

The stories which follow stem from the past twenty years I have spent studying and relating to the people and the land of Arkansas. They are mostly factual although a couple have fictional twists - the angelic in *Fallen Angel* and the suicide in *Harmony*. Some are geographic and environmental and stem from years of work with the state's Pollution Control agency. Three of them are prizewinners and five them were published locally in other collections. Two are from a series of columns I wrote on environmental issues for the local press. The rest appear here for the first time.

Tales from a Yank in Arkansas
in the Clinton Era

by

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Chapter 1

Fallen Angel

In one of my all-time favorite songs, Willie Nelson sings about the mending of an angel that had flown too close to the ground and broken her wing. Whenever I heard it, I felt that Willie somehow knew my ex-wife Martha and was singing about her. Martha was the closest thing to an angel I had ever met and she was always flying too close to the ground. She had crashed into me once on a flight back to Arkansas and, in my own alcohol-fueled, depressive style, I had stripped off her feathers and grounded her for a few years.

I had always wanted to talk to Willie about this, find out when he knew her, how he met her-stuff like that. I had this image that someday I would be sitting in a bar and Willie would walk in and sit down beside me and I would ask him about Martha. And he'd say, "Sure, I remember Martha. She came to one of my concerts in Little Rock. Sat right in the front and cried during the whole thing. Little strawberry-blond angel. Cute, Sweet, and kind. Had a special spiritual quality about her that came out whenever something sad happened. Too sensitive for this world. Tore me up to see her cry like that, so I had one of the boys invite her backstage. Seems like her husband had left her, and I reminded her of him~ I saw that angelic quality in her and that's what made me write that song." Then Willie would take a big swig of whiskey, wash it down with a beer, and he'd ask me how I knew her. I'd order us both another round and tell him what I knew about our favorite angel.

I found Martha behind this big watermelon. It was at one of those single parents' picnics. She was sad then too, just like that time with Willie, and when that happened, Martha turned to guys like me and Willie, or if we weren't around, to small children and animals. Martha sensed this part of me that's healing to fallen angels, and I hardly ever left her side for the next three years.

When I lived with her, Martha had a dog named Ralph, which, by coincidence, is my name too. This led to a lot of bad jokes about Ralph-dog and Ralph-person, their relative roles in the family, and their place in Martha's heart. (To me, the jokes were not all that funny, since I distinctly felt I ranked somewhere between the cat and a neighbor's dog that had attached himself to Martha's family.)

As, I assume, with most misplaced angels grounded on earth, Martha had difficulty accepting the unfortunate habit most living things here have of dying~me at inappropriate times without any apparent reason. Ralph dog, for example, met his untimely demise after a long war with the mailman which ended with Ralph under the wheels of the mail truck, having for once misjudged the speed of the truck and his own ability to stop just in front of the mechanical monster driven by his nemesis. The dog's death devastated Martha, and she vowed never to get so attached to another dog. Eventually, she pulled herself herself together, helped along by time and the realization that Ralph's fate, though untimely, was appropriate for the nature of the beast. Ralph had died as he had lived - a proud and valiant warrior defending his turf against a known enemy (Ralph was a small Beagle, but he never knew it - in his heart, he was as big as a Great Dane).

Despite her vow to not become attached to other earthly beings, for they would, as both Ralph-dog had and Ralph-person soon would, ultimately leave her, Martha turned, as always, to other living things to mend her wounded heart. I became the focus of her angelic devotion, giving up ever bigger parts of myself in compensation fo0r the loss of her dog. As we merged, it seemed at first like heaven on earth, but it did not last. Martha and I drifted apart, partly because it is so hard to watch an angel get battered so frequently by the realities that hardened earth creatures tend to take for granted. I often tried to explain to her why the earth was so messed up; why the rich got richer, the poor starved, animals were tortured for science, and minorities were shoved into ghettos. But it seemed as though whoever made angels, had not given them the same capacity for serenity in the face of evil that humans develop.

Martha just would not see why the world had to be this way or that it always had been so; indeed, by fixing her vision on butterflies, children and animals, she managed not to see much of the more sordid part of the world. That made it even harder for her for her to deal with human frailty - that those you loved could be lost through death or departure was just not an acceptable tenet among angels. Although I left, or tried to leave several times, I never got away - angels never say goodbye forever.

Like Willie Nelson in the song, over the years I had spent with Martha, I had gotten pretty good at patching angels, and she knew she could call on me for repairs. We developed a mutual support system for I found that nothing soothes the spirit like the presence of angels - no easy admission for a died-in-the-wool, Marxist-atheist, as I claimed to be in those days, and I needed her as often as she needed me.

