand a court-martial."

(Or words to that effect.)

"Yes, sir."

Hangs up the phone. Puts pistol back in its holster. Waves politely to the four men in German uniform who are just standing there trying to make up their minds whether to run for it or give up. Not a word, but waves his friendly hello and goodbye and then hops off the pier and starts walking away along the beach. Just as he was told to do.

The four men pull the rubber boat and their other gear up under the pier and just above the high tide line as marked by seaweed and flotsam and jetsam. They proceed to shed their uniforms and bury them casually in the sand. They settle down and to catch some sleep awhile waiting for dawn.

\* \* \* \* \*

While I was writing this story, I got in touch with my old friend Allen Wier, a gifted novelist and story-writer. Allen and I had once made a tour of Texas colleges back in 1983 reading from our new books – Allen’s *DEPARTING AS AIR* and my novel *THE SUCCESSION*. One of the places we went to was Baylor, where Allen had gone to school. Baylor is in Waco which is where Eddie Weems was living at that time. I think Eddie was working at Baylor. Now I asked Allen for any recollections he might have of our time with Eddie in Waco.

He replied, and I’ll be quoting from his letter to me dated 3 June 2002.

“When we got to Waco, we stayed at Eddie and Jane Weems’ house. Eddie drove us over to Baylor for our reading. After the reading, Eddie piled us into his car . . . .”

Politely Allen avoids the subject of the reading itself. Baylor was and is a very strict and straight-laced place. Good school, but kind of strict. Allen is too polite to remind me that all three of us, he and Eddie and myself, having had a few drinks to prepare for this important occasion, were reeking with the odor of alcohol. People left in good size clumps and crowds even before we had been so much as introduced or read a word out loud. A bad scene . . . .

“After the reading, Eddie piled us into his car, winking and grinning. He wouldn’t tell us where we were headed, just that he had something to show us. We drove all across Waco in the dark and stopped in front of one of those big metal buildings they erect in about a week. This one was blue metal and there was a big neon sign – I think it was “The 500 Club,” something like that – pink neon lighting up a large parking lot full of pickup trucks and Cadillacs and Lincolns. Eddie sat there grinning as if we were parked in front of the Taj Mahal.

“‘Just last week,’ he told us, ‘a fellah rode his horse inside.’

“Remember, George, you and I had to catch a red-eye flight very early the next morning on a ‘Git-along-little-dogie’ airline, en route to Abilene Christian College, I think. And we were already pretty bushed – ten readings in eight days (or was it eight readings in ten days?). Anyway, ole Eddie herded us into that big blue metal building where rock-and-roll and strobe lights pulsed steadily and there were all these nekkid girls everywhere you looked. That place must have had four or five little stages and a stripper or two on every stage.

“Several of the dancers waved and hollered at Eddie as we walked in. Once we were seated at a table, a girl in a French Maid’s outfit came and took our drink orders. Eddie was

handing out credit cards and big smiles in all directions. It was as if we were celebrating birthdays or one of us was fixing to get married the next day.

“Eddie paid for ‘table dances’ for both of us, and in my memory he hired two or three girls to dance for each of us at the same time. Our little black cocktail table was crowded with women undressing up close and personal.”

One thing I do remember, Allen, was this. At some point a very good looking young woman, beautifully and expensively dressed, (hat and gloves too as I choose to recall) a creature of “real class,” came in accompanied by a tall, handsome well-dressed man. He looked like a young corporate executive. All the girls crowded around to greet her warmly. Turned out, or so it seemed, she was a former dancer at the Club 500 who had recently married the man she was with. She introduced him all around. And then they sat down at a table. After a little while, one of the naked dancers beckoned to her to come on up to the stage. Laughing, she jumped up from the table and joined the dancers. Danced for a few moments in all her fine new clothes, then suddenly began to shuck off those clothes and become another naked dancer. I remember her wedding ring, a big diamond that she had proudly shown off to her friends, glinting in the light. The expression on her husband’s face was . . . well, ambiguous, uncertain. I couldn’t rightly guess whether he was pleased and proud or utterly dismayed.

Did the dancing wife know Eddie Weems? I don’t know. Why not? She should have. Everybody else did. I think we would have noticed only if she hadn’t known Eddie.

“I remember looking at you and your head was nodding with pure fatigue. I thought we might turn out to be the first men in the history of the Club 500 to fall asleep during a table dance.

“Finally, after Eddie had signed plenty of credit card slips and spread plenty of good will, we convinced him we couldn’t take any more fun that night; and he drove us home where Jane got up and welcomed us back and then, more than good naturedly got up again along about two or three hours later to make us coffee before Eddie drove us off to the airport, clearly sad to see us go.

“I hope that Jane will see this story as a tribute to Eddie even if, as I like to think, those nekkid girls are now angels up in heaven waving and dancing and delivering drinks on the house all around the clouds.”

I am sorry to report that Jane Weems has also died since then. She was always an angel to put up with him and us, too.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am not going to tell some of the other versions of this story so that you can then compare and contrast them with Eddie's account. Suffice it to say, they give a picture that, in general and in many details, is much more serious, more dangerous than Eddie's account.

Since, as indicated, the other versions, though excellent, are uniformly based on official government documents and data, the actions taken (or not taken) by the F.B.I., the Coast Guard, the Justice Department etc. are inevitably shown in a favorable light.

As soon as the saboteurs were caught, they were given the benefit of a speedy military tribunal, convicted, and six of them were executed soon thereafter. There was no particular value at the time for the U.S. Government to portray them as a bunch of clowns and stumblebums. Best that they should be presented to the general public as extremely dangerous and diabolically clever Nazi agents.

(Here a word or two more may be in order. My friend Richard Dillard, poet and novelist and co-author of the screenplay for *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*, tells me that Hitler's political party was originally called Naso, for National Socialists. The word Nazi was originally used by the opposition and means something like "buffoon" in English. For some reason they began to call themselves Nazis. And it was no joke by 1941; though you would have to admit that a movie/musical like *The Producers* returns things to their original mint condition.)

Best that the Americans should not be clowns, either. And the relatively quick roundup and capture of the eight saboteurs should not be attributed to dumb luck, but rather to the always alert, dedicated and determined efforts of the Americans, and especially J. Edgar Hoover and his band of merry men over at the F.B.I.

So, four German saboteurs came ashore in uniform near a Coast Guard station on Long Island. They immediately encountered a Coast Guardsman, but nothing came of that encounter. Whatever took place, they were not taken into custody. They rested awhile, smoking German cigarettes (leaving crumpled-up cigarette packages behind) and drank some German *schmapps* (also leaving the empty bottle behind) and changed back into civilian clothing (leaving the German uniforms behind) and just disappeared. As did the submarine that had brought them there.

Focus now on George John Dasch, the eldest of the saboteurs and the leader of the group that landed on Long Island. When, early on the morning of June 14th, they scattered and made their separate ways, by public transportation, into New York City, Dasch used a



public telephone as soon as possible to call the F.B.I. office in New York. The people he talked to there were surprisingly polite. They listened to him, then told him that this news was so vital, so important that he should take it directly, and in person, to the Director of the F.B.I. in Washington, D.C.

Dasch realized that these people thought he was nuts. The only way he could stop the mission cold and before a lot of people got hurt and some infrastructure (as they call it now) was damaged and destroyed, would be if he did exactly what they had suggested and went on down to Washington and tried to see Hoover. If he went in person to the N.Y. office, that person (himself) would probably find himself locked up somewhere. Then – worst case scenario, let us say that the mission succeeded. Would the F.B.I. agents in New York City be happy to learn that Dasch wasn't crazy after all and that he had been telling them the truth, the real “skinny,” from the beginning? Would they let their future careers in the Bureau be jeopardized? No, siree. What would be jeopardized would be the life of one expendable George Dasch who would find himself on the bottom of the East River or maybe even the Hudson wearing huge concrete shoes.

To allay suspicions, Dasch met with the other saboteurs as had been planned, reconfirmed their immediate future plans, then took a train to Washington. Got there. Found and went to Hoover's office and asked for an appointment.

“And what is the nature of your problem, Mr. Dasch?”

He explained, briefly, that he had some extremely urgent and sensitive information that he could deliver only to the Director, himself, personally. He then took the chair that the receptionist offered him and began to catch up on his magazine reading. If this were a story of research rather than mere fictive memory, I would probably tell you what he might have been reading in the magazines. People came and went from the inner sanctum. Dasch waited calmly and read those old magazines.

From the beginning, from the day he was recruited by the Abwehr for this mysterious mission – and Dasch was the very first person they picked – Dasch had planned to betray the operation. He was delighted when they accidentally landed at the Coast Guard station. Alarmed but pleased when the sailor drew down on them. Sincerely disappointed when, for some reason, that sailor simply let them go. But Dasch was ever an optimist. Always looking for the silver lining. Thus the response of the New York Office of the F.B.I. to the news that a gang of German saboteurs were in town, while disappointing, was helpful. For one thing it meant his luck was holding. Suppose he had stupidly gone straight to the office and made his declaration then and there. Go figure. Meanwhile their funny – ha-ha – brush off (“This is really important. You must report at once to the Director in person”)

told him something about the culture of the F.B.I., itself, namely that these agents had not much respect for their boss. That it popped into their minds so quickly (“This looks like a job for Superman!”) also indicated to Dasch that it was probably the kind of thing Hoover was looking for and would go for. They, the N.Y. guys, were betting the store that a loonie like that would never get into Hoover’s office. And even if he did, it would be a good joke, and one he couldn’t pin on them, at Hoover’s expense.

They were dead wrong on every count.

Dasch did get to see Hoover. (“You got five minutes. I’ll give you five minutes and the clock is already ticking, pal.”) It took two full days of just sitting there reading and being calm, cool, and collected before he had his chance.

But it didn’t take five full minutes to convince J. Edgar that this was really hot stuff. It did take a little longer to convince him that it was all or mostly true.

Dasch suggested that Hoover should call up his agents in New York City and tell them to haul ass out to Long Island and to check directly under the pier of the Coast Guard station for any signs that maybe some Nazis had been camping out there recently. Dasch was taking a chance or two, to be sure. He did not tell Hoover that he had already tried his luck (and failed) with those New York guys. So Hoover would not begin by chewing them out, but instead would issue crisp, loud orders, thus indicating they were at least still on the payroll and more or less in his good graces. There was no percentage in their not finding the evidence. There was every incentive to locate some if they could.

Note that Dasch didn’t suggest calling the Coast Guard. Which might have been quicker and more efficient: “Hey, guys, run on down and take a look underneath your own pier and see if you can find some Nazi stuff from the other night when they landed there, okay?”

The United States Coast Guard had no incentive whatsoever to find any evidence that a bunch of Nazis had been hanging out over at their place. Note that Dasch was also betting that the Coast Guard had not found anything yet, on their own, in the two and a half days since the saboteurs first encountered the sailor. He was betting that they hadn’t found anything because they hadn’t bothered to look yet. He could have been wrong, but, what-the-hell, he couldn’t be in a whole lot more trouble than he was already. Right?

Dasch goes back to his chair and his limp magazines.

Hoover catches up on some paperwork.

And then, after a while, an hour or so, the phone rings and, in a trice (as they say), George Dasch is the man of the hour.

Hoover is so happy he takes Dasch out to dinner at a first class Washington restaurant (Harvey's?) where they can get a good piece of steak. Hoover already guesses that he is going to have to depend a great deal on the kindness and good will of Dasch to catch and convict the rest of this gang. He has already guessed Dasch's weakness and so devotes some time to praising the guy as a great American patriot who has done his country service above and beyond the call of duty.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rolling up the rest of them, except for one case, is no big problem. Thanks to Dasch, the government has complete information on all the others in both groups and on where they are supposed to be and what they are up to.

Everybody but one, Herbert Haupt of Chicago, at twenty-one the youngest of them, is taken into custody. They, the New York F.B.I., have Haupt under close surveillance. He has been making a lot of phone calls from various phone booths and they think maybe he has some contacts that Dasch doesn't know about or anyway hasn't yet revealed. Trailing him, several agents follow Haupt to Penn Station where he buys a one-way ticket to Chicago and boards, aptly, the Twentieth Century Limited. So do they.

They don't tell anybody else what they are doing except the people in the New York office.

In Chicago Haupt hops in a cab and the F.B.I. agents do likewise.

"Follow that cab!"

Haupt's cab goes directly to his home address where (to their knowledge) his mother lives. He goes in. The F.B.I. guys settle in for a long wait after explaining to the cabbie what rights he doesn't have and what happens to uncooperative cab drivers in wartime. But they don't have to wait long, anyway. Here comes young Haupt backing his mother's old Packard out of the attached garage.

"Follow that car!"

Haupt goes downtown and parks near the Federal Building. They follow him inside. A couple of them ride up with him in the elevator. Elevator stops and opens and Haupt hops out and opens a frosted glass door marked "Federal Bureau of Investigation."

"Jaysus, and Jay Edgar! What the fuck is going on?"

It looks really weird to our New York boys.

What they don't know won't help or hurt them now. Seems that a month or so ago a draft notice for Haupt arrived home in the mail. ("Greetings from the President of the United States!") Being in Germany at the time, he missed it. Since then a second notice, followed by a stern warning, have come. The warning informed him that unless he checked, by a certain date, with the F.B.I., a warrant for his arrest would be issued. He is already a day or two late. So what happens is that he tells the Chicago F.B.I. people that he has been out of the country, mostly in Mexico, but that he is back for good now and will, of course, report at once to Selective Service. They tell him not to sweat it. "Thanks for coming by." Leaves, pulling the door to quietly. Smiling. Whistling a happy tune while waiting for the elevator. Maybe it is the same tune we heard back at the beginning.

These New York guys are really confused and baffled now. They phone home for instructions, and their office tells them under no circumstances to deal with or say anything to the Chicago F.B.I. office. Just keep that Nazi kid under tight surveillance and wait for more instructions.

Cut to the end of the chase. What happens is that Haupt goes and checks into a downtown hotel. By then the Chicago F.B.I. people are beginning to be suspicious of something. Anyway while Haupt is soaking in the big bath tub and humming that same little happy tune, the two groups of F.B.I. men, Chicago and New York, unbeknownst to each other, decide to break into Haupt's hotel room and grab him. Each thinks the other group is a bunch of armed German agents.

And thus, while poor Haupt is cringing in the soapy tub, we witness the only violence of the whole affair as the F.B.I. guys shoot it out with each other. Luckily they are, one and all, lousy shots. They manage to fill the ceiling and the walls with bullet holes, and to scare the shit out of the hotel staff, but nobody gets hurt.

If they ever do a movie of Eddie's version that could be, in the hands of the right director, a dynamite scene.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, fiction or no, alas, it all gets a little bit serious and complicated as things will sometime do. What begins in farce, a few laughs, ends in something like tragedy with a stage littered with corpses. Only six dead bodies in this case (same as in Hamlet, if you care to count Rozencrantz and Guildenstern). And they are all saboteurs.

You can see it all for yourself. Headlines, a fair and speedy Military Tribunal, followed by a speedy appeal that is lost in the Supreme Court, followed by a fair and speedy execution by means of the electric chair in the D.C. Jail on August 8, 1942, a little less than two months after they landed. Justice moved swiftly in those days. Read the versions based on the tribunal transcript. Get the facts there. Eddie's version of the end game doesn't differ much from the official one except that in the latter our brilliant and steadfast F.B.I. guys are shown to be right on top of things from the get-go. They saved the nation.

And the lesson to all Americans from the President and all our fearless leaders on down is that we are safely in good hands. Everybody (except the six saboteurs) gets something good out of it besides the praise of a thankful public. Hoover gets a special medal.

The two saboteurs who weren't electrocuted didn't make out quite as well as they might have. Dasch was under the understanding that, having betrayed the operation and been a fully cooperative government witness he would be acquitted or, anyway, given "a slap on the wrist." He was told to expect a Presidential pardon. What he got instead was thirty years in the slammer, effective immediately. He was cuffed and carried away from the Tribunal. Clearly Hoover didn't want anybody running around free as the breeze who knew the whole truth about the sequence of what was called a SNAFU in that war (Situation Normal: All Fucked Up). Dasch covered for them in his testimony, somewhat to his own disadvantage. But one day he might well change his mind and tell another story. Hoover might, wisely, have preferred to execute him with the others. He could have. But he had at least some sense of loyalty. How much harm could Dasch do to him or national security from deep in bowels of a Federal penitentiary?

Because they needed to have two witnesses for the sake of the tribunal and appearances, the government also used another man, one whom Dasch "turned" for them – Ernest Burger, an American citizen who had served in the National Guard once upon a time. In a busy life, he had also been a Stormtrooper in the Nazi party in Germany and a private in the Wehrmacht. On top of all that he logged more than a year as a political prisoner in a concentration camp, for bad mouthing the Gestapo.

Burger got thirty years, too. His understanding was that later on, and as soon as possible, he would quietly be set free.

In his excellent and informative Atlantic piece Gary Cohen writes: "Dasch and Burger spent some six years in U.S. Prisons and then were deported to Germany in April of 1948." Dasch told Eddie, in an interview, that there was no kind of new hearing or anything; no warning either. Just suddenly in the middle of the night some F.B.I. guys came to his cell,

gave him a set of civilian clothes and put him on a plane for Germany. He was widely known and hated in Germany as the Judas among the saboteurs. According to Gary Cohen, Dasch had a hard time of it, but lived on until 1992. He adds this fascinating sentence: “Late in his life Dasch befriended Charlie Chaplin, who was living in nearby Switzerland, and the two men compared notes on how J. Edgar Hoover had ruined their lives.”

Eddie didn't know whatever became of the other one – Burger.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have on my desk in front of me right now a book about espionage during World War II – *THE SHADOW WAR* (Time-Life Books 1991). Okay, so I did do a little reading and research, but not all that much. It lies open to page 57 where there is a black and white photograph of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. He is in uniform, though most of his uniform is concealed within a large, dark, heavy foot-length overcoat with shiny little epaulets on the shoulders. And he is wearing what we would call a visored garrison cap, replete with “scrambled eggs” on the visor. He is walking along, hands behind his back, looking across at the camera. There are two other men, one on each side, walking with him, wearing Wehrmacht uniforms – no overcoats, riding britches, high, and highly polished riding boots. They are identified in the caption as “two key aides” – General Erwin Lahousen, head of sabotage, and Colonel Hans Pickenbrock, chief of espionage. Canaris looks to be very serious, more so in the context of the caption which tells us that “a grim Wilhelm Canaris trudges to Adolf Hitler's office on June 30 to explain the collapse of Operation Pastorius.” *Trudges*, that's a nice associative touch. Sets the tone. Only in truth the three men just seem to be walking slowly along. *Trudges* is a pure judgment call. “Grim” is also. Serious, as already said, yes indeed, but poker-faced, really. They don't look specially sad or troubled. Maybe if we could only see his eyes, which are in the shadow of his visor, we would know better . . . .

There are other photos of Canaris in *THE SHADOW WAR*. In a full page portrait, from a certain angle (again he has just turned towards the camera), Canaris, with his garrison cap on, but now set well above the large, heavy-lidded eyes, looks quite a bit like Eric von Stroheim. Remember him? Without a cap on he looks quite different – silky silver hair and heavy silver eyebrows, a good looking man of early middle age, handsome, yes, yet somehow also nondescript. In photographs with others – Himmler, Goebbels, his long time rival

Reinhard Heydrich – Canaris is a trim man of medium height and, always, that pleasant poker face. *THE SHADOW WAR* describes him as more than a little eccentric (p. 4): “A pill-popping hypochondriac who wore heavy winter clothing year round (that, if true, may explain the heavy overcoat he wore on June 30), Canaris harbored an irrational dislike of tall people and those with small ears.” This sounds more like some kind of a joke originating from the bored Time-Life editors, who had to put this book together, than confirmed fact. Those guys, the editors, try to make something out of “his rumpled uniform, eccentric mannerisms, and lisping voice” and point out that he “fretted obsessively over the health of his pets.” They also quote him as saying: “My dachshund is discreet and will never betray me. I cannot say that of any human being.” Who knows? Maybe he and Hitler, a couple of certified dog lovers, had that to talk about. In any case a lot of people who know enough to have a legitimate opinion regard Canaris as the great spymaster of World War II.

I have also on my desk – *MASTER SPY* (1952), by Ian Colvin, who argues that Canaris, while not actually working for or with the British, was a kind of secret ally of theirs, strongly favoring them over the Russians and, towards the end, even the Führer, and, from time to time, giving the British some information, serious aid and comfort whenever he could get away with it. Colvin makes a strong, if, finally, inconclusive case.

Some people speculate that Canaris cooperated with the Brits to help set up the assassination, in May 1942, of his rival and competition Reinhard Heydrich, who, among other things was SS Deputy Protector of Bohemia-Moravia. It is entirely possible, but there are no confirming documents. Very few documents concerning Canaris survive.

I am perfectly willing to write off that heavy overcoat in the big middle of June, on the assumption that the comment on Canaris’s sumptuary eccentricity is factually correct – that he wore winter clothing all year round. I have to admit that I haven’t yet found any other evidence of that except for this photograph. But let it be.

I do have a couple of other minor problems with the June 30 photograph and its caption.

The saboteurs, all but Dasch who was free until early July, were finally caught and in custody by June 25. Thanks to the eager (if supremely self-serving) efforts of J. Edgar Hoover, the news about the saboteurs and their capture was in all the American and allied newspapers beginning June 27. Certainly Canaris, the old master spy, himself, would have been fully aware of that much. Whether or not Hitler, who was busy concentrating on the Eastern Front that summer of ‘42, would have known (or cared) much about it, one way or the other, on or before June 30, I wonder . . . . I’m thinking that Canaris was bringing him the news in person on June 30. That’s what was happening. Which would have been the

right (smart) thing to do. And whatever may or may not have happened at that meeting, if it, in fact, ever took place, we don't know. In any case, we don't hear from any other sources (and they are plentiful) that the Führer was particularly upset at that particular time or angry at Canaris. Canaris came and went (if he in fact came and went) without getting into any big trouble with Hitler, at least at that time. His troubles were yet to come.

Don't fail to consider this – that the events, just as they had been played out, actually served both sides. Hoover was out to prove that we could defend ourselves from any kind of sneak attack. Not counting Pearl Harbor. The Germans, on the other hand, had succeeded in planting the idea, at least back home, that they could come ashore whenever and wherever they chose to. Meantime the U-Boats were still sinking American ships by the dozens, lots of them within sight of the lights of New York City.

It is entirely possible that Hitler congratulated Canaris, in June of '42, for mounting Operation Pastorius even though it had failed.

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**FADE IN**

**EXT. RASTENBERG-AIRFIELD-DAY**

A small airfield amid pine woods of East Prussia

Long shot as light airplane, a Storch, lands and taxis towards a camouflaged building. A staff car appears and picks up a single passenger from the airplane. Car drives off quickly on a dirt road into the surrounding forest.

**CLOSE SHOT: ADMIRAL CANARIS.**

He is sitting in the back seat, holding a well-stuffed briefcase in his lap.

He removes his cap and pats his sweaty forehead with a handkerchief. He looks genuinely anxious.

**TITLE: "JANUARY 31, 1943"**

\* \* \* \* \*



Admiral Canaris is being driven in a staff car from the airfield to meet with and report as ordered to the Führer at the Führer's headquarters – the Wolfsschanze. He hasn't got the slightest idea why the Führer wants to see him today. It could be any number of things. So many these days. Things seem to be falling apart bit by bit in North Africa and more so on the Eastern Front. The bad news of that particular day is the loss of Stalingrad and the surrender, by newly promoted Field Marshal Paulus, of the German Sixth Army there, more than 90,000 men, (of which only about 5000 will live to return home many years later). The worst single defeat in German military history.

Canaris is not looking forward to talking with the Führer. Canaris, an intelligencer after all, will already know something about how the Führer is

holding up these days. Not very well. He will know what the great tank general Guderian will soon discover and report later. Of course, both men will be and were shocked because they had not, in fact and flesh, seen Hitler or talked with him in a while. Here's how Guderian would describe him: "His left hand trembled, his back was bent, his gaze was fixed, his eyes protruded but lacked their former luster, his cheeks were flecked with red. He was more excitable, easily lost his composure and was prone to angry outbursts and ill-considered decisions."

Canaris arrives and is ushered in at once to the Führer's office. To the surprise of the Admiral it is very calm and quiet there. No glittering generals. Not a lot of the usual yelling and screaming going on. No phones ringing off the hook and no clerks and messengers coming and going. Hitler's dog, the Alsatian Blondie, is there, but does not bark at the Admiral. It is quiet enough so that Canaris can hear someone nearby, out of sight, idly pecking away at a typewriter. Maybe writing a poem.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few years later, in the early '50s, while I was a soldier stationed at Linz, Austria, I witnessed the return of some of these men, those who had somehow or other survived, from the infamous Soviet Gulag. Still later, maybe a decade after, I wrote a story based on the experience – "Whistling in the Dark." It includes, as its final scene, the moment when two men, American soldiers, a sergeant (myself) and a corporal are pulling duty as Courtesy

Patrol. After lunch in a country *gasthaus* they drive a Jeep into town and park at the railroad station.

Now then, full of good food and beer and full of goodwill toward humankind, one and all, our two soldiers have driven into town, parked their Jeep in a reserved space, and are taking a stroll around the Bahnhof. They will check the papers of a few GIs who are arriving and departing. They will caution a soldier or two to button up a shirt pocket or tighten up a necktie. And they will watch the trains come and go. The weather is really fine and dandy, couldn't be better. Nice and warm and getting warmer with the afternoon. The air is scented with springtime. Or is it the little bouquets of flowers so many people seem to be carrying? The girls are in their light dresses already. Splendid, if a little pale from winter. Sap stirs in the limbs of the sergeant and the corporal.

Unusually crowded today. They are separated by the crowds. No matter. They will meet up sooner or later on one of the platforms or back at the Jeep.

Alone, I stroll, not strut, out of the great barn of a building (most GIs call it the Barnhof) into the sunlight on a platform. People, crowds of them, smiling and jabbering, waiting for a train. Even if my German were good enough to understand more than a few rudimentary phrases, I could not hear what they are saying. Somewhere nearby, though I can't yet see it, a brass band is playing cheerful oompah music. Deafening and delightful.

Must be a local holiday of some kind. Now I am closer to the band. I see the middle-aged musicians, their cheeks chipmunking as they play. I am standing close by the huge bass drum. Which keeps a steady rhythm.

This band is of an age that would allow them to have played all through the war. I wonder if they did that.

Now, even as I hear the shrill scream of the whistle, I see all the faces in the crowd turn toward the track where the train is coming slowly, with sighs of steam, easing into the station. To my amazement I see their faces, all of them, change entirely in a wink of time. A moment ago they were animated, smiling. Now each mask of flesh is anxious and searching. And, as if at an order, they all begin to cry. I have never been among a huge crowd of weeping people before. Sobs and tears all around me. Stunned and lost, I feel; out of empathy (and perhaps out of a military reflex), tears well up in my own eyes. I am one of them, I am one with them, though I do not know why.

Now many in the crowd are holding up enlarged photographs, placards with names printed large on them. Like some kind of grotesque parody of a political rally.

The doors open, and out of the train, helped by porters, many of them with crude canes and crutches, here come, one after another, a ragged company of dazed, shabby,

skinny scarecrows. They are weeping also, some of them. Others study the crowd, searching with hard looks and dry eyes for familiar faces. The band is deafening. Next to me the bass drum pounds and pounds in tune and in time with my heart.

In time, very soon, in fact, I will learn that they are the latest contingent of Austrian veterans from the Eastern Front, returning home from Siberia. The Russians are moving slowly, in their own inexorable, patient, glacial fashion, toward a treaty here in Austria (as I will learn much later), if not a war first. Part of that movement is to let some of the scarecrows who have somehow managed to survive until now come home.

But here and now I know nothing of that and care less. I see a homecoming of the defeated and the wounded. Some greeted with great joy, with flowers and embracing. Some, as always, alone now even at home – though I see schoolchildren have been assigned the duty of making sure that everyone gets a greeting and some flowers.

I stand there knowing one thing for certain – that I am seeing our century, our time, close and truly. Here it is and, even among strangers, I am among them, sharing the moment of truth whether I want to or not.

An American sergeant stands in the swirling crowd with tears rolling down his cheeks. He will be gone from here soon, first miles, then years and years away. But he will not, because he cannot, forget this moment or himself in it, his share of this world's woe and joy, the lament and celebration of all living things.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hitler paces up and down, back and forth. He is mumbling something. Canaris listens very closely and what he thinks he hears is: “Twelve loyal Germans . . . twelve loyal Germans . . . .”

Canaris doesn't have a clue.

“Very sad,” he says, finally. “It's a very sad thing, my Führer.”

“Sad? It is a fucking disaster, a complete and utter disaster, and it will never ever happen again. You and I must make certain that it can never happen again.”

“Absolutely, sir. We won't allow that.”

Just then Admiral Canaris figures out what's going on around here, what the Führer is talking about. And it ain't Stalingrad or the war in Tunisia. It's those saboteurs again. Canaris had by now forgotten all about them. After all, six of the eight were executed by the

Americans way back in August of 1942. Maybe that fact was really slow in getting to and arousing the Führer's distracted attention.

Canaris has to be mildly pleased with himself for figuring it out. After all, there weren't actually twelve of them, only nine if you count in that lucky guy who caught the clap in Paris. And, as far as Canaris knows, they were all of them Americans, not Germans, loyal or not.

"Never again," Hitler repeats for emphasis.

"No, sir. Absolutely not. Never again."

"Admiral, I want you to prepare and to send out many more missions to America. I want waves of saboteurs landed on their shores. Use Jews and criminals only from now on. This is my direct order to you. Do whatever is necessary to accomplish this goal."

"Yes, sir."

"I have complete trust and faith in you."

"Thank you, sir."

"That's all."

Canaris salutes and exits quickly and smartly.

He isn't happy, not exactly overjoyed by this latest assignment. Still . . . It's another vague and on-going project, again all under the protective angelic wings of a direct order from the Führer. Canaris ought to be able to use that for all kinds of interesting purposes. Meantime. Meantime, my friends, he can do exactly what he, in fact, does. He obeys Hitler's instructions (more or less) to the letter. And no, he doesn't send any more teams to America and the Führer never mentions that crazy idea again. But Canaris does manage to round up a large number of prominent Jews, culled from concentration camps and thus saved from almost certain death. The reader is reminded that in January of 1942, one year earlier, it was Canaris's enemy, Heydrich who proposed the *Endlösung* (Final Solution) at the famous Wannsee meeting. Canaris begins and maintains the serious charade of training these people at his secret base. And nothing changes when Canaris, himself, is dead and gone. The endless and pointless training program for his once and future Jewish and criminal saboteurs goes on and is still in progress in April of 1945 when the Russians arrive and capture the base.

**FADE IN**

**EXT. STAFF CAR DAY**

The car follows the twisty road through the forest.

**INT. STAFF CAR DAY**

**CLOSE SHOT: ADMIRAL CANARIS**

He seems comfortable and quite alone in the back seat. Straightens his cap. Allows himself a little smile. Suddenly begins to whistle the tune we heard in the beginning and when Herbert Haupt was taking a bath in the hotel in Chicago.

**EXT. STAFF CAR DAY**

The tune continues, grows louder as the car arrives at the airfield . . .

A good place, give or take, to end the movie of it. Fading or even iris-ing out on a full close shot of the silver haired Admiral sitting there whistling away like a delighted child.

If this were a movie, the Admiral wouldn't have anyone to tell that this is a melody that he hasn't heard or even thought of since childhood.

No! That's not true.

He now remembers that he has more than once heard Hitler whistling the selfsame happy tune on more than one occasion, back in better times.

Did you know that Hitler was a wonderful whistler?\*

Only it does not, in fact, all end there. Ends not so nicely. The whole world knows that the Admiral was implicated and involved in the plot to kill Hitler in 1944. He could have fled to safety, but did not. And the British did not come to his rescue in his hour of need. He was arrested, tortured and then held until early 1945 when he was secretly tried before an SS court-martial. Just before the end of the war, he was suddenly stripped naked in his cell (there are witnesses to that), put in chains and dragged away from his cell to a homemade gallows. Where, with the aid of an iron collar which slowed down the effects of strangulation, he was hanged until he was dead. The process took a little more than half an hour.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eddie Weems was a great big guy, huge really. Did I mention that? No, and I didn't mention that he had served in the U.S. Navy, either. He was a handsome man, at least six-and-a-half feet tall, probably more, and as big and wide as any pro football player. He had once been a serious jock in his own right back when he was in college. His father was a coach. And Eddie always tried to keep in some kind of shape, and to keep his weight down, regularly jogging before that became such a trendy thing to do with your spare time. While he was working at the Press in Austin, he would often skip lunch and go over to the track,

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\*"Hitler was a beautiful whistler. While I played he'd recline and whistle the melody, tremolo. How he enjoyed those Pudding Club scores!" Ernst ("Putzi") Hanfstaengel, quoted in the *Harvard Magazine*, July-August, 1974

which was inside the football stadium. He would put on his sweat clothes, drive over there and park, then lumber, steady and slow (and, as indicated, very large) around and around the track until he had worked up a good sweat and racked up a couple or three miles.

One day he was jogging around the track, all alone that day . . . well, not quite. They were working on the stadium, making some repairs and replacing some seats and so forth. Very noisy. Nobody else running on the track, though. All by himself. Eddie took his sweet time, ran his couple or three miles and then started for home to shower and change. He heard the sound of a lot of sirens, fairly close by on the Texas campus. Thought it must be a big fire or something. Switched on his car radio to see if there might be any news.

There was some news all right. Very excited news. Somebody was up on the tall tower in the middle of the campus shooting people. Killing and wounding a good many.

What dawned on Eddie, well before he reached the safety of home and his own driveway, was that he had just spent the last half hour or so, a huge, heavy guy slowly running round and around the track, as an absolutely perfect moving target for the shooter up on the tower. A couple of people on the other side, well beyond the far side of the stadium, had been hit. He would learn that later in the next day's morning paper. From the tower, through a telescopic sight, Eddie would have been very much like a large tin duck in a carnival shooting gallery. Surely that man on the tower – Whitman was his name, wasn't it? – who proved himself to be a hell of a good shot if nothing else, must have sighted in on Eddie, focused on him, followed him as he jogged along, and then never fired a shot at him. Why? Who knows? Maybe it was just too easy. No sport in it. Maybe the sight of that big old guy thumping his way around the track pleased or amused the shooter.

Eddie had no answer at the time.

I don't, either, here and now.

END

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## FOUR POEMS

Stephen Cushman

May

So subjunctive, your name;  
yet there's nothing iffy  
about the trees in basic green,

their colorful underwear gone  
back in the drawer of early spring,  
nothing the least bit contingent

in the way a woodthrush succeeds  
white-throated sparrows at dawn  
or iris follows dogwood.

Here in the northern temperate zone,  
how could you possibly express  
the hypothetical, the wish,

with all your satisfactions  
so relentlessly indicative?  
Oh, what I wouldn't give

to cross your looks with just a whiff  
of that autumnal musk  
you emanate down under.