All of which is necessary to understand the importance of Roary. I guess the same folks who make angels, make dogs for angels trapped on earth. That's the kind of dog Roary was, "a lovin' dog" Martha called him - a big, beautiful, highly-spirited, good-natured Red Setter with a deep, vibrant bark that was evident even as a pup - hence the name, Roary. Normally, I'm not a dog lover. I don't have anything against them, but I always felt that unless you were a shepherd and needed one to help with the sheep, dogs are just more trouble than they are worth. Roary was an exception. Roary didn't "do" anything. He was just a "lovin' dog" and that was enough. He went through life loving everyone and you couldn't help loving back - even us Marxist-atheists.

Roary was always around when I visited Martha. He would bound out to greet me with that big silly grin of his and that roaring bark he used to greet everyone. He seemed to like it best when the three of us went for walks, especially if it were near water and one of us could be persuaded to throw sticks for him to fetch. He was a joy to watch as he emerged with stick-in-mouth; his wet, shining, red coat gleaming in the sun. His energy was as boundless as his good nature. The only times I ever got irritated with Roary were when I wanted Martha's total attention. Roary was willing to share Martha but would not tolerate being ignored for long, especially if he sensed there was some loving going on that he was not party to. On these occasions, Roary would barge in with his cool, wet nose or paw, followed with a whine and, if these did not get him in on the loving, his ultimate weapon - that roaring bark - was used until he was either let in or chased away.

It wasn't much use getting mad at Roary - he didn't seem to understand that emotion - and, with all that good-natured energy and determination, he wore me down every time and ended up with at least his share of whatever affection and attention was being doled out. Fortunately, angels are good at giving out that stuff and both Roary and I came away happy. The years passed, Martha went away to school and I got married again. I didn't see much of Martha but we kept in touch. She wanted me to take care of Roary while she went to school, but my job kept me away too much to give Roary the care I felt he deserved. Martha's parents ended up caring for him, until she returned - just in time to console me as my new marriage crumbled away.

Before I had recovered, Martha was given the crushing news that Roary had developed an incurable form of bone cancer and would soon die. The vet advised having Roary put away before the pain got bad or the sickness became debilitating. The decision as to exactly when this would be was left up to Martha. My role would be to assist in the earthly details of grave digging and pall bearing, for Roary had to be carried from the vet's office to his final resting spot behind Martha's house - and, of course, tending to the assorted angel parts that were sure to break, I thought, during an ordeal of this magnitude.

I was not sure that in my own weakened condition, still grieving over my lost marriage, I would be up to the emotional demands that the situation seemingly would require, but I agreed to stand by and do what I could while hoping that Roary would hang in there long enough for Martha's magic to work its course on the sadness that enveloped me. But that was not to be. Only ten days after the vet first broke the news, Martha called early in the morning, upset and crying. Roary was bleeding badly and there was no choice. We had to "bring him to the vet's" that very day, and "would I come?" I choked up over the phone, a sure sign that my normal Yankee cover was not fully in place as I used to think it should be, but I agreed to come.

Fortunately, Martha's earthly family was also on alert and the full burden of support was not to fall on my somewhat shaky shoulders. Her daughter was there when I arrived followed by a brother, mother and father. Plans were laid

amidst much crying, and for me, Martha had a special request. We were to take Roary on a final walk down to his beloved creek. I knew the creek to be polluted from a nearby bauxite mine and numerous residential cesspools - but, for now at least, that didn't seem to matter. Roary didn't care as long as the water still sparkled and was cool. To Martha, both the water and the trees along the bank were beautiful and so it was close to heaven.

Roary perked up some when he saw what was happening. On the way to the creek, he stuck his head out the window, as usual, and if one didn't notice the flecks of blood that spattered the side of the car, he looked almost like his old self. For me, what was worse than the blood was the silence, for the cancer had choked him and stifled his magnificent bark. He was totally quiet that final day except for one feeble yelp when he got to the edge of the creek and felt the water. We thought about throwing one final stick for him to fetch but were afraid the effort might cause him pain. So Roary had to settle for a bath that would wash the blood from his still-glistening red coat instead of the usual frenetically paced stick fetching. Even that tired him and he was content to come up on the bank and lie next to us.

It was there on the bank that I realized that angels are sent to teach us about the spirit of love and how it remains even when the physical manifestations are no longer present. For now that Roary was leaving, and was too weak to physically participate or disrupt the love between his angel Martha and Ralph-person, Martha invited him to share in spirit. It was as though Martha was getting both of us to focus on the feeling of love in this ritual on the bank of the creek, and it worked; I felt enveloped in love and mentally invited Roary into that space. He lay quietly, his wet fur still sparkling when hit by the occasional rays of sunlight that filtered through the trees. Martha looked at the heavens and said she wished I could see their beauty above the trees, and for once I could see the heavens - they were reflected in her eyes. Roary never murmured nor did he nuzzle - he seemed content for once merely to be in the presence of the angel he loved so dearly and merely to share in spirit this final loving on the bank.