## December

Hangdog suns skulk in the south,  
shirking the late afternoon.  
It doesn't get darker than this.  
Now what? What are we waiting for?  
Doesn't get more naked either.  
Not as in nude, posing on pillows  
with just the right look  
for cameras and easels,  
but as in stripped of every stitch,  
last oak leaves gone,  
no hospital gown of snow.  
What's next? Rasping impatience?  
Or stiffening torpor, unstirred  
by this face without makeup?  
Or could it be catching the indigo eye  
even the briefest sky bats,  
reveler in expectation?



## Presbyopia

Why does the inability of the eye  
to focus sharply on what's nearby,  
thanks to hardening of a crystalline lens,  
come on now? Is it pure coincidence  
that I finally see, in those closest to me,  
the heart's small print more clearly?

Another Anniversary  
of Appomattox

Some people so lonely  
they can't bear the birds again,  
those catchy solos about duets  
mouthing off outside the window.

Others been lonely so long  
they're used to making do  
and don't want you  
reminding them of redbud blossoms

they've learned to live without.  
So if you're a victor, shut  
your trap and do no harm  
to people who hear in birds,

this wren,  
only the terms of surrender.

MY YELLOW RIBBON TOWN:  
A meditation on my country and my home

Paul M. Gaston

At the outset of my country's "shock and awe" adventurism, I was persuaded that it was both unjustified and potentially disastrous. When Nelson Mandela singled out the United States as a major threat to world peace, I feared for more than our standing in the community of nations. When an acquaintance close to the inner circle of decision makers told me that Iraq was but one of several countries the Administration might have chosen to attack and that the "war on terrorism" would likely involve military action against any Muslim countries that might become supply stations for our terrorist enemies I knew my fears were justified.

What I believed to be true in the spring of 2003 gradually came to be widely acknowledged. By November, intelligence expert Thomas Powers summed up what virtually everyone outside the Bush-Cheney-Rice-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz sphere of influence would admit: "On the eve of war, and probably for years beforehand," he wrote, "Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction and it had no active program to build them." The justification for the war "was not merely flawed or imperfect – it was wrong in almost every detail, and completely wrong at the heart. There was no imminent danger – indeed there was no *distant* danger. Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction to give to al-Qaeda or anyone else."<sup>1</sup>

No president in our history has been the object of such world wide anathema as George W. Bush. Never has American foreign policy been so devastatingly dissected by the international press. Never have so many millions of citizens around the world gathered to protest what they call our march to empire. Government spokesmen and their media allies dismiss the criticism as jealousy-inspired anti-Americanism. Which it is not. The Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, among the most eloquent of our foreign critics, pays homage to America's "rich tradition of resistance" and credits today's Americans with being among the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Powers, "The Vanishing Case for War," *The New York Review of Books*, December 4, 2003, pp. 14, 15.

most insightful opponents of their nation's policies. History, she says, is giving American dissenters the chance to make their country into something it should be, but is not – a great nation, true to its highest ideals.<sup>2</sup>



Soon after the Bush regime sent its armed forces into Iraq, wondering like so many others what I could possibly say or do that might make a difference, I set off for my home state of Alabama. My first stop was Monroeville, where the Alabama Writers Forum was holding its annual meeting. I had been invited to talk on a recently published book in which I wrote about the American conviction of our moral and physical impregnability, the myths we held to of our innocence and invincibility.<sup>3</sup> What I had to say was not new, but I thought it was timely.

With varying emphases throughout their history, Americans have stressed the belief that theirs is an exceptional nation, different from and superior to those of the rest of the world. Its ideology of freedom and equality set it above the old world's heritage of feudalism and privilege. With the end of the Cold War it stood like a colossus ready to spread its claimed virtues, the world's only superpower and best democracy, innocent and invincible. After the September 11 attacks the Bush regime called on these beliefs shamelessly. When it decided to launch its revolutionary preemptive strike against Iraq it raised them as shields against truths about both past and present.

Monroeville was a good place to be. Those who write and read honest books, I reasoned, should be the vanguard of the movement to unmask falsehoods and reveal the motivations underlying them. I was not disappointed by the people I met there. They were a receptive and lively group of authors, young and old, novices and old hands, poets and novelists and nonfiction writers of all sorts. It was energizing to be in their company. All of them – or at least all of them I heard or spoke to – shared, in one degree or another, my anxieties and warmly endorsed what I had to say about the misleading myths of innocence and invincibility. Like me, they hoped to find a way to stand against the peril to which the Bush regime seemed to be leading us; but, also like me – though they would speak of the

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<sup>2</sup> Arundhati Roy, "Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy," a speech at the Riverside Church, New York, May 13, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Paul M. Gaston, *THE NEW SOUTH: A CREED IN SOUTHERN MYTHMAKING*, published originally by Knopf in 1970; the second edition, with an Afterword by me, was published by New South Press in 2002.

power of the written word – they were not sure that what we wrote might make a difference. Writing, however, was our calling. It was what we could do.



My next stop was Fairhope, home of the unique utopian community on the shores of Mobile Bay. My grandfather, who was its founder and guiding force for more than forty years, was himself a fine writer, a newspaper editor and pamphleteer of rare distinction. But he placed his hopes for reform elsewhere. He wrote that “they that shall make good theories work and prove the value of proposed social solutions by practical demonstration will do far more to move the world than the wisest and most brilliant theorists.”<sup>4</sup> His life work was to try to do precisely that, “to prove the value of proposed social solutions by practical demonstration.”

As I drove down the black ribbon of highway knifing through familiar red clay banks edging pine forests, my imagination ran back to the fall of 1894 when my grandfather and grandmother, along with their four children, the youngest still in diapers, traveled through the forebears of these same woods, passengers on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad headed for what they had come to call their “promised land.” Their fair hopes for creating a city on a hill must have been tried as they neared their destination, which they would find to be a desolate, thickly wooded site high on a bluff on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. Nothing on the route they were traveling could have been familiar to them. How could they not have experienced at least a little anxiety? Family lore, however, has it that my grandfather, just turned thirty-three, was unshakably optimistic, filled with confidence in his ability to create a model community free from the gross exploitation, inequality, and manifold injustices of Gilded Age America. He thought they were realistic when they named their soon-to-be-founded community Fairhope.

Now I was driving toward the town he had created and directed for forty years and which my father had led for thirty-six more after him. Fairhope was my spiritual home, the place where my values were shaped and my moral compass established. I looked forward to roaming the bluffs above the Bay and the beaches along the shore, and to reflecting once again on the dreams that had been woven into the place of my birth and rearing. I longed for a time machine to transport me to that train, carrying my grandfather along to his

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<sup>4</sup> Ernest B. Gaston, “True Cooperative Individualism: An Argument on the Plan of the Fairhope Industrial Association,” *Liberty Bell*, April 28, 1894. See also, Paul M. Gaston, *MAN AND MISSION: E.B.GASTON AND THE ORIGINS OF THE FAIRHOPE SINGLE TAX COLONY* (Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 1993).

destination. We would talk about what he really expected to accomplish and why he had risked so much against such formidable odds.

As I reflected on what he had written about the imperfections and injustices of his America, and on the better world he hoped to create, the dark thoughts I had about my country, now more than a century later, kept intruding. I remembered a passage from one of his early writings in which he lamented that it was impossible to live in his America without becoming enmeshed in one form or another of exploitation or injustice and the abandonment of principle. The pressure merely to exist, he wrote, moved even a good man to turn “his back on what he knows to be his true self and higher convictions [and] to pursue with the utmost concentration of his energies the prize of material gain.”<sup>5</sup> It was a world he could no longer abide. As I ticked off a partial list of parallels in my own life, I wondered how much longer I could abide them. Lacking his vigor and courage I reckoned I would do little more than list them:

- The cable that speeded up my internet connection and gave me too many television channels was provided by Adelphia, its founders shown on the evening news carried off to jail for their thievery;

- Health South, the rehabilitation hospital where good women and men helped me recover from a knee-replacement operation, was owned by another set of thieves, with headquarters in Alabama, of all places;

- My telephone service once came from MCI, a division of WorldCom; its executives stole millions and wondered why anyone would want them to grace the presence of our prison system (a fate the worst of them continue to evade);

- My electric power was never routed by Enron, but I knew many who relied on it and I grieved for the employees sent into poverty and despair by the thievery of its executives;

- I never had the need for an accountant, but kinspersons had once worked for Arthur Anderson, chief facilitating servant of the corporate crooks;

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Gaston, *MAN AND MISSION*, p. 140.

- Family members and friends shopped at Wal-Mart, chief exemplar of the right to pay poverty wages and to abuse workers;

- My own university rivaled Wal-Mart, housing its well-paid guests in motels that refused to pay a living wage. And why not? Hiding behind the mantra of privatization it allowed the payment of poverty wages to hundreds of the workers who sustained its daily existence.

Like my grandfather, I saw these and other crimes of my day as consequences of the structure of our society and the values that shaped and maintained it, not the aberrant wanderings of a few errant individuals. They reached so far into every aspect of our daily lives that only a hermit living off nuts and berries in the forest could escape their tentacles. They were so common and omnipresent, almost like the air we breathed, that our lives became inured to them. I thought of the chocolate I was munching as I drove, knowing that the beans from which it was made were harvested by child slave labor. And what of the coffee I had drunk with my breakfast in Monroeville? What exploited workers had plucked its beans?

All of these somber thoughts, ricocheting off my meditation with my grandfather, deepened my dismay over the support with which my fellow citizens sustained our president. In the midst of war his regime was mobilized to impose on our conquered lands the very values I was lamenting, all with minimal opposition from a morally benumbed citizenry. The democracy of which the administration spoke so glibly was married to an aggressive brand of “free market capitalism” that not only permitted, but encouraged, this very undermining of democratic values. At home, the economic policies it favored – from benefit-the-rich tax reform to the evisceration of Medicare – came wrapped in an ideology my grandfather would have called “unnatural and unjust” because it violated the “natural rights” of its citizens, and was “at war with the nobler impulses of humanity, and opposed to its highest development.”

In his call to fellow reformers to join him in creating an alternative, model community, he wrote that “the present social and economic order is doomed. In the height of its marvelous achievements it bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Clear headed economists and warm hearted philanthropists long ago pointed out and denounced its enormous waste of human energy and natural resources and its hideous injustice and cruelty.” Of reformers like himself, he wrote, “the injustice and attendant want, misery,

hardships and despair everywhere apparent fill his life with sadness.”<sup>6</sup> I knew what he meant, what he felt.



Fairhope was, literally, a city on a hill. Captivated by the beauty of the site, my grandfather wrote lyrically about his first view of it:

*Here we have a short strip of sandy beach, then a narrow park ranging in width from 100 to 250 feet and covered with almost every variety of shrub and tree which flourishes in this locality – pine, live oak, magnolia, cedar, juniper, cypress, gum, holly, bay, beech, youpon and myrtle. On the east side of this “lower park,” as we call it, a red clay bluff rises up almost perpendicularly to a height of nearly 40 feet. Along its serried edge tall, arrowy pines stand like sentinels looking out to sea.*<sup>7</sup>

Those sentinels stood guard over the creation of what the Fairhoppers designed to be a demonstration of what they called “cooperative individualism,” a guide to a fulfilling life free of the extremes of poverty and wealth, exploitation and unchecked individualism, so tightly woven into the America they were hoping to reform. Their struggle to achieve these goals went on year after year, often with what appeared to be no hope of success, but they persisted. By the 1920s, the model community cast a small beam of idealism and hope, providing land and opportunity for men and women of modest means and winning accolades from visiting northern writers and reformers.

For a little boy growing up in the Fairhope of the 1930s and 40s, as I did, the fair hopes of 1894 seemed everywhere to have been fulfilled. What such a youngster experienced most immediately in those years was a sense of freedom and security in an environment of harmony and sensuous beauty. The settlement spread back from the water’s edge, just as my grandfather had first described it, making its way from the shore line up the cliffs to the gently-rising table land at their summit. In retrospect, I think of it as a nurturing communal park. There were no private homes or commercial structures monopolizing either views or access to the Bay. In addition to the Bay, the sandy beaches, and the wooded bluffs, there were ravines with red-clay banks and white-sand bottoms that cut through the town; and, not far away, a deep, clear, cold, fresh-water creek, overhung with oak limbs festooned with

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, esp. pp. 4, 139-140.

<sup>7</sup> Fairhope *Courier*, January 1, 1895.



Spanish moss. These natural treasures were our Shangri-La. Nowhere did we see “private property” or “keep out” signs. Nor was there a big house on a hill or a rich planter or banker to stand over us. The community’s special treasures belonged to us all, shielded against the ravages of wealth, power, and privilege.

Inspired by Henry George’s belief in land as our common inheritance and his tempered version of the cooperative commonwealth, the Fairhoppers joined to their radical economic and social practices equally radical educational ideas. In our “organic” school, as we called it – attending to the whole person, body, mind, and spirit – we found another place of security and freedom. With our broad academic curriculum joined with art, crafts, dance, drama, and music classes, we grew up feeling the school was for us, not that we were to fit into some preconceived notion of what we ought to be or become. The absence of grades, honors, rewards, punishments, and failure in an atmosphere where we and our ideas were at the center of things was something we found stimulating and supportive. We came to learn because we wanted to. We also internalized a lived experience of democracy and equality in ways no civics lesson or history class could teach.<sup>8</sup>

Somewhere along the way, still a young boy, I learned that all of these blessings were neither accidental nor the natural order of things in the United States, much less in the American South. I have strong memories of my father reading to me the constitution of our community, written by his father, declaring that Fairhope was to be “a model community . . . free from all forms of private monopoly” where its citizens would have “equality of opportunity, the full reward of individual effort and the benefits of co-operation in matters of general concern.” On other occasions, my father read to me his father’s declaration that Fairhope was designed “to establish justice, to remove the opportunities for the preying of one upon another.” In one of his letters he wrote: “We close the gates against injustice; we open them to unselfishness. Society can do no more.” These and other colony aphorisms became part of my early learning and consciousness so that I came to feel that we not only had an obligation to struggle for justice but that we were armed with special insights into how it could be achieved. Our lives seemed to be lived with high purpose.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Dewey visited the school in 1913 and wrote glowingly about it “The democracy which proclaims equality of opportunity as its ideal requires an education in which learning and social application, ideas and practice, work and recognition of the meaning of what is done, are united from the beginning and for all,” he wrote. The Fairhope school, he believed, clearly showed “how the ideal of equal opportunity for all is to be transmuted into reality.” John and Evelyn Dewey, *SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW* (New York, 1915), pp. 315-16. See also my biography of Marietta Johnson, founder and long-time director of the school, in Paul M. Gaston, *WOMEN OF FAIRHOPE* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), ch. 3.

<sup>9</sup> The quotations and some of the language here may be found in a speech I gave in 1997, later published in pamphlet form: Paul M. Gaston, *MY SOUTH – AND YOURS* (Charlottesville, 1997), pp. 5-6.



As I turned off the interstate onto the commercially blighted last stretch of highway into Fairhope, dark broodings crowded out my reverie. Musings on the colony's idealistic origins and inspiring early history gave way to melancholy. I felt a sharp sense of loss over the faded sense of a life once lived with high purpose; the subversion of a reformist mission; and the end of free land that had been Fairhope's *raison d'être*, its road to the realization of the fair hopes of ordinary Americans. At the Monroeville meeting one of the writers, a Fairhoper who lived out in the country, closed the inscription of her new book to me with the rueful truth that she was "too po' to live in the single tax colony."

Unknowingly, I suspect, what she wrote was a bitter epitaph for my grandfather's dream and my father's life work. Quite apart from all of Fairhope's many charms and attractions – the beauty of the bay, gulleys, pine forests, and tree-lined streets; the vitality of its writers and artists; the visits of the John Deweys, Clarence Darrows, and Upton Sinclairs; the uniqueness and fame of the school; the binding experience of democratic communalism – the colony's fundamental distinguishing feature, the one from which all else derived, was its land policy. Modifying Henry George's single tax theory, the colony owned, and made freely available to its lessees, land which it rented for homes, businesses, and farms. In exchange for the rental payment, the colony paid all taxes levied on the land and improvement of its lessees – a simulated version of George's single tax on land values. Two generations and more of settlers, most of them men and women of modest means, attributed their material security and sense of personal worth to the free land that gave them their start, all in a culture where land speculation and exploitation were shared anathema.

If my writer friend's inscription provided Fairhope's epitaph, the spirited woman who cut my hair pronounced its consequences. I came to her shop (she would never have called it a salon) soon after my arrival and almost immediately she began dissecting contemporary Fairhope. She never goes down the picturesque main street, she told me, because "they have too many rich people there building condos they won't even live in." Fairhope, she informed me, "has become a place for rich people." With a sardonic edge in her voice she told me how the previous mayor had gone on a visit to Carmel, California, to come back with a scheme for turning Fairhope into the Carmel of the Bay. Now, she said, it was filled with all those silly boutiques. Why, she wanted to know, "would anyone spend \$500 on a pair of shoes." She didn't mention it, but I couldn't help thinking of one of the

new shops for upscale ladies apparel I had seen on my early-morning walk. It was called, without irony, Utopia.

Having no idea who I was (or who my father and grandfather had been) my haircutter's mood expanded. It was plain wrong, she said, for people to be spending all that money, tearing down houses and buildings all over the town to replace them with huge expensive ones; it was plain wrong to be spending all that money "when there are people homeless, people in the streets, people in poverty." Right on, I said silently, wanting to tell her that she was an authentic Fairhoper. Then, turning mellow for a moment, she told me she had once seen a picture book history of Fairhope. It seemed to her that not only had life been simpler then; it had been better. People got along, enjoyed what they had, lived a good life without "all this showing off, this pretension, this looking down on you." Then her coup de grâce: "People like me had a chance back then."



After my haircut I took a long walk through my old neighborhood, the area now called "the historic district." A block up from the Bay, in front of the home where my mother and her family first lived, and across the street from the park where my father had proposed to her, I exchanged the morning greeting with a fashionably dressed young woman out on a stroll with her dog. We fell into pleasant conversation. Her face lit up with pleasure when I asked her if she liked living in Fairhope. "Oh, yes, indeed," she replied, explaining that she and her husband had moved there just a few years previous, choosing it because, well, because of its beauty, its charming boutiques and good restaurants. The people were all friendly and, well, she gave a sigh of satisfaction, "it is safe." I recalled, but did not mention, *SAFE PLACES EAST*, a book for retirement-seekers. Fairhope is the only Alabama community it features.<sup>10</sup>

Unspoken in this encounter or in Fairhope booster literature is the enforced whiteness of the town. Almost immediately on their arrival, the founders made a fateful decision to restrict their model community to white people, but they did so in the full knowledge that they were violating the fundamental principle they had set out to demonstrate. When a supporter of the colony raised questions about the exclusion policy, there was no evasion in my grandfather's reply. "The criticism of our friend," he wrote, "illustrates anew the difficulties and differences of opinion arising in the effort to determine

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<sup>10</sup> David and Holly Franke, *SAFE PLACES EAST* (New York, 1973), pp. 42-69.

how far we can practically go in the ‘application of correct theories’ within a general condition of applied incorrect ones over which we have no control.” Racial discrimination, he agreed, was wrong: “We believe in ‘universal equality’ – equality of rights”; no man had “more moral or natural right to any particular portion of the earth, the common heritage of mankind, than any other of his fellow men.” But when he asked if the colony should “follow the naked principle of equality unreservedly, regardless of existing conditions” he could not advise it. To do so, he believed, would stir the wrath of the neighboring white Southerners and bring to a cruel end the infant experiment.<sup>11</sup>

In the decades that followed, the “existing conditions” that had occasioned the exclusion policy in the first place did not ease. Both my grandfather and my father spoke and wrote against the white supremacy culture, but could not lead the colony or the town government to abandon its commitment to segregation. In fact, as the years wore on and new generations were born into and grew up in a world of segregation, many of the singletaxers came to believe that there was no conflict between the principles of their demonstration and the continuation of a whites only policy. By the 1960s one of the most prominent among them was a George Wallace ally and others fell easily in line behind Alabama’s most influential white supremacist.

Fairhope’s population swelled with newcomers in the last decades of the twentieth century. Few of them knew of or identified with the founding mission. At the same time, the Single Tax Corporation played an ever diminishing role in the life of the town. Its landholdings had not increased significantly for decades, the town government owned and maintained the public utilities once identified with the colony, and the rising popularity of the entire eastern shore drove land values up sharply. The Corporation, unable to diminish land speculation, acquiesced in the transfers of its most desirable lands for huge sums of money. In the midst of all these boom times the town annexed areas to the north, where well-to-do white people lived, but firmly resisted vigorous demands from black leaders to annex contiguous areas to the south, where they lived. The “existing conditions” of the 1890s and 1960s had vanished, but racial mores were now too deeply entrenched – and too little challenged – to permit a reckoning with history and a righting of wrongs. Fairhope became, almost as never before, an enclave of white people and, increasingly, well-to-do white people.

I continued my walk in silence. Everywhere there was evidence of my haircutter’s complaint. Charming homes, authentic reminders of the egalitarian roots of the model

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<sup>11</sup> Fairhope *Courier*, April 1, 1898.

community, were crumbling before the bulldozer, making way for the mansions of the rich that so aroused the ire of the few remaining Fairhoppers.

Then there were the yellow ribbons. Hardly a yard was without one, tied to a post box, fixed to a tree, laced in a doorway, all shown off by the manicured lawns they graced. Their message was reinforced along the way by “support our troops” signs. “Stand up for peace” placards were nowhere to be seen. Yellow ribbons, manicured lawns, and giant new homes – this was the Fairhope of the twenty-first century.

The new Organic School building, too, was festooned with ribbons, but at least it had not followed the lead of the intermediate school where the pupils had successfully demanded that the luncheon menu identify the fried potatoes as “freedom fries.” I suppose eleven and twelve-year olds, inspired by what they heard at home, could earn one’s empathy. When the Congress of the United States similarly changed its menu I decided against calling the action childish. That would have been to deliver an insult to children. I settled for petulant.

This lockstep display of ribbons and signs, as I was to learn later, came in part at the request of the mayor. Fairhope, he apparently believed, should have its patriotism mobilized and on display. I had once been one of “our troops” – a squad leader in a mortar section of a weapon’s platoon of an Army infantry company. I wore my uniform proudly and felt admired in it, both at home and overseas. But the thought that I and my comrades were being used for a cause that was less than noble never crossed the minds of anyone I knew or had ever heard of. Now, in 2003, the young men and women who wanted to be proud and admired in the uniforms they wore had to wonder. Why had their government scorned the United Nations? Why had it driven their historic allies from their side? Why were they in this war and its aftermath with so little world support? Why was the outcome so uncertain? These questions would come to haunt more of them in the months ahead.

I was joined for lunch that day by one of the old Fairhoppers, a woman absorbed with organizing a tour of “historic” homes (“see them before they are torn down”), writing vignettes of Fairhope’s golden days, and still struggling to bring the Organic School back to its founding principles. As we reflected on the yellow ribbons and the disappearing homes she recounted the story of a Single Tax stalwart who had told an Elderhostel class that if E. B. Gaston were to walk the streets of Fairhope today he would know that the model community of his dreams had become a reality. We both shook our heads in disbelief, not needing to say that it would be my grandfather’s nightmare, not his dream, that he would encounter.

The parading of nightmares as dreams come true had begun well before the Elderhostel lecture. More than a decade earlier, the then mayor, returning from a European trip that filled him with a new vision of Fairhope's future, said that he had "a burning desire to make Fairhope the most beautiful, charming city that you could find anywhere in this country."<sup>12</sup> Beauty and charm. E. B. Gaston had no objection to either of them; indeed, early Fairhoppers created the parks, protecting them in perpetuity from private and profiteering enterprise, and lined the avenues with the magnolias and oaks that gave it the beauty so enticing to the newcomers. But where was the mayor's "burning desire" for free land, for "a model community . . . free from all forms of private monopoly" where its citizens would have "equality of opportunity, the full reward of individual effort and the benefits of co-operation in matters of general concern." There was no such desire, burning or otherwise. But the author of the popular pictorial history could write that, because of this mayor's vision and leadership, the "tradition of 'cooperative individualism' is alive and well among us one hundred years after Gaston coined the phrase."<sup>13</sup>



I left Fairhope unsure of what my days there had taught me about the state of our union. Three out of four Fairhope voters opted for George W. Bush in 2000. By the twenty-first century the South had become the engine driving the Republican Party. The story of how this had come about is complicated, but we know it was anchored in the race-based "southern strategy" Nixon launched at the end of the 1960s and the "social issues" strategy his successors added a quarter-century later. The first brought well-to-do whites into the party; the second wooed those at the lower end of the income scale. But Fairhope? Even in conservative Alabama its 75% vote for Bush was nineteen points higher than the state total of 56%.

What seemed to stand out most clearly for me in Fairhope's history was the gradual erosion of the options open to the colony leaders, the inevitable declining significance of its land policy, and then the dissipation of the idealism and vision of most of its remaining members and leaders. All of this made it easy for the molders of the new Fairhope to appropriate the luster and beauty of the historic community and to convert it into a fortified jewel of contented conservatism. We historians write about unintended consequences. I

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Larry Allums, 1894-1944: A PICTORIAL HISTORY (Virginia Beach, 1994), p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

cannot imagine a better example than what I saw in the walks I took through my home town in the spring of 2003. I know my father and grandfather would have felt the same way.

Fortified jewels of contented conservatism exist all over America, of course, more of them in the South than ever before. Flying their yellow ribbons, they have cut themselves off from the historic roots of American idealism and are the backbone of the Bush regime. They will mobilize to thwart regime change in 2004. We who will strive to prevail against them need to keep alive our fair hopes that the call for a revival of America's "rich tradition of resistance" will be answered. It will be a resistance faithful to the dream of a more worthy America, perhaps with the power of recapturing those who have abandoned it.

For Fairhope it is probably too late to change significantly the voting percentages in 2004, but it is not too late for a once energizing tradition of resistance to be revitalized. I have written in this essay about the spirit of the woman who cut my hair, but not of the band of writers, artists, and free thinkers that still distinguishes Fairhope from other non-university southern communities. They once set the tone of the model community; they are now an embattled minority. On my last visit one of them showed me a book my grandfather had inscribed to her. "Yours for justice," he had written in his bold hand. "Why don't we stand up for justice again," my friend asked me. It was a good question.

"My Yellow Ribbon Town: A Meditation on My Country and My Home,"  
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“They Stand Accused”: JAMES L. HICKS’S INVESTIGATIONS  
IN SUMNER, MISSISSIPPI, SEPTEMBER 1955

from  
THE LYNCHING OF EMMETT TILL  
A Documentary Narrative

Christopher Metress

*Editor’s note:* Recently, the F.B.I announced it was re-opening the case of the murder of Emmett Till, a teenaged boy from Chicago who had gone to visit his black relatives in Money, Mississippi. There, inadvertently, he had run afoul of the local white storekeeper and his brother. These men killed the boy – horribly – for the ostensible offence of “whistling” at the store-keeper’s wife. The killers – who were so known to the white and black populations – were found *not guilty* by an all-white jury. At the boy’s funeral in Chicago, at his mother’s insistence, the casket was left open, and photographs were taken. They were shocking and were instrumental in the moral galvanizing that became the great Civil Rights Movement of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Fifty years later, we are assured that this nation is now seeking justice.

James L. Hicks was then the dean of African-American journalists. He went down to Mississippi to cover the trial, and wrote four dispatches. We published them two years ago, in *Archipelago* <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/hicks.htm>, but believe they are worth re-reading now.

For further reading and viewing, see “The Murder of Emmett Till,” a documentary on “American Experience,” PBS [www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/). For those who wonder if justice will be done, see “Why It’s Unlikely the Emmett Till Murder Mystery Will Ever Be Solved” <http://hnn.us/articles/4853.html>.

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*Foreword*

On September 24, 1955, an all-white Mississippi jury, after a mere sixty-seven minutes of deliberation, acquitted J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant of the murder of Emmett Till. Till, a fourteen year-old black boy from Chicago, had been visiting for the first time his extended family in the Mississippi Delta. One afternoon, barely a week into his visit, he and several other youths were standing outside a white-owned grocery in the small hamlet of Money. Apparently, Till had been boasting of his friendships with white people up North — in particular his friendships with white girls — and the local kids, looking to call his bluff, dared him to enter the store and flirt with Carolyn Bryant, the white woman and former beauty queen who was working the cash register. Till entered the store, and what he did next is unclear. Some say he “wolf whistled” at Bryant; others say he grabbed her hand and asked her for a date; still others claim he did nothing more than simply say “bye, baby” to her as he left the store. Whatever Till did, it was apparent to all involved that he had done something that made Carolyn Bryant angry or afraid. Till’s friends rushed him away from the store as Bryant went to her car to get a gun.

For three days, nothing more happened, and then Roy Bryant — Carolyn’s husband — and J.W. Milam — Roy Bryant’s step-brother — struck out in the dead of night in search of young Till. They found him where they thought he’d be at two in the morning: asleep in the modest cabin of Mose Wright, his great-uncle. The two men, demanding to see the boy “who’d done the talking,” took Till forcibly from the house, and his family never saw him alive again. The next morning, at their behest, the local sheriff searched the county, and when he could not find any trace of Till he questioned and eventually arrested Milam and Bryant on kidnapping charges. When Till’s bloated and disfigured corpse surfaced three days later downstream in the Tallahatchie River, Milam and Bryant were quickly re-arrested, this time for murder.

In the weeks leading up to the trial, media coverage was enormous. Influential African American weeklies like the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *New York Amsterdam News*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American* all published loud denunciations of southern injustice and threatened to exert political and economic pressure should Mississippi fail to give Till’s case a fair hearing. In response, southern white papers, led by the conservative *Jackson Daily News* and the more moderate *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, insisted that justice would be done and that continued threats from the “liberal press” would threaten rather than secure justice in the case. Eventually, more than seventy newspapers and magazines sent reporters to the trial, and when, against all reasonable evidence, the jury failed to convict Milam and Bryant, the denunciations were swift and strong. While apologist papers in the South argued that justice had had its day in court, African American newspapers and magazines, joined by a chorus of support from the northern white press and liberal political organizations, called for national protests and boycotts.

According to many reporters in attendance, the judicial process had failed Emmett Till, and the real question to come out of the whole trial was whether, without federal

intervention, blacks could get justice in Mississippi. For another set of dissenters, however, the trial raised a different set of questions, many of them concerned with the truths of the case. Despite the best efforts of the prosecuting attorneys, the trial seemed to hide more truths than it answered as many competing testimonies were never fully explored or cross-examined. For instance, what really had happened that afternoon in the Bryant grocery? Moreover, how did Milam and Bryant find out about the alleged transgression? Who else besides Milam and Bryant drove out to Mose Wright’s cabin that night, and who were the other men spotted with Milam at the barn the next morning? Were there really black men in Milam’s pickup that evening? If so, who were they and what had happened to them? Finally, how long did Emmett Till remain alive that night, and exactly when, where, why and how did his murder take place? A handful of investigative reporters understood that the trial did not answer these questions fully and that the truth, more likely than not, had been obscured by the proceedings.

Among the investigative reporters at the trial, none played a more significant role than James L. Hicks. Hicks began his career as a reporter for the *Cleveland Call and Post* in 1935 and later moved on to the *Baltimore Afro-American*. As one of the premier investigative journalists of his generation, Hicks was also the Washington, D.C. bureau chief for the National Negro Press Association, which served more than one hundred newspapers. In 1955, he became executive director of the *New York Amsterdam News*, a position he would hold for the good part of twenty years. As the first black member of the State Department Correspondents Association and the first black reporter cleared to cover the United Nations, Hicks was truly a pioneer in the field. His coverage of the Till trial ran in dozens of African-American newspapers, and in the following piece of investigative journalism — which ran in four installments in October 1955 — he tells about the role he played in discovering the existence of “missing witnesses” to the murder. Hicks’s work in this area actually forced a trial recess on Tuesday, September 20, as the prosecution called for time to track down these newly discovered witnesses. In this series of articles — which ran in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Cleveland Call and Post* and the *Atlanta Daily World* — Hicks argues that the forces of law in Mississippi conspired to prevent the full evidence of Milam and Bryant’s guilt from surfacing at the trial. The version reprinted here draws its structure from the installments published in the *Cleveland Call and Post*, which presented the most condensed rendering of Hicks’s articles. Passages omitted from the *Cleveland Call and Post* articles, but included in some form or other in either the *Atlanta Daily World* or the *Baltimore Afro-American*, have been inserted throughout and marked by the addition of brackets.

—Christopher Metress

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“They Stand Accused by *C-P* Reporter: Jimmy Hicks Charges Miss. Officials Aided  
Lynchers”

James L. Hicks, *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 8, 1955

*New York, N.Y.* — Here for the first time is the true story of what happened in the hectic five-day trial of two white men in Sumner, Mississippi, for the murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till of Chicago.

This story has never been written before. I did not write it in Mississippi for fear of bodily harm to myself, and to my colleagues.

No one else has written it because no one else in the capacity of a reporter lived as close to it as I did.

[Looking back on it now, I am ashamed that I did not throw caution to the winds and at least try to get out the story exactly as it was unfolding to me. I’m convinced, however, that if I had tried this, I would not be here in New York to write this.

[I should like also to add that not once in the stories that I did file from Sumner did I tell a lie. The offense, if I committed one, lies in the fact that the stories that I did file did not dig or go far enough into the truth. It just wasn’t safe to do so.]

Here in the safety of New York I now charge (as I would have charged in Sumner, Mississippi) that:

Sheriff H. C. Strider frustrated the ends of justice by refusing to take an impartial person to the Charleston jail at Charleston, Miss., and permit them to check on his report that Leroy “Too Tight” Collins [was] not in the Charleston jail.

I further charge, and with the protection of proper law officials will go back to Mississippi and help prove, that Leroy Collins was in the Charleston jail on Friday at the very hour that the case went to the jury.

I charge further that Prosecutors Gerald Chatham and Robert B. Smith were told about this but that they decided that since the sheriff had given his word that Collins was not in the jail, they proceeded to close out the trial without this man whom everyone believes could have positively hung the crime on the two white men and seriously implicated at least one other white man.

I finally charge that if Leroy Collins is brought forward at this date and given all opportunity to talk where he is assured that he is not in any danger, he will be able to tell where Henry Lee Loggins is and that the two of them will prove to be the two colored men who were seen on the truck the night of the murder by Moses Wright and Willie Reed.

*Knew Too Much*

I believe that Henry Lee Loggins is dead and that he was disposed of because he knew too much about the case.

These are serious charges. But I welcome this opportunity to write down the evidence on which they are based.

This is the fantastic story as lived by this reporter:

*Attended Funeral*

On the Sunday before the opening of the trial I attended the funeral of "Kid" Townsend, a well[-]liked colored man who has lived in Sumner virtually all his life.

I had been told that a number of white people would attend the funeral and I felt that it would provide at least good pre-trial story for my paper.

[I drove into the churchyard, got out with my notebook in my hand and went into the church passing a number of colored people standing in the churchyard.

[Inside I found the church crowded with no seats and that white people were occupying the two rows on the left side of the church.