I like to think that the heavens opened up for him too, although my old materialistic instincts revolt against such spiritual transferences from human to animals. Yet, who knows, he was, after all, an angel's dog.

Later, that afternoon we took Roary to the Vet's. He dragged his feet a little on the way in as if he knew what was in store for him. But it was a feeble protest and he lay quietly when the vet stretched him out on the table. I was alright up to the point where the needle went in and Roary nodded off. Then tears blinded me and I struggled to do my duty and console Martha. But Martha was handling this farewell superbly; utilizing the reserves that angels must have for emergencies of the spirit. Although the tears were streaming down her face, she was sending Roary out in style, with his innocently beautiful head cradled in her hands.

I couldn't help thinking that I would like to die as Roary did, cleanly bathed, held, loved and given a glimpse of heaven by a loving angel. I reached out and stroked Roary on the top of his head, a place I knew he liked to have scratched, as a way of saying goodbye. Then the drugs took affect and Roary was gone. Martha's father and I carried the big dog out to the grave we had dug earlier. Water had seeped into the bottom of the grave and we offered to scoop it out, but Martha thought it only appropriate that since Roary loved water that he be buried with some. I held Martha briefly after, but she seemed calm. Her mother got busy digging flowers for me to transplant in my yard, and it seemed like the world was back to normal - minus one "lovin" dog.

I felt strangely restored as if somehow Roary's spirit had landed in me. While I don't feel any great urges to leap after sticks thrown in the creek, I do feel a lot more like loving almost everybody. And, when I think about it, I guess Martha wanted me there for both of us. The angel in her knew that it would help heal me to say goodbye to Roary.

Chapter 2

HILL PEOPLE AND HIPPIES:

CONFRONTATION IN THE OZARKS

In the movie filmed in Arkansas called *Bootleggers* Slim Pickens reaches down for a handful of thin mountain soil, lets it trickle through his fingers and says to his son, "That's why we're bootleggers, son. This here soil ain't fitten for nothing better than to grow enough corn to make whiskey out of. You can't make a liven off the land alone." And so it has been in the Ozarks, as it was in the Appalachians from whence many of the original settlers came; generations have tilled the rugged land and supplemented its meager returns in anyway they could - some legal, some not. The Appalachian hill people brought to Arkansas strong feelings about the need to be independent, self-reliant and proud that had been cherished back east. In their value system, loyalty to family came first, relatives and neighbors second. The government was, by and large, an alien force to be avoided if at all possible; to be fought if avoidance proved impossible. As their ancestors had fought Alexander Hamilton who had been sent by President Washington to put down the Whiskey Rebellion in 1793, so too the contemporary Ozarkians occasionally do battle with government narcotic agents who come to seek out and destroy their carefully tended marijuana plots which have replaced the omnipresent stills as the main source of illegal supplementary income. The overwhelming concern of the hill people has always been with surviving on that thin, rocky soil. Cotton was the cash crop in the South and there was no way the hill people could compete in quantity with the delta planters on their thick, rich Mississippi soil.

Some hill people, however, stubbornly continued to plant a few acres in cotton on the creek bottoms until the mechanization of cotton production in the 1950's ended the meager profitability of such efforts. While the railroads were being built and the demand for timber was high, work in sawmills provided supplemental employment. But, by the turn of the century, most of the major lines had been built and the sawmills began to close down. Apples and peaches could be grown until the late 1920's and early 1930's when St. Stephen's scales wiped out the orchards. The illegal production of corn liquor or "white lightnin'", had traditionally been used as a cheap way to take some of the pain out of the poverty of the hills. Bootlegging became a source of quick cash until Roosevelt ended prohibition making it less profitable. It became a lot harder to make ends meet in the hills. So when the war came in 1941, a lot of folk began to move into the cities. A hard core of people did remain and eked out a living planting a little corn, grazing cattle and raising hogs and chickens. They sold eggs and milk to the local grocer and slaughtered a hog or sold a cow when the mortgage was due and thus managed to survive until the growth of the poultry industry provided a needed boost to the local economy.