[The temperature was about 95 degrees and I decided to stand outside the church and listen to the services after I had been in the church about a half hour. This was easy to do because the church was the typical white-washed wooden structure and the minister who preached was shouting loud enough to be heard from outside.

[My notes, which I shall constantly refer to in this article, show that the preacher's name was the Rev. W. M. King, that there were 175 colored people in the church and 12 whites including five women, four men, and three white children.

[My notes also show that I recorded the sermon as being from "Fourth Chapter, Second Timothy," and beneath I have a quotation read by the minister which said, "I have fought the good fight. I have kept the faith. I have finished my course."]

I was leaning there against the fender of a parked car when a voice behind me said, "Are you down here for the trial?"

Up to this point I did not know a single colored person in Sumner and I had tried in the two days I'd been there from spreading around that I was a reporter.

But as I turned to the voice I decided that it would get out anyway[,] so I turned to the man who addressed me and said, "Yes, I am down on the trial. I'm a reporter."

The man was colored and he said to me, "There's a lady behind this car who would like to talk with you. I think you'd be interested in what she has to say."

[I turned and looked but saw no one. At that moment the man said, "Go behind the car, but don't take out your notebook and write down nothing."

[Now at this point I should like to say to the reader, if this whole thing starts off reading like a cheap and fantastic Hollywood movie script, that is exactly what it is going to read like for the entire five days.

[But I can say also that every word of it is true and it is written exactly the way I lived it.]

I went back of that car and found a woman whom I shall not describe[,] for she told me in the beginning that she was actually endangering her life by talking to me about the trial.

#### *Woman Gives Tip*

The woman then told me that a young boy named "Too Tight" was in the truck the night of the murder and that he had suddenly disappeared and no one knew where he was.

She said she did not know "Too Tight's" real name but that she thought she could send me to a place to get all the information I wanted on him "if you aren't afraid to go."

I told her I was not afraid. Then standing and looking off in another direction she said to me[,] "Go to Glendora. That's about seven miles south of here. Be careful and don't let the people know what you are looking for. Don't talk to any white people.

"Go to a place called King's. It's the only colored dance hall in town. Hang around there and find the right people. They will tell you 'Too Tight's' name and what happened to him. But don't,["] she said, "get caught down there after dark."

Then she walked away from the car.

[As he walked away I looked at my watch. It was three o'clock. I reasoned that with any good luck I could drive down there in 20 minutes and spend an hour or so in town and still make it back to my hotel in Mound Bayou by dark.]

So I got in the car and headed immediately for Glendora.

The tavern called King's was easy to find. I just looked for a large group of colored people on a back street and there was King's.

#### *King's Tavern*

It was a typical hangout in a typical Mississippi town. The place was filthy and the cotton pickers who were enjoying their Sunday off crowded it to the doors.

At one end of the long hall was what served as a kitchen. Somewhere within the bowels of the place a jukebox was giving out with Rock and Roll blues and in the center of

the floor couples were dancing attired in all kinds of clothing. Some of the young women up to 25 years old were dancing barefooted.

[I stood for a long time trying to “case” the place. I had not had a meal since my Mound Bayou breakfast that morning at seven and I was hungry. But I realized that I only had about a good hour to work in before dark and I wanted to get the most out of my time by circulating through the crowd instead of tying myself to an eating table.

[So I elected to spend my hour or so drinking beer and dancing to see what I could find. I walked over to the kitchen and foolishly asked for a “menu.”

[That was a dead giveaway for a stranger and I realized it now. But at the time the words seemed to slip out of my mouth. It seemed that at the time I felt that if I had some reading matter in my hand I could stall a little but until I made up my mind as to what approach to make.]

### *Spotted As Stranger*

When I asked a girl waitress for a menu, a man behind the counter spoke up and said, “We don’t have any menu. But we can fix you most anything you want.” Then he asked the question I knew was coming.

“Where you from?”

You simply can’t escape it in the South. They can spot a stranger a mile away.

I could tell by the authoritative way the man spoke that he must be the owner or manager of the joint, so I answered, “Oh, I’m from up the way a bit” and gradually I drew him into conversation.

After trying to convince him I was merely a drifting guy who had dropped in his place for a beer or two — and convincing myself that I hadn’t convinced him of anything — I came at him right down the middle:

“Whatever happened to my boy ‘Too Tight,’” I said?

The man stopped as if I had hit him in the face. I looked over to my right and some men seated at a table playing “Georgia Skin” dropped their cards and turned to look at me at the mention of the name “Too Tight.”

### *Looking for “Too Tight”*

I knew then that I was on the trail of something big.

But I also knew that the man to whom I was talking would not talk to me in the hearing distance of the others[,] so I grabbed him by his arm and moved over in a direction away from the “Skinners” and nearer the kitchen all the while saying “Let’s have a beer.”

He said nothing until he got me a beer. Then he moved over to me and said, "What do you want with 'Too Tight'?"

I told him "Too Tight" was a friend of mine. That we used to gamble together and that I was in his town and decided to look him up.

He looked around and said, "'Too Tight' is in jail."

"In jail," I said. "What have they got Too Tight in jail for? He never bothered anybody."

The man looked at me and said, "See that chick over there," pointing to a girl seated near the wall. "She can tell you about 'Too Tight'."

While I drank my beer, I stood there trying to figure how to best approach the girl who had the key to what I was looking for. She was seated with a big husky guy and the last thing I wanted to do was to become involved with a man for "molesting" his girl friend.

But all around me I noticed that when the other men wanted to dance they didn't ask the women for a dance. They just walk up, grab the woman by the arm and start dancing.

I felt my time was running out and I decided to try the bold approach. So I walked over to where she was seated, grabbed her by the hand and said, "Let's dance."

She was up on her feet in a flash and I swirled her out in the middle of the floor into the crowd as fast as I could[,] hoping that the big guy at the table wasn't mad at me.

### *He's in Jail*

She spoke first. And her questions were the usual. "Where are you from?" I told here that I was from up in Sumner and I was looking for my friend "Too Tight."

"Too Tight? she said[,] "He's in jail."

I expressed surprised. "In jail for what?" I said. "I don't know," she answered. "They came and for him Monday a week ago."

I let fly then with a barrage of questions[,] determined to get them all in before the dance was over and the big guy came to claim her. I asked her if she had been to see him in jail. She said no.

"You mean to tell me," I said[,] "that your boyfriend has been in jail a week and you haven't been to see him?"

She said[,] "'Too Tight' isn't my boy friend. He lived with us."

I asked her who was "Us" and she said[,] "Me and my husband."

["]Is that your husband over at the table?" I asked. "No," she answered. "He's in jail, too."

“What did they get him for?” I asked. “I don’t know,” she said. “[]Both of them worked for one of those white men who killed that boy from Chicago and they came and got both of them.”

I then asked her what jail they were in and if she had been to see her husband. She said she had not — that she had been even afraid to talk about it to anyone.

I asked her what her name was. She told me. I then asked what her husband’s name was. She said “Henry Lee Loggins.”

Since the name she gave me did not have Loggins for a last name, I said to her, “I thought you said your name was so and so. Now you tell me your husband’s name is Loggins.”

“We’re not married,” she said. “We just lived together.”

Then I asked her what to me was the \$64 question in Glendora. “What,” I said, “is Too Tight’s real name? I’ve known him a long time but all I know is Too Tight.”

#### *Gives Mystery Name*

She came right down the middle. “His real name is Leroy Collins[,]” she said.

She then told me that Too Tight lived with his grandfather on the Aklet farm near Glendora (about a mile and a half away) but that he stayed in town so much that he had just started living with her and her “husband.”

I then tried to get real chummy with her. I complimented her on her dancing and her hair and I asked her if I could come back down to Glendora and take her out. Then for the first time I noticed that she was barefooted.

“We’ll go to the jail first and see your husband,” I said, “and then we can go out and have a few drinks.”

She said that would be all right if I got back before ten o’clock that night. I told her then that I didn’t mean that I was coming back that same night but that I had planned to come down and pick her up the next day.

#### *Fears Beating*

“I can’t do that,” she said. “I’ll be picking cotton all during the day next week.”

I told her that we couldn’t get into the jail at night and that I’d pay her what she would make picking cotton if she would stay home from work the next day and go to the jail with me.

“I’d like to do it”, she said[,] “But I’d get a beating.”



I asked her who would beat her and she said that the white man for whom she worked came around and whipped everyone who didn't go out into the cotton fields and pick his cotton. “Even if they are sick, he whips them,” she said.

I asked her to come with me while I ate something and she readily consented[,] completely ignoring the big guy at the table where she had been seated. I then found that the menu which was unwritten consisted of chitterlings or beef stew.

I ordered beef stew and sat down with her at a table. As hungry as I was, I couldn't go for the stew[,] so I pushed it away and told her I was about ready to leave. She then showed me where she lived and I promised to come back to Glendora some night. I never went back.

Things simply got too hot.



“White Reporters Doublecrossed Probers Seeking Lost Witnesses”

James L. Hicks, *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 15, 1955

I got into my rented car with Mississippi tags and headed back from Glendora in the direction of Sumner.

When I reached the little town of Webb about a mile and a half away and almost half way back to Sumner I noticed a dirt road which I reasoned if it were straight would cut across country and hit the highway leading back to Mound Bayou.

I stopped the car, consulted my map, reasoned that I was guessing right and headed down the dirt road to take the short cut.

If I had known then what I know now I would never have taken that dirt road.

Nothing happened to me on it but subsequent events proved what could have happened.

The road led me in back of the state penitentiary at Parchman, Mississippi and I heaved a sigh of relief when I finally came out of its unpaved dust and rejoined the main highway.

*Tell Experience*

When I arrived back in Mound Bayou, Simeon Booker, Cloydde Murdock and photographer Jackson of the Johnson Publications out of Chicago were anxious to tell me of an experience they had had on their first day at Sumner.

They had gone to Money[,] which is below Glendora[,] and on their way back they too had seen the dirt road and reasoned as I did that it was a short cut.

But somehow as they went down the road they had become turned around and ended up going down a dead end road that led into the fields.

As they approached the dead end they encountered a truck load of white men all armed with shotguns and pistols, driving up the lonely road meeting them. They stopped, turned around and headed back. Upon questioning the presence of the guns they were told that the men were "deer hunting." However, on their arrival back in Mound Bayou they were told that deer hunting season had not yet started in Mississippi.

When I arrived back in Mound Bayou I told Dr. T. R. M. Howard[,] militant leader to the Delta[,] what I had found. I then learned that certain information which tied in beautifully with what I had.

He had been receiving reports for days that there had been two men on the truck with Emmett Till but he had not been able to establish who they were. He also had information on others such as Willie Reed and Mandy Bradley[,] whom he told me were willing to come forward and testify at the proper time.

#### *Unearth Witnesses*

Dr. Howard had given this information to other colored reporters but he had warned them not to publish a word about it until he could round up the witnesses and get them out of danger before stories broke in the press that they had valuable information which could lead to conviction. He impressed upon me and others that once a story got into the papers their lives would not be worth a nickel.

There then began some of the most trying days of my career as a reporter. I knew I was on something big and I wanted to break it with my papers right away.

The question was how to do so without tipping the white people of Mississippi off and thereby exposing myself and the innocent cotton pickers to bodily harm.

I argued that I should break the story. But Dr. Howard and my colleagues argued "How." They warned me that the wires out of Mound Bayou were not safe and they said it would be simply folly to put the story on Western Union and think that it would not get all over town.

All day Monday I worked through the trial almost in a daze, wrestling with whether I should plunge into my story of the two witnesses or hold off a little longer as Dr. Howard and others suggested.

[I filed copy on the testimony of the Rev. Moses Wright and Mrs. Mamie Bradley and let it go at that.]

Tuesday I continued to press for a release of the story. For by this time some of the white reporters had got wind of what we were working on and had asked me if I knew anything of a man named “Too Tight.”

In one story I filed through Western Union on Tuesday I alluded strongly to important and new witnesses which might come up in the trial. I came as near as I could to telling my office that something big was about to break without putting any of the witnesses on the spot.

This was the fear which the others had and which I must admit made sense at the time. They knew that Sheriff Strider of Tallahatchie County was a witness for the defense, that he had said he doubted the body was that of Emmett Till and that he had shown hostility to colored people working on the case.

#### *Fear Harm To Witnesses*

They felt and I agreed that if Strider learned that we were going to produce some eye witnesses to the murder he would tip off the defense and others working with them and our witnesses would either be spirited away or come to bodily harm.

At first this sounded fantastic to me. To think that one could not trust the Sheriff. But when I looked at the hard cold facts that Strider had said the body was not Till’s, that he was a witness against the state and that if “Too Tight” was in the Charleston jail Strider was the man who put him there, I agreed that it did not make sense to tip off Strider.

Then Ruby Hurley[,] NAACP field secretary[,] came to town and in a session in my hotel room which will live long in my memory I told Ruby what my problem was and told her that I could not see how I could sit on the story any longer no matter who was threatened by its publication.

Dr. Howard and my colleagues were all against my filing the story. They kept saying[,] “We don’t want to get anybody killed. Wait.”

#### *Plan Shift*

I put it up squarely to Ruby. She came through like a champion. She said that the evidence which we had was enough to stop the trial and shift it over to Sunflower County. Our witnesses were willing to testify that the crime was committed in Sunflower County instead of Tallahatchie County.

And she pointed out that if the case went to the jury in Tallahatchie County the two men would never have to stand trial again in another county because of double jeopardy. She said it was important that the evidence be made public right away before the case closed and went to the jury.

Ruby won the day on that point. But she stated that the story should be given the widest possible play on the dailies so that the public pressure could help to step in and stop the trial.

That meant that we had to call in white reporters since many of the weekly papers had already gone to the press. But who?

Simeon Booker, a Nieman fellow[,] suggested the name of Clark Porteous of the *Memphis Press Scimitar* who is also a Nieman fellow. I suggested that we add to it John Popham of the *New York Times* who was covering the story for the *Times*.

We agreed that we could call them in on it right away and that we'd have them ask the Sheriff where “Too Tight” was and to notify the Prosecutor and the District Attorney that we had new evidence to produce if they could offer the witnesses protection. We felt that these two men were men we could trust and we ruled out any other whites on the story either because no one in the group knew them well enough—or knew them too well to be trusted.

#### *Makes Error*

It was here that Dr. Howard committed what I will always feel was a tactical mistake. He was seated there in my room and suddenly he was going to Memphis to meet Congressman Diggs. Our agreement was sealed that we would notify Porteous and Popham and no one else.

Dr. Howard left. But a few minutes later we got word that Porteous and a “carload of reporters from Clarksdale” were coming down to hear the “story of the new witnesses.”

Now we had agreed that no one but Porteous and Popham would be let in on the story but when Porteous arrived he came without Popham and instead had with him two white reporters of the Jackson, Mississippi *Daily News*[,] regarded by many as one of the most inflammatory papers in the state!

It now appears that Dr. Howard, who had been pledging to me secrecy all the time, had suddenly just thrown the whole story to the wolves. I was hurt and I said so. Ruby was shocked and she said so. We then began to wonder what would happen to our witnesses because through our underground with them we had informed them that nothing would appear in the press until they were off the plantation in safe hands.

*Spills Beans*

When the three white reporters showed up[,] Dr. Howard, who had not gone to Memphis[,] sat down with them in an insurance office in Mound Bayou. Without learning who they were or pledging them to any off the record secrecy he began to tell them every word of the evidence he had and that which we had produced.

Then after telling them all, he told them that they could not break the story until the next afternoon because he first wanted to get the witnesses off the plantation.

This is what he told them:

“Sunday night a Negro came to me with information that the killing of Till may have happened in Sunflower County. I have looked into this. I can produce at least five witnesses at the proper time who will testify that Till was not killed in Tallahatchie County but killed in Sunflower County about three and a half miles west of Drew in the headquarters shed of the Clint Sheridan Plantation[,] which is managed by Leslie Milan, brother of J. W. Milan, one of the defendants and half brother of Roy Bryant[,] the other defendant.

“Word had been brought to me that within the past eight hours efforts have been made to clean up blood stains on the floor of this shed. I am informed that if you reporters will go with the proper authorities in the morning, you will see some stains and where efforts have been made to remove them.

“I am informed that a 1955 green Chevrolet truck with a white top was seen on the place at 6 a.m. Sunday, August 28, the last time Till was seen alive. There were four white men in the cab and three Negro men in the back. Photos of Till have been identified. He was in the middle in the back.

“There are witnesses who heard the cries of a boy from the shed. They heard blows. They noted that the cries gradually decreased until they were heard no more.

“Later a tractor was moved from the shed. The truck was driven into the shed. The truck came out with a tarpaulin spread over the back. The Negroes who went into the shed were not seen at this time and have not been seen around the plantation since.”

*Jumps Gun*

Porteous readily agreed to keeping the story off the papers until the next day but James Featherstone of the *Jackson Daily News* told Dr. Howard the he could not promise he would not print the story the next day. He said he had been called to come to Mound Bayou for a story, that he had not been told it was off the record and that he was going to print the story as quickly as he could get it in the papers.

This caused everyone in the room to almost faint because they knew what publication of the story would mean to the witnesses like Willie Reed and Mandy Bradley[,] who were at that moment still down on the plantation.

It took everyone in the room begging and pleading with Featherstone not to break the story. He finally agreed on the condition that on the following night when the witnesses were produced in Mound Bayou that no other white reporter be let in on the meeting except the three who were then there.

Dr. Howard, who I’m sure by this time realized his tactical mistake, promised that would be the case.

### *Scheme Exposed*

The next step was to get the witnesses off the plantation and then have the white reporters tell the DA and the prosecutors that we had them and that they were all willing to talk. We broke up the meeting on this note.

But the white reporters went to the authorities either that night or the first thing the next morning because when the trial recessed the next day the prosecutors had informed the judge and the Governor of the State about the new evidence and the trial came to an abrupt recess to allow the prosecutors to talk with the witnesses.

Now during cotton picking time in Mississippi you can’t get a cotton picker to leave the plantation during the day unless a white man comes for him. If he does he is subjected to a good whipping.

Ruby Hurley knew this and knowing this she became immediately alarmed that we would not be able to get the witness[es] until that night and that since the prosecution already knew about it the defense would also find out about it and that meant that they were still on the spot.

Still with the idea of saving lives, we huddled together with Miss Hurley in Sumner’s only tavern to decide what was the next move.

Ruby said there was only one thing to do. That was to go on the plantation and warn the witnesses to leave at once and come to Mound Bayou as soon as possible. But native Mississippians pointed out the problem of that.

### *Meant Trouble*

They said it meant trouble if any strange colored people showed up on a plantation and then some of the plantation people disappeared. Since we had to go to the plantation of the defendants they considered it double trouble.

But Ruby was insistent and it was finally agreed that Ruby and a reporter, Moses Newsome of Memphis[,] would go out on the plantation to warn the people and set up a meeting place for that night and that we would all then meet in a certain place in Cleveland, Mississippi[,] where we would talk to the witnesses and then bring them to Mound Bayou eight miles away to meet the authorities and the white reporters.

Thus shortly after high noon Ruby and Newsome disguised themselves as sharecroppers (Moses who was 130 pounds went away wearing a size 46 pair of overalls and Ruby wearing a Mother Hubbard dress and a bandana and actually looked for the moment like a sharecropper.)

This may sound fantastic but this is all true and it is the only way the state produced what few witnesses it did produce with the exception of Mose Wright.

They left, borrowed an old battered auto and went out into the plantations.

With the trial recessed we then went back to Mound Bayou. The meeting place with the witnesses was in Cleveland, Mississippi[,] and we were to be there at dark.

When darkness fell I went to the meeting place. There I met a man who is an ardent worker in the NAACP. He told me to park my car and get into his car. Then he drove me to a house which turned out to be the real meeting place.

I later learned that this is the way they do it down there. They announce one place as a site. But when you arrive there it is really not the bonafide place. If you are the right person you are taken from there to the meeting place. If you are not, no one will admit knowing what you are talking about.

Fantastic! It seems that way. But you have to live in Mississippi under the threat of its violence to learn what people like Ruby Hurley and other NAACP leaders have learned.

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“The Mississippi Lynching Story: Luring Terrorized Witnesses from the Plantations  
Was Toughest Job”

James L. Hicks, *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 22, 1955

When I arrived at the house I found Ruby Hurley and Newsome safe but they had a sad story to tell.

During the afternoon the authorities notified by the white reporters had gone to the plantations ahead of them and questioned the prospective witnesses. This had scared them

to death and they felt that we had gone back on our promise to get them out of there before the white people were told.

The result was that they not only clammed up to the whites but they refused to come to the meeting with us.

We didn't know what to do then. A call came from Porteous saying that he was on his way down with the sheriffs in the various counties. A special investigator sent by the Governor and other officials. And we had no witnesses to produce.

We went on, however, to the meeting place with the white authorities and Dr. Howard[,] who met with them[,] told them of how they had jumped the gun and what it meant.

He also pointed out the danger that the witnesses would be in when the story broke and he asked that they be taken off the farms and placed in protective custody. The various sheriffs and county supervisors, all of whom were here, said they did not feel the people involved were in any immediate danger but they said if Dr. Howard thought so they would go get them and bring them to Mound Bayou for safe keeping.

#### *Meet Officials*

Thus at about midnight we sat there in an insurance office with the following law officials of Mississippi, T.J. Townsend, prosecutor of Sunflower County, Gwin Cole, who had been flown to the trial that day on orders by Governor Hugh White as soon as the new evidence was presented, Sheriff George Smith of LeFlore County, District Attorney Stannie Senders of Sunflower County and John Ed Cothran, chief deputy of Sunflower County. They said the Governor was interested in the case and they wanted to do anything Dr. Howard and the group suggested.

Dr. Howard insisted that the only thing to do was to go right then and get the people off the plantation. The law officials said they could not force them to leave but that they could take us out and let us talk to them and bring those out who wanted to come.

Things happened fast after that. The various sheriffs said they would get people in their own counties and before one could say Jackie Robinson cars were moving out in all directions.

#### *Visit Plantations*

Some key people of Mississippi who were in on the meeting but who still cannot be identified got into cars with the sheriffs. These people were the contact people with the



people on the plantations. Various reporters took off after the sheriffs in cars of their own. As for me I started out behind the sheriff who was to bring in Willie Reed.

He went through Mound Bayou like a streak and turned right at the dirt road leading towards Drew. I hit the dirt road behind him as he roared into the cotton fields.

Now it's simply a part of this fantastic story to state that at times on that little dirt road leading out of Mound Bayou I was travelling in the dead of night at times at 70 miles an hour!

It's fantastic but true.

But at that speed I lost the sheriff[,] and a Jackson and Johnson publications photographer who was riding with me and I decided to go on to County Supervisor Townsend's office at Drew where all the witnesses picked up by the various sheriffs were to be brought before being taken to Mound Bayou.

Driving at 75 miles an hour when we hit the paved road leading into Drew we overtook Simeon Booker and Clark Porteous and Featherston [Featherstone]. They too had chased a sheriff and got lost on the Mississippi dirt road. The five of us then went to Townsend's office.

As we arrived there a white woman drove up in a car and a colored man got out. This proved to be Frank Young, one of the key witnesses in the case who never testified. The sheriff in that county had simply called the plantation owner on which Young worked and told her to bring Young in.

#### *Kept Mum*

Dr. Howard was to have followed us to Drew to be there when witnesses were questioned but for some reason he was delayed and though Young had talked freely before this, he refused to talk to anyone but Dr. Howard.

We waited a long time and then the white woman who had brought him in grew tired and she took Young back to the plantation, promising to have him in court the next day. Young never took the witness stand. They told me he came to the court and could not find the courthouse and went back. I never did get the straight of this.

One of the sheriffs had taken a colored minister with him to get Mandy Bradley. About two o'clock in the morning they returned without Mandy. Moses Newsome, a reporter who rode in the sheriff's car with the minister and the sheriff[,] said the sheriff had driven to the house, sent the minister in to talk with Mrs. Bradley and see if she would come to Mound Bayou.

She is said to have told him that she would not. That she did not know anything about the case. But later the same woman did testify in the case and has now left Mississippi and is in Chicago. I can only believe that the events of the day and night had frightened her nearly to death.

The various sheriffs talked to other witnesses but were able to get none to come forward that night. Finally in the early hours of the morning we went back to Mound Bayou over the lonely back road.

There is one point which I should mention here that I feel had a direct bearing on my future activities with the trial.

During the meeting at Mound Bayou with the various sheriffs, one of them asked Dr. Howard what were the names of the two men who had been seen on the truck with Emmett Till. At this point Dr. Howard and the sheriffs were in the room together and reporters waiting outside.

#### *Put on Spot*

But at this point Dr. Howard in a loud voice called out "Send Jimmy Hicks in here." I went into the room and before all these sheriffs and other officials of Mississippi, many of whom I did not trust, he pointed to me and said: "This is Jimmy Hicks of the Afro American papers. He has talked with the people who know 'Too Tight.' Hicks, what is 'Too Tight's' real name and what is the name of the man who was on that truck with him?"

I didn't want to answer. I didn't want to enter into that way whatever. But I couldn't let Dr. Howard down before all those people and I knew I was the only one who had the answer. So I said "'Too Tight's' real name is Leroy Collins and the other man is Henry Lee Loggins."

All their eyes were upon me as I left the room. And I got a funny feeling that the finger might also be on me too.

#### *Watch Story*

Back at the Mound Bayou hotel my colleagues were even more insistent that I lighten up on the type of story I was filling though Western Union.

From that point on it seemed that everyone in the courthouse knew what I had written the moment I filed it. I am not accusing Western Union. I do not believe that the operators were willfully letting anyone read my copy.

But the Western Union ticker was set up in the hallway of the courthouse and many of the local people had never seen one work. Those who could not get into the courtroom

made it a habit to crowd around the open phones and the Western Union desk and listen to the reporters call in their stories on special wires set up for them.

It was very easy for them to also look over the shoulder of the Western Union operator and see what he was filing.

The owner of the only colored phone in Sumner told me himself that the white people listened in on everything said on his phones so I ruled that one out with the exception of a few calls to my office during which time I never once said what part I was playing in the trial.

While I was debating on whether to sit down and tell it all an incident happened which caused me to finally agree to file what I was seeing and doing.

I drove to the trial at nine o'clock Wednesday morning and sat through the trial until it recessed at 1:30. Then I started to my car parked in front of the courthouse. As I reached the car with the key in my hand to get a notebook out of the car a white man stepped off the curb and said to me "Boy is this your car[?]" When I answered that it was, he snatched the key from my hand and said[,] "You come with me down to the Mayor's office.

I was never so shocked in my life when I saw his gun [and] I decided that I'd better go along.

### *Under Arrest*

I began walking with the man to the "mayor's office." Neither of us said a word. But oh how I was thinking. I felt at the start that Sheriff Strider[,] whom I simply do not trust[,] had got wind of my activity in tracking down "Too Tight" and I figured that I might be stuck away in some jail and given a good going over until after the trial.

We walked a half block and turned into the office of the *Sumner Sentinel*. Inside the door stood Featherson[,] the Jackson, Mississippi reporter who had worked on the witnesses with us virtually all night the night before.

Featherson said to me[,] "Hi Hicks. How you doing?" I said to him[,] "Not so good. Looks like I'm in trouble."

He said[,] "What's the trouble" and I asked him to ask the deputy who had brought me in. All the deputy would tell him was that Sheriff Strider had ordered him to pick me up.

I'll never forget Featherson. He told the deputy[,] "Look, I'm from Jackson, Mississippi. I know this boy. He's all right. You must have the wrong man. This boy is down here covering the trial." The deputy ignored him.

About that time Simpson, editor of the *Sentinel*[,] came in. And I was glad that he had been the first man I had gone to when I hit town.

Simpson, like Featherson, greeted me warmly and asked me how things were going. I told him that I was under arrest but did not know the charges. Simpson then aggressively demanded of the deputy what he was holding me for. When he refused to tell him he said[,] “Well, by God. Let’s get the sheriff over here and see. This man is here to cover the trial. Every reporter speaks highly of him because I checked up on him.[?]” He then ordered someone in his office to get the sheriff[,] who was in the courthouse across the street.

*Newsmen Busy*

But instead of the sheriff coming back about 40 newsmen hit the door of the *Sentinel*. Their nose for news had already sniffed a news story and they were there to check on it and I was glad to see them there.

It was then and only then that the deputy suddenly realized that he knew the charges against me. He said[,] “He’s charged with passing a school bus!”

Simpson exploded. “School bus[,]” he said. “For goodness sakes, turn that man loose. You’re getting ready to give this town the highest black eye it has ever had.”

He then turned to what I later found out was the justice of the peace who tried my case — the linotype operator in Simpson’s printing plant!

Simpson suggested to the linotype operator that he dismiss the charges but the linotype operator[,] who was then talking to his boss, said, “This is my case and I’m going to try it.”

I saw then that there was a little man who wanted to show his importance and I was so relieved that it was a traffic charge and nothing else that I told Alex Wilson of the *Memphis Tri State Defender* to buzz to the colored press that I was OK and could pay the fine and that I think I’d get off better if they left and made it appear that no one was putting any pressure on the little justice of the peace.

They left (and bless them all for having the courage to come), but some of the white reporters remained and continued to ask questions. One picked up a phone off Simpson’s desk, called Memphis and began to dictating the story to his editor. The story later appeared on the center fold of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*.

With Simpson talking to the JP, he said to me[,] “Come back here, boy.” I went. He took me back to a linotype machine, wiped the ink off his hands, got out a law book and began reading a law to me.

When he finished he told me that under that law he could fine me \$300 or give me six months in jail. But he said he was going to “give you a break” and dismiss the case. He asked me if I thought that would be a good break. I told him I certainly did. And then he

dismissed the case and told me to “tell all those reporters out there that we gave you a break.” I told him that I would—and I did.

By this time, however, I was getting the general idea that I was a marked man[,] for during his conversation with me the justice of the peace started telling me where I was staying, what time I got to the trial in the morning, where I parked my car and who I was going to have lunch with that day. (I was going to eat with a local woman who had promised some more information. She did not show up).

I haven’t the slightest idea how he learned all this.

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“Jimmy Hicks Tells Inside Story of Infamous Mississippi Lynch Case”

James L. Hicks, *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 22, 1955

The next day Willie Reed, Mandy Bradley and others took the stand and testified. I filed straight copy of their testimony but I was eating my heart out to file copy on the fact that “Too Tight” Leroy Collins was in the Charleston jail, that Sheriff Strider knew he was there and that he would not produce him.

After they testified word came that the prosecution was going to close down its arguments. I couldn’t believe it. How could they close without trying to put “Too Tight” on the stand.

I went to the Prosecutor Gerald Chatham and asked if it were true. He said it was. I asked him how about “Too Tight.” He said Sheriff Strider told him that “Too Tight” was not in the Charleston jail. He said he couldn’t produce him if the sheriff would not produce him.

I asked him what did he think had happened to “Too Tight.” He said[,] “I wouldn’t like to say.”

*Witness Seen*

That night I received information that there was a person in Charleston who had been to the jail the day before and talked with “Too Tight.” The person was at a certain spot[,] an NAACP official was there too and they wanted to know what should be done.

He told the person to be ready to testify the next day. Then we got word to the prosecutors by phone of what we had learned. As tactfully as it could be done it was pointed out that perhaps Sheriff Strider had been mistaken.

But the next morning the prosecution stated again that despite the fact that someone was willing to go to the jail and identify "Too Tight" he could not go there because the sheriff of the jail had already said he was not there.

The case actually went to the jury on that note and to this day no one got a chance to go there and talk to "Too Tight" Collins.

I think he is still there. If he is not there I think Sheriff Strider should be made to tell where he is.

### *Could Clear Mystery*

And I believe if either he or Loggins could be put on a witness stand they would clear up once and for all the mystery of what they were doing on that truck with Emmett Till and what happened to Emmett Till when he was taken into that barn on the night of August 28.

Perhaps the reader will still condemn me for not dashing off reports on the above story day by day and hour by hour as it happened.

I should like to add these additional facts, unrelated as they might seem:

On the night that I filed my first copy from Sumner I was in my hotel room at Mound Bayou rather sure that no one in Sumner knew where I was living.

I got a phone call from Sumner long after midnight. The voice said he was a reporter from Louisiana and that he had met me earlier in the day. When I said I didn't remember him he said it was not important. That what he really called was for me to go to Memphis with him. He said he was working on a new angle on the story and asked me if I wanted to come along.

He said he realized Mound Bayou was not on the road to Memphis but that he was sleepy and would gladly drive out of his way to come by for me if I would agree to go so that I would help him drive back.

I told him that I couldn't possibly break away to go. When I said that he began asking me how long would I be at my hotel in Mound Bayou. I told him that I was just preparing to go south to Greenville and work on a new lead I had found. He said he could reach Sumner in about a half hour and that he wanted to talk to me. I told him I was leaving right away.

### *Given a Weapon*

When the conversation ended and I told some of our group what had transpired a local Mississippian went out to his car, returned to my room and gave me a loaded .38 Smith and Wesson pistol. "Here, boy," he said. "You sleep with this tonight." I did.

About an hour later a carload of people drove up the side of my hotel and knocked on my door.

I lay there with my hand clutching the loaded gun and said nothing. Then they went next door and knocked on the door of Simeon Booker. He did not answer either.

By this time I got up and came to the door. I tested the lock to make sure it was locked and then I began peeping with gun in hand through the three small windows up at the top of the door of my hotel.

Beneath the street light outside I could see a carload of colored people. I was close to them as 30 feet. The light was playing full on the face of a colored woman I had seen before as she sat on the front seat of the car with the door opened.

The man doing the knocking was standing talking with her with his back to me and I could not see his face. I heard him say[,] "He's not in there."

Then the man walked around the other side of the car still with his face from me and went around the motel to the home of Mrs. Anderson[,] who owns the motel. I crossed the room, still with the gun in my hand, and watched him ring the bell until she answered the door.

Then he left after talking with her a moment and came back to the car parked in front of my door. He got into the car from the driver's side and soon they drove south toward Cleveland.

I went back to bed with the gun under my pillow. Then next morning Mrs. Anderson told me that the people had asked her if she had any vacant rooms. What I couldn't understand and still don't was why they knocked on the door of my motel room instead of first going to the office of the motel.

### *Feared Trap*

On another occasion Murray Kempton of the *New York Post* called me in Mound Bayou. I got his message and called him back. He was not in. But as soon as I hung up the phone rang for me. A voice on the other end of the wire in Clarksdale said his name was Ferguson and that he knew I had called Murray a few minutes ago. The voice said he and Murray were good friends and that I could tell him anything that I was going to tell Murray and that he would pass it on to Murray.

I told the voice that he was on the wrong track, that I had not been calling Murray to tell him anything but that I was simply returning a call Murray had put through to me from Clarksdale.

The voice insisted[,] "Come on Hicks. You know plenty. Let me in on it." He gave the impression that he was another newsman. I told him I simply did not have any leads to work on and he finally hung up.

#### *Face Trickster*

Then next day in Sumner I told Murray about the incident. We went to James Featherson and accused Featherson of trying to get me to give him some information under his name.

But the last day of the trial Featherson came up to me in Kempton's presence and swore that he had never talked with me by phone. I told Murray that the man on the other end had used the name Ferguson. And in reflection I'm not sure that it was not the voice of Featherson.

Who was it? I haven't the slightest idea.

One more incident. Sheriff Strider gave out press passes which were supposed to enable reporters to use the backstairs which the jury used in getting in and out of the courtroom to avoid going through the crowd.

#### *Barred By Deputy*

The day after I gave the sheriff the name of "Too Tight" Collins I started up the back steps to go to the courtroom. A deputy was standing on the narrow stairway and as I approached him with the card in hand he put one foot against the wall of the narrow stairway, leaned against the other and barred the way.

I said[,] "Press" and held the card up higher. He said to me[,] "No niggers are going up this stairway." I bit my tongue, turned around and started for the front stairs where one had to push his way through the hostile crowd.

On the way I met John Popham of the *Times* and I told him what had happened. I also told him what a loaded thing it was to push one's way through the hostile crowd. He suggested that we get together and try to go up.

With Popham leading the way we went back to the stairs. Several white reporters walked on past the deputy before we reached him.

Then Popham walked past him. I followed. But as I put my foot out to mount the first stair, up came the deputy's foot again and barred the way. Popham, who had already



passed him turned and said[,] “He’s a reporter. He’s got a card. The sheriff said the press could go up this way.”

The man snarled at me[,] “You’re not going up this way. G’roung.” He had a gun. I had no choice. I went around.

*No action Taken*

I know that this information was given to Strider. But we still never were able to use the back steps.

All of these things gradually beat me down at Sumner. A deputy threatened to knock Simeon Booker’s “head off” because Booker held up the press card and asked the deputy to help him get through the crowd.

A man who walked up to the press table and called all of us “niggers” was sworn in five minutes later as the bailiff.

*Reporter Fired Upon*

An English correspondent who talked to a colored woman was later fired at twice the same night by the deputy who arrested me.

A cross was burned fifty yards from the courthouse during the trial. There was no investigation that I heard of.

They allotted us chairs at the Jim Crow press table but during the noon recess while we were trying to get our stories filed in a colored restaurant the crowd would come in and take the chairs from our table. I stood up more often than I sat down.

Congressman Diggs and Dr. Howard brought their own chairs to the Jim Crow press table. On the last day of the trial the crowd took them.

This was the trial at Sumner as I lived it. Other colored reporters will verify that portion of my story where our paths crossed, and they crossed often. There are other colored reporters who could possibly tell even more fantastic stories. But they are all true.

James L. Hicks’ dispatches appear in  
Christopher Metress’ THE LYNCHING OF EMMETT TILL: A Documentary Narrative  
(University of Virginia Press <<http://www.upress.virginia.edu/>>, September 2002);  
with permission of the *Cleveland Call and Post*.

See also, Archipelago Vol. 6, No. 1 Spring 2000  
<http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/hicks.htm>  
and

“The Murder of Emmett Till,” a documentary on “American Experience,” PBS  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/>

and Further Reading  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/filmmore/fr.html>

*animation*

## *PHANTOM*

A 3-D Computer Animation by  
Ronan Coyle - animation  
Jim McGuinness – photography  
Giles Packham – music



View the film on-line

[www.archipelago.org/vol8-2/phantom](http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-2/phantom)

### *About Phantom*

*Phantom* (2002) is the result of a collaboration between three friends: an animator, a composer and a photographer. The piece explores a vacated flat in Dublin. Once full of life, the flat is now empty – only memories wash around the deserted rooms. Inspired by the music which accompanies it, *Phantom* is a series of still photographs which are animated using the technique of texture projection.

### *Cast*

*The Girl* – Catherine Bruen

*The Guy* – Ronan Coyle

### *Awards*

In 2003 James Kelly came on board as executive producer to submit *Phantom* to a number of Irish film festivals. *Phantom* was shown in competition 2003, at the Galway Film Fleadh, where it won third place in Best Animation; and at the Kerry Film Festival, where it won commendation for Best Animation Technique and, from the director Neil Jordan, the adjudicator, Special Commendation for Best Director.

### *Creative Process*

For about ten years, Ronan Coyle shared a flat in the house in Merrion Square with various flatmates.

In early 2002, an eviction notice arrived.

The three friends, Ronan, Jim, and Giles, having talked about doing a collaboration, thought the flat would be appropriate, and they waited until most of the rooms were empty.

Giles had already written the music.

Early one day, the three met in the flat and listened to the music over and over and discussed what would happen in the film.

The dripping theme was inspired by various upstairs events over the years of overflowing baths and washing machines. One weekend, the upstairs tenants went away, and their washing-machine pipes broke. For the whole time water dripped down through the ceiling and over the door jambs of the flat below (the water-stains can be seen in the animation). The flat-mates took turns manning a complicated system of upside-down umbrellas, buckets, and pots for emptying the water into the toilet.

When the three were happy, Jim McGuinness photographed the empty space into the afternoon (while the daylight lasted).

It was initially supposed to be a quick little project but the 3-D construction, animation, and compositing ended up taking the animator, Ronan Coyle, roughly 6 months.

The premier of *Phantom* was held in the flat. Reunited, the collaborators, previous flat-mates, remaining tenants and their friends and families got together. A bed sheet was thumbtacked to the wall and the film projected onto to it. As the electricity had been disconnected, they could only show *Phantom* as long as laptop batteries lasted. The flat is still empty.

### *Notes on the Technique*

The technique of Texture Projection allows a photograph to be viewed from perspectives other than the one it was originally taken from. This manipulation of still photography lends

the animation a dream-like cardboard cut-out quality which seemed appropriate for the music.

## The Process

### *On Location*

Multiple reference photographs were taken of each location, taking note of the position of the camera within that location. Wide lens angles were mostly used for the interior reference photographs, whereas zoom lenses were necessary for close-up detail of the exterior shots. Six rolls of film were used to record the locations and character permutations.

### *Post Production*

In the 3-D software a camera with similar properties was placed in a dummy cube (representing the room to be modelled). Looking through the camera viewpoint, the reference photograph was set as the screen background. Then room elements (shelves, jam jar lids, etc) were built by working backwards from a corner of the dummy cube. When all the elements were sufficiently accurate, the photograph was projected, from the camera, back onto the blank geometry. This process was repeated for all the reference areas of each room. Camera, water and water-shimmer were animated. Drips were simulated using particle physics. The final composite consisted of up to eight layers including: depth of field, water shimmer, camera distortion and camera iris saturation.

### *Audio*

Appropriate Foley was recorded on location and in studio which was edited back over the original soundtrack.



Photo Jim McGuinness



Photo Jim McGuinness



Photo Jim McGuinness



Photo Jim McGuinness

### *Wireframe Composites*

The geometry had to be built backwards, using a technique called texture projection. Similar to a traditional technique in animation of rotoscoping, where a scene is filmed and animators trace over it to obtain motion and natural movement. In this context, it was 3D rotoscoping. Jim took notice of the different lenses and where he was positioned in the room, and this information was used to build up the 3D geometry, to correspond to the photographs.

The next step was projection the photo back onto the geometry. What happened is that you can look at a photo from a different angle than the one it was taken in. The best example of the technique is the shot when the camera goes in through the bathroom window. All the reference photos were taken from the car park out the back – it demonstrates the point of being able to move the camera to other points than the one from which the photo was originally taken.



drawing Ronan Coyle



drawing Ronan Coyle





drawing Ronan Coyle



drawing Ronan Coyle

Phantom ©2002 Ronan Coyle [ronancoyle@lycos.com](mailto:ronancoyle@lycos.com), Jim McGuinness  
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The Beatles appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9, 1964, and the direct influence of that even is still being felt in new ways. In 1961, Senator John Kerry played bass guitar in a band called the Electras. The band rehearsed in the halls of St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire; they cut a record and described their music as 'early surf.' Tony Blair's band was called Ugly Rumours; he played guitar and sang. Only the other day, on a tour of China, a group of students asked the British prime minister to sing a Beatles song. He blushed and looked at his wife, Cherie, who picked up the microphone and gave a rather croaky rendition of 'When I'm Sixty-Four.' John Edwards plays the saxophone and 'admires' the Beatles. Former Governor Howard Dean plays the harmonica and the guitar and his favorite Beatle is George Harrison. Wesley Clark's favorite album of all time is *Yellow Submarine* (Kerry's is *Abbey Road*; Dennis Kucinich's is *The White Album*). Who can forget Bill Clinton's saxophone solo on *Arsenio Hall*? 'There was not only a new sound,' said Al Gore, speaking about the Beatles to the editor of *Rolling Stone*. 'There was something else that was new with the Beatles. A new sensibility ... that incredible gestalt they had.' The great exception to this is George W. Bush. He was at Yale from 1964 to 1968, and liked some of the Beatles first records. 'Then they got a bit weird,' he has said. 'I didn't like all that later stuff when they got strange.' Bush also told Oprah Winfrey his favorite song is the Everly Brothers' 'Wake Up Little Susie' (1957), but overall he says he prefers country music.

Andrew O'Hagen

“Back in the US of A,” *NYRB*, May 27, 2004  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17112>

“At least I know what I am trying to do, which is to live deliberately without roots. I would put it like this. America may break one completely, but the best of which one is capable is more likely to be drawn out of one here more than anywhere else.”

W.H. Auden

quoted in Mark Ford,

“Auden Remakes ‘The Tempest!’”, *NYRB*, June 10, 2004

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## A World That Begins in Art

Katherine McNamara

### *Art Lets Us Live*

Helen Vendler, the esteemed scholar of poetry, delivered the Jefferson Lecture in May at the National Endowment for the Humanities. She proposed that the humanities ought to take as their central study the esthetic works of the imagination, because, she argued, “after all,” societies are remembered principally for their arts. She pointed out that the arts (and religion) used to offer training in “subtlety of response” – a lovely phrase – and so, would most truthfully show us representations of ourselves, far more “responsibly” than commercial culture can or be expected to do. She urged that the children of our society be taught their cultural patrimony, which is rich and wonderfully varied, as, generally, our “students leave high school knowing almost nothing about American art, music, architecture, and sculpture, and having only a superficial acquaintance with a few American authors.” Humanely, she affirmed that, just as art is only “half itself without us – its audience, its analysts, its scholars – so we are only half ourselves without it.”

The audience must have rejoiced to hear this. It was all true, but no one had said it out loud, in public, in Washington, for a long time.

“But,” she went on to say, “these patriotic and cultural aims alone are not [justification] enough . . .” That is, if we set ourselves to read Stevens, or Eliot, or Marianne Moore, or “Hamlet,” before reading history, or economics, or political science, our minds would be finer and clearer and we would not “lose sight of individual human uniqueness – the quality most prized in artists, and most salient, and most valued, in the arts.” She called upon us to recognize that “The arts present the whole uncensored human person – in emotional, physical, and intellectual being, and in single and collective form – as no other branch of human accomplishment does.”

The arts, she reminded us, recalling Wallace Stevens, on three of whose poems she centered her text, let us live our lives, meaning (as artists mean) “to live in the body as well as in the mind, on the sensual earth as well as in the celestial clouds. The arts exist to relocate us in the body by means of the work of the mind in aesthetic creation; they situation us on

the earth, paradoxically, by means of a mental paradigm of experience embodied, with symbolic concision, in a physical medium.”

*The arts situate us on the earth and in our body.* I want to believe this; I do believe it; I know it to be true. It is true for me, who live in my study, surrounded by books, in a house free of television, in a cultivated garden. At another extreme, in the Alaskan bush, in bitter cold and darkness, poetry once helped me live. Reading Heaney and Milosz lit the mind with sounds of distant worlds brought close. The elegance of form quieted and ordered a spirit agitated by that immense landscape indifferent to human presence. The poems were as real as the night sky. Into Athabaskan schools I had then the pleasure of carrying great literature. There, I was sobered by the real lives of students, yet the work was not lessened but made urgent. I saw certain desperate youngsters writing their own poems, singing their songs as if to save their lives. They were not deaf to the joy and power of their making, although poetry did not always, or perhaps often, save their lives. Art helps us live – I believe this – although I do not believe it must save our lives. Art helps us live, until we cannot live.

Helen Vendler would know as well as any of us does that men of cultivation have been among the great tyrants and butchers of history; yet, even so, that other men of little learning have, as in the present time, orchestrated enormous wars. It is the populace about whom she is concerned: the great mass of our people who seem to live “blankly, scarcely seeing the earth on which they lived. . . .” It is they, it is we ourselves, she offers, whose lives can only be refreshed and delighted by true acquaintance with and knowledge of the arts.

She asks two questions that strike the heart of the matter. They are vital ones, yet nearly unanswerable, except by the work of art itself; and then, by the careful description (this is the work of the scholar) of how it came into being. Her questions:

Who has the right to be an artist?

How does one claim that right?

### *An Instrument of Transmission*

Art lives in the body and rises from the body. I was typing this insight on an instrument of transmission, my laptop. There came a curious thought. Using a wireless network, I had been paging through *ArtsCanada*, about which I was going to write, and suddenly I wondered whether an American soldier similarly using a laptop and wireless network could see what I saw. If so, what would she do differently?

*What Is That By Which We Will Be Remembered?*

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a public agency, opens *via* the Web a doorway into a digital imaginative space called *ArtsCanada*. Those Canadians have found out how to offer broadband storytelling and documentation of high quality in a well-designed format. Yet, how often on the Web does bad design ruin content. Not at this site. Canada was the home of Marshall MacLuhan, afar all. In their digital medium is *ArtsCanada's* message: the arts matter to us and we will – and we certainly can – do good work with this cool technology. So simple an idea; so interesting its working out.

To go there, you need a computer with a broadband connection, Flash, and a good sound system. Community and university libraries usually have this kind of set-up. Recently, I spent time on their program *True North, the Concert*. Annually, the CBC sponsors a concert in a small community in the far North – the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Cree Quebec – presenting artists from across northern Canada. Last year the concert was held in Oujé-Bougoumou, in Cree Quebec, a handsome community designed by the Blackfoot and Ojibwa architect Douglas Cardinal. *ArtsCanada* hosts an excerpt of the concert in sound, photos, and video; the links from splash page to the performers menu are easy to follow. I want to draw your attention to a group called Ceramony (as they write it). Click on “Ceramony.” When the frame loads, you will see and hear three young men – whose names I could not quite catch – talk about themselves, their Cree identity, and their band. They formed in 2002, having “a mind set to get certain messages out, implementing our culture but going for the mainstream.” Then, they discovered who they are and what they stand for.

*First voice:* “Art raises you up a level – instead of being in politics, being a leader in that sense, music makes you *move*, makes you *want* to move, makes you want to *think*. Politics won’t do that for you. Art speaks a lot and on different levels.”

*Second voice:* “In the midst of the Agreement in Principle [*the recent agreement between the Cree Grand Council and the Government of Quebec allowing hydroelectric-development in the James Bay area, a hugely controversial act*] and the new relationship signed between the Government of Quebec and the Crees of Northern Quebec, we raised a lot of concerns. As it progressed, we realized there were a lot of questions rather than a lot of answers. We learnt about the agreement, we learnt about what was happening behind the scenes. A lot of it is just fact, whether people like to believe it or not, and we wrote a song behind it.” [*“First Son,” video*]

*Third voice:* “In any story, there are two sides. This was ours – and many others’. Many people felt silenced. We feel it is the right thing to do, to speak up in this way – instead of being violent. As you can see how the world is turning out now, this is the best way to release something that you need to release, instead of going out there and killing each other. This is, I guess, our war, with this music.”

The James Bay agreement caused, and still causes, much dismay among the Cree, as they relate.

*Voice:* “The youth were not consulted, and the youth are the more educated. Nobody listened to us, and we thought, ‘Well, politics ain’t going to do it.’ We tried to do things by the book, we tried to show respect. Nobody listened. We were avoided by the Grand Council – the Grand Chief himself! So we thought, there’s one way he has to listen: if all the youth, all the kids are driving around town blasting these lyrics. And last night, we had a special guest in the audience, and that was the Grand Chief that ignored us. And this time he couldn’t ignore us, there was 20,000 watts of sound blowing right in his face. (chuckle) That was our little ‘You’re listening now’ kind of thing.”

*Voice:* “Another thing we can relate personally is that [“First Son”] relates to indigenous people world-wide, from Australia all the way to South America to North America – it’s a statement a lot of indigenous people want to get out there, or have tried to get out there. This is our way of doing it as well.”

*Voice:* “It was written innocently, the lyrics just kept coming, and now it’s the definition of what we are at the moment.”

The definition he spoke of is their song “First Son,” with a driving refrain, “First nation, assimilated son.” It is a resistance song. Ceremony is part of the culture wars taking place around the world, and these three musicians are young men working out, by means of their art, how to be native in the present world, within their society, without killing or doing violence. They know themselves as artists. This knowledge is huge when it comes. They throb with energy. Their kind of music is not one I normally feel close to, but I would get up and dance if I were in the audience; and I was moved and thrilled by the sound of the war cries – or sorrow-cries – that open and close “First Son.”

Another page of *ArtsCanada*, under “Features,” is “Variations on Gould,” a delightful virtual movieola on which the visitor can select and mix an audio-visual program to his heart’s content. No doubt the purist would be appalled; but the interface is clever and playful: “The world adored Glenn Gould the pianist, but from the earliest years of his career, he was also fascinated with the possibilities afforded by radio, tape and the recording studio. Gould, to whom innovation came naturally, used a technique which he called

‘contrapuntal radio’ – a process where sound counterpoints ideas. In the spirit of Glenn Gould’s CBC Radio work, we’ve created an interactive playground where you can create your own ‘contrapuntal web’ piece with rare audio clips from the archives, reminiscences, music, images, and more.”

And then, there is the National Film Board of Canada. Several years ago, the NFB helped back a film called *Atanarjuat / The Fast Runner*, an Aboriginal-language feature film, directed by Zacharias Kunuk and produced by a professional Inuit film company, Igloodik Isuma. *Atanarjuat* is (as the Web site describes), “a \$1.96 million historical thriller based on a legend of love, jealousy, murder and revenge in the Igloodik region.” This was a true community project, with script, costumes, and sets organized with the advice of elders and culture-bearers. It has been shown internationally to admiring audiences and is recognized as being of the highest quality. Its subject is a thousand-year old legend. The film was made with Inuit actors; the script is in Inuktitut, with subtitles. (To my pleasure, I recognized one or two words.)

Why is there no *ArtsCanada* in this, our country? Where is our national film board? What federal agency devoted to the arts or the humanities has as its purpose the task of portraying this multicultural nation to itself and the world? These are not quite the right questions, because we can find excellent programs on public radio and television, in independent movies, and on a whole range of .org Web sites. Fine works are located in all sorts of niches and crannies in the public airwaves, art movie houses, and the new media. But that is just the problem: as a nation, we care very little for the living arts and the humanities as our cultural treasury. And now we must live with another kind of imagery: the digital photos from Abu Ghraib. The man with the hood over his head and the wires attached to his body. The soldier leering into the lens of the camera as she points to his genitals.

### *Have Darkened Our Spacious Skies*

*If the world does begin in art, then in what does art begin? In a speck in the eye, or sound in the ear . . . a hand or a foot wanting to move . . . the sound of a gun in the background . . .*

I live in the home city of Jefferson, who did not free his slaves, except for the children of Sally Hemings, whom he – can I say, loved? Jefferson and his children, both lines, are part of my cultural patrimony, even though my forebears came to this nation some time after Jefferson’s death. Up the road, so to speak, lived Washington, who was the only Southern Founder to contemplate freeing his slaves, then do so in his will. As a Northerner,



I am always aware of this history of which, by the seeming accident of residence, I am barely part. In this small city the past is in the air and walks the streets in the bodies of residents – the black men in coveralls plodding along Preston Avenue through the humid summer heat; Rob Coles, fifth-great-grandson of Jefferson and for decades his impersonator, making his way up High Street one wintry evening after a performance, the snow settling on his great-coated shoulders and his reddish, clubbed hair.

This year marks the fiftieth Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In Virginia, the response to court-ordered integration of the races was Massive Resistance, lasting from 1954 until 1968, in which white fathers shut down the public schools, denying even a minimal education to black children, while enrolling their own children in academies organized in opposition to the law. In April came the DNA sweep described in this issue, in which the Charlottesville police asked nearly 200 black men living in the city to give up voluntary DNA samples, in their desperate pursuit of a serial rapist who has plagued the area for six years. But a wound was opened in the polity. Was the sweep a matter of racial profiling (but the rapist is known to be African-American); was it the kind of “voluntary” invasive search now encouraged in our national climate of fear and excessive longing for security? I wanted to understand why the chief of police had chosen this, of all measures, and how the people of the city are making sense of it. And so, as Nell Boeschstein writes in “Just the Facts, Ma’am,” we turned our editorial attention to our own community.

Although I had not anticipated this, it happens that all but one of the contributors to this issue live in Charlottesville, though they are known widely as historians, poets, and men of letters. One essay, that by Paul Gaston, about the betrayal of the utopian colony of his childhood, appears in a book just out. A passage from the Foreword to that book speaks directly, I think, to the larger issues that have concerned many of us since the 2000 election, that allowed our government to invade Iraq without legal justification; and speaks also of a shadow haunting this community:

Out of the suffering of slavery, civil war, and segregation came redemption through the Southern civil rights movement with its message of resistance to injustice, faith in the rule of law, and belief in human nature as a positive force. This Southern promise of a community of equals built upon individual character has been undermined, however, by an abundant crop of reactionary and harsh public officials, some kept at home and some sent from the South to Washington, who support the economics of militarism, energy exploitation, suburban sprawl, callousness toward the powerless, and piety imposed from the

courthouse. These particular Southern contributions have darkened our spacious skies. (Anthony Dunbar, *HERE WE STAND, VOICES OF SOUTHERN DISSENT*, 2004)

We would fool ourselves by supposing that our national policies do not have roots in our various localities; and, equally, that the ethical content of those policies does not then trickle back down into our very streets and houses.

If the arts let us live, nonetheless they do not soothe us. Literature and the ancient art of storytelling are not easily typified, nor will they willingly let their reader off the hook. George Garrett has written a funny story about a sober subject, but he can't decide whether the story is fiction or non-fiction. That is the complexity of a "true" story: what do we know, exactly? This one is about Nazi saboteurs who landed on Long Island in 1941. What happened next was a Keystone-Kops sort of comedy, until the invaders were caught and secretly executed. Border security was a little patchy, even in wartime, but in the end the darker powers of the government won.

I return to Helen Vendler's lecture, and conclude that we should not mistake her. Her argument is not meliorist or celebratory. The arts are neither entertainment nor distraction, nor do they soothe us, nor will they – *nor can we allow them to* – lie to us. Scholars and interpreters must, surely, teach us to keep our eyes and ears open to what is real, our judgment wary of the false narrative and the unearned happy ending. Artists – those who are our best – mirror us as humans back to ourselves, they show us images of how we live on this earth, they portray us as persons to the world.

We are at a crucial point in our existence as a republic. We are obligated to look at ourselves clearly, without illusion, as we are, as we were, and as we might become. Where else but in the arts will we find what we seek?

.....

One must make  
 a distinction  
 however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the  
 result is not poetry,  
 nor till the poets among us can be  
 "literalists of  
 the imagination"—above  
 insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,”  
 shall we have  
 it. . . .

Marianne Moore, “Poetry”

*Further reading:*

- Helen Vendler, “The Ocean, The Bird, and The Scholar,” The Jefferson Lecture  
<http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/vendler/lecture.html>, National Endowment for the Humanities,  
 Washington, D.C., May 6, 2004
- Anthony Dunbar, ed. *HERE WE STAND, VOICES OF SOUTHERN DISSENT* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books,  
 2004)
- Nell Boeschstein, “Just the Facts, Ma’am,” this issue
- Paul Gaston, “My Yellow Ribbon Town,” this issue.
- George Garrett, “A Story Goes With It,” this issue.

*Web watching/listening:*

- CBC on-line <http://www.CBC.ca/>
- CBC ArtsCanada <http://artscanada.CBC.ca/artscanada.jsp>
- True North Concert <http://north.CBC.ca/truenorthconcert/>
- Oujé-Bougoumou Cree Nation <http://www.ouje.ca/>
- Douglas Cardinal, Architect <http://www.djcarchitect.com/>; about his designs [http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/aboriginalplanet/archives/may2002/art7\\_intro-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/aboriginalplanet/archives/may2002/art7_intro-en.asp).
- Grand Council of the Crees <http://www.gcc.ca/>
- Northwest Territories <http://www.gov.nt.ca/>
- The Yukon <http://www.gov.yk.ca/>
- Nunavut <http://www.gov.nu.ca/>
- Nunavik <http://www.nunavik-tourism.com/>
- Inuvialuit <http://www.inuvialuit.com/> “Inuit living in the western Canadian Arctic call themselves ‘Inuvialuit’, meaning ‘real human beings’, and have long considered themselves distinct from other Canadian Inuit. Today this distinct identity has a political dimension; the Inuvialuit chose not to join Nunavut (the new Inuit territory in the eastern Arctic), but to remain in the Northwest Territories under their own land claim agreement. (See Canadian Museum of Civilization, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/ex01e.asp?ExID=250>)
- Aboriginal Planet* <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/aboriginalplanet/archives/may2004/cover-en.asp>
- UN Forum on Indigenous Issues <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html>
- North CBC <http://north.CBC.ca/>
- Atanarjuat* The Fast Runner <http://www.atanarjuat.com/>
- Iglolik Isuma Productions Inc [http://www.atanarjuat.com/about\\_ishuma/index.html](http://www.atanarjuat.com/about_ishuma/index.html)

The National Film Board of Canada <http://www.nfb.ca/e/> “produces and distributes films and other audio-visual works which interpret Canada to Canadians and to other countries.”

Telefilm Canada [http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/choix\\_flash.asp](http://www.telefilm.gc.ca/choix_flash.asp)

Massive Resistance: here <http://www.vahistory.org/massive.resistance/> and here <http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whoweare/exhibits/brown/resistance.htm>

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*Previous Endnotes:*

Incoming, *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-1/endnotes.htm>

The Only God Is the God of War, Vol. 7, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-2/endnotes.htm>

“Where Are the Weapons?” Vol. 7, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-2/endnotes.htm>

Patriotism and the Right of Free Speech in Wartime Vol. 7, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-1/endnotes.htm>

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The Colossus, Vol. 6, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/endnotes.htm>

The Bear, Vol. 5, No. 4 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-4/endnotes.htm>

Sasha Choi Goes Home, Vol. 5, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-3/endnotes.htm>

Sasha Choi in America, Vol. 5, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-2/endnotes.htm>

A Local Habitation and A Name, Vol. 5, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-1/endnotes.htm>

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The Poem of the Grand Inquisitor, Vol. 4, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol4-3/endnotes.htm>

On the Marionette Theater, Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol4-2/endnotes.htm>

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On Memory, Vol. 3, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol3-2/endnotes.htm>

Passion, Vol. 3, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol3-1/endnotes.htm>

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The Devil’s Dictionary; Economics for Poets, Vol. 1, No. 3 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-3/endnotes.htm>

Hecuba in New York; Déformation Professionnelle, Vol. 1, No. 2 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-2/endnotes.htm>

Art, Capitalist Relations, and Publishing on the Web, Vol. 1, No. 1 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-1/endnotes.htm>

## Contributors

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**Ronan Coyle** [ronancoyle@lycos.com](mailto:ronancoyle@lycos.com), the animator/director of *Phantom* <http://www.feenish.com/animation.php>, studied architecture for three years, then began a four-year course in visual communications. He then discovered 3D software and did advertising animation for three years before taking time off to make the short animation *Phantom*, with **Jim McGuinness** and **Giles Packham**. The film was shown in competition in 2003, in Film Fleadh, Galway, where it won third place in Best Animation. At the Kerry Film Festival 2003, *Phantom* won commendation for Best Animation Technique and special commendation for Best Director, for which Neil Jordan was adjudicator. Ronan Coyle is at work with Giles Packham on a new animation, *Calcification* <http://www.calcification.com/>, due out this summer. He lives in Dublin, where he is a research assistant for Media Lab Europe <http://www.medialabeurope.org/>, a division of MIT. His drawing “A Page from the Book o’Kells” appeared in *Archipelago* <http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-1/coyle.htm>.

**Stephen Cushman** [sbc9g@cms.mail.virginia.edu](mailto:sbc9g@cms.mail.virginia.edu) is the author of two books of poems, *BLUE PAJAMAS* (LSU Press, 1998 <http://www.lsu.edu/lSUPress/catalog/fal-win-98/cushman>) and *CUSSING LESSON* (LSU Press, 2002 [http://www.lsu.edu/lSUPress/catalog/spring2002\\_books/books/cushman.html](http://www.lsu.edu/lSUPress/catalog/spring2002_books/books/cushman.html)). He teaches at the University of Virginia, where he directs the American Studies major and the International Center for American Studies.

**George Garrett** [gpg@virginia.edu](mailto:gpg@virginia.edu) is the author of books of poetry, essays, short stories, and novels, including *DEATH OF THE FOX*; *ENTERED FROM THE SUN*; *THE SUCCESSION*; *DO, LORD, REMEMBER ME*; *THE KING OF BABYLON SHALL NOT COME AGAINST YOU*; *WHISTLING IN THE DARK*, *et alia*. He is Henry Hoyns Professor of Creative Writing, Emeritus, University of Virginia, and has been Chancellor of the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He is now the Poet Laureate of Virginia. “A Story Goes With It” appears in another version as a chapbook published by Blacksheep Books of Five and Ten Press (Washington, D.C., June 2004). His work has often appeared in *Archipelago*.

**Paul Gaston** [pmg@virginia.edu](mailto:pmg@virginia.edu) was born and reared in Fairhope, Alabama, a utopian colony founded in 1894 by his grandfather, E. B. Gaston, and others. Conceived by Iowa Populists, it aimed to demonstrate the radical economic and social theories of Henry

George, and it was the first single-tax colony founded in America. Paul Gaston was educated at the School of Organic Education, founded in Fairhope in 1907, and at Swarthmore College, the University of Copenhagen, and the University of North Carolina. He joined the History Department of the University of Virginia in 1957, where he taught Southern and Civil Rights History there until his retirement in 1997. His books are: *THE NEW SOUTH CREED: A STUDY IN SOUTHERN MYTHMAKING* (Knopf, 1970; NewSouth Books, 2002); *WOMEN OF FAIR HOPE* (University of Georgia Press, 1984; Black Belt Press, 1993) and *MAN AND MISSION: E.B. GASTON AND THE ORIGINS OF THE FAIRHOPE SINGLE TAX COLONY* (Black Belt Press, 1993).

Paul Gaston's involvement as a civil rights and social justice activist began with his role as a community organizer and participant in protest movements and a sit-in during the 1960s. At the University he led the efforts of student and faculty groups to dismantle segregation and its heritage. He served as research director of the Southern Regional Council, the South's oldest interracial research, information, and advocacy agency in the field of civil rights and social justice. A member of its executive committee from 1974-1998, he was president from 1984-1988. He is currently writing a memoir, tentatively entitled *COMING OF AGE IN UTOPIA, THE BLESSINGS AND THE BURDENS*. "My Yellow Ribbon Town" appears in *WHERE WE STAND: VOICES OF SOUTHERN DISSENT* (NewSouth Books <http://www.newsouthbooks.com>, July 2004), with a Foreword by Jimmy Carter.

**James L. Hicks** began his career as a reporter for the *Cleveland Call and Post* in 1935 and later moved on to the *Baltimore Afro-American*. As one of the premier investigative journalists of his generation, Hicks was also the Washington, D.C. bureau chief for the National Negro Press Association, which served more than one hundred newspapers. In 1955, he became executive director of the *New York Amsterdam News*, a position he would hold for the good part of twenty years. As the first black member of the State Department Correspondents Association and the first black reporter cleared to cover the United Nations, Hicks was a pioneer in the field. His coverage of the Till trial ran in dozens of African-American newspapers, and in the piece of investigative journalism (reprinted in this issue) — which ran in four installments in October 1955 — he told about the role he played in discovering the existence of "missing witnesses" to the murder. In these articles — which ran in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *Cleveland Call and Post* and the *Atlanta Daily World* — Hicks argued that the forces of law in Mississippi conspired to prevent the full evidence of the guilt of Milam and Bryant, the known killers of Emmett Till, from surfacing at the trial. The four articles appear in *THE LYNCHING OF EMMETT TILL: A Documentary Narrative*, by **Christopher Metress** (University of Virginia Press <http://www.upress.virginia.edu/>, September 2002).

See also, "The Murder of Emmett Till," a documentary on "American Experience," PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/> and Further Reading <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/filmmore/fr.html>.

**Jim McGuinness** [jimmcguinness73@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jimmcguinness73@yahoo.com.au), who took the reference photographs for *Phantom*, has been a corporate graphic designer and now is at the graphic-design studio Four5one <http://www.four5one.ie/news.htm>, in the heart of Dublin, where he gets to work with the designers behind U2's albums. He has employed a mix of medium-format and 35mm photography, and is currently involved in a personal project of portraits from travels, to Australia, America, Mexico, and other places. He and **Ronan Coyle** wanted to collaborate on a project, he writes, and when the idea for *Phantom* came up, they were pleased to work together on it. "Considering the low costs of putting together the short for **Giles Packham**, I think we produced a beautiful piece of work!"

**Christopher Metress** [cpmetres@samford.edu](mailto:cpmetres@samford.edu) is Associate Professor of English at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. His essays and reviews on southern literature and culture have appeared in such journals as *Southern Quarterly*, *Studies in the Novel*, *South Atlantic Review*, and *Southern Review*. He is currently at work on a study of white southern writers and their responses to the civil rights movement. His *THE LYNCHING OF EMMETT TILL: A Documentary Narrative*, (University of Virginia Press <http://www.upress.virginia.edu/>) was published in September 2002. The Hicks dispatches also appeared in *Archipelago* Vol. 6, No. 1 Spring 2000 <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/hicks.htm>. See also, "The Murder of Emmett Till," a documentary on "American Experience," PBS <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/> and Further Reading <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/filmmore/fr.html>.

**Giles Packham** [giles@waveformstudios.net](mailto:giles@waveformstudios.net), who composed the music for *Phantom*, is an Irish-born composer and musician. In 2002 he co-founded Waveform Studios [www.waveformstudios.net](http://www.waveformstudios.net), where he is now Creative Director. The Dublin-based company is now in their second year of operation, providing music composition and audio sound-design for film, television, advertising and games. Giles Packham studied music from an early age and plays many instruments. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin's Music and Media Technologies Masters Programme in 2000, where he studied composition with Donnacha Dennehy and Roger Doyle. From there he went on to train as a sound engineer in Windmill Lane's post-production facility. He is currently studying orchestration with former UCLA lecturers Don Ray and Bob Drasnin.

Following on from the success of *Phantom*, which won three awards including a special recommendation from Neil Jordan at the Kerry Film Festival in 2003, Giles Packham is collaborating with Ronan Coyle again on the animation *Calcification* <http://www.feenish.com/animation.php>. This seven-minute short is funded by the Irish national broadcaster RTE and the Irish Film Board and is due for release Summer 2004.