While the means of survival for the hill people has shifted, they continue to maintain their lifestyle and the values of self-reliance and independence that are at the ethical core of their culture have not changed over the years. This is the lifestyle, adorned to-be-sure with a strong dose of romantic idealism from superficial readings of *Whole Earth* magazines, that has charmed many of the young people who make up the ranks of the so-called "back-to-the-earth" movement. Dependent on their parents for most of their lives, these young, largely middle-class people see in the life style of the hill-dwelling subsistence farmer a chance for true independence and a way out of career traps that ensnared their parents. Traditional jobs, they argue, foster a dependency on corporations or government, both of which were condemned by the radicals in the 1960's as repressive and immoral institutions. Rebellious against the soft, corrupt life of their parents they, in essence, chose to trade that kind of existence for the purer, harder life of the hill farmer. That the reality of a life without indoor plumbing and electricity has driven a number of them back to parents and traditional jobs should come as no surprise. Yet, some survived and even established bonds with the natives who had been there

for generations, no small feat considering the instinctively hostile attitude of the locals and the lifestyle of the invaders. Generations of viewing all newcomers with suspicion as possible agents of the tax collector or the Revenue Office has built up a residue of hostility in the makeup of the average hill-dweller that has to be overcome before his or her innate friendliness can shine through. With the uprooting of people that has been so much a part of modern life even in the hills, a sense of community rarely develops even in places where this built-in resentment towards newcomers by natives does not exist. Most people have difficulty learning to respect the cultural preferences of others. The traditions of the hill people made the process of assimilation even more difficult for the wave of refugees from the turmoil of the sixties. One area in northwest Arkansas where these two divergent cultures met and came close to developing a workable synthesis was called Chimes.

That the natives of this "community" (the extent to which this area became a community is still unclear) was able to, at least briefly, shake off the residue of suspicion towards newcomers and overcome cultural differences is primarily due to the efforts of one man, Jerry Friedberg. "I just looked for the largest blank area on a map of the state of Arkansas and this was it." Such was the selection process that brought Jerry Friedberg, the charismatic leader of the new wave of settlers, to the community of Chimes. Jerry, like many of the new residents of Chimes, was moved by the literature of the "back-to-the-earth" movement and wanted to get away from cities, people, and the problems of middle-class American life. He was not greatly concerned with where he got away to, as long as it promised a degree of rural isolation and the living was cheap. Chimes promised to deliver both. Unlike many of the others, Jerry was not "burnt out"; he was not escaping from a dead-end job that had sapped his vitality. It was just his style to move from one adventure to another. He brought to Chimes the same active interest in life and politics that had made him a leader in the radical movements of the 60's. The strategy was different but the tactics were similar. They were based on the premise that unless the people of Chimes were organized, paved roads and electricity would come to the area. People in large numbers would follow and with them would come all the problems that they had come to Chimes to get away from. "Preservation politics" he called it to distinguish it from the "liberation politics" of the sixties. Still, he claimed, "You have to organize to preserve as well as to liberate."

Jerry's first organizing venture was a food cooperative. By purchasing whole grains and dried fruits from a cooperative warehouse in Fayetteville in bulk, and then distributing them to members in Chimes, Jerry soon got to know most of the new residents and many of the old-timers. His monthly price list was peppered with commentary on political events that impinged on rural life in any way and the gospel of preservation politics according to Jerry was spread through Chimes.

It was through the accidental acquisition of this price list-newsletter given to me by a friend that I became aware of Jerry's activities. Armed with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, I had embarked on a quest to find out what was happening in rural Arkansas. I tracked Jerry down and first found him directing the efforts of several of his neighbors in raising the support beams of a new resident's house. I was immediately placed on one end of a beam with instructions to heave along with others upon command. It was my baptism in the cooperative ethos of the new community Jerry was building.

Coming from similar backgrounds (we had even studied the same period of British History while writing our dissertations - his in Political Science, mine in Political History), Jerry and I felt an immediate rapport. He opened his home to me and allowed me to tag along while he immersed us both in a crash course, self-taught, on rural politics and culture. He was especially concerned with county politics for, in Arkansas, that is where crucial decisions about which roads get paved are made. His Harvard Ph.D. was of little use in this work, and, with the old-timers and the more nihilist of the new settlers, any hint of intellectual arrogance could be an impediment to conversation. So Jerry, the radical ex-professor, became, once more, a novice. This time the classroom was a local general store and the teachers were the owner and some of his older customers who gathered almost daily to swap stories. At one of these sessions, a discussion between Jerry and a grizzled old veteran of the hills turned from a shared appreciation of the warmth of the morning sun and of the beauty of the hills in the early light to a disagreement over the relative merits of a possible paving a road leading into Chimes. The old man and Jerry both agreed that the beauty of the hills needed to be protected, but they disagreed over whether the roads should be paved. After a lifetime of fighting ruts and mud, the old man could not resist the attractions of a ride into town on a paved road. Jerry feared that with the pavement, would come all of those things he had fled to the hills to get away from.

It was an interesting role reversal, "progress" being supported by the old and fought by the young. Jerry listened with respect as the old-timer recounted the number of his vehicles, mainly used pick-up trucks that had met an untimely death on the ruts and holes that were unavoidable on the gravel roads. It was either dust that filled the lungs

and all other cavities or mud that made the roads impassable. When the old man was through, Jerry agreed with his description of the difficulty that faced the traveler on the roads as they existed. He then briefly stated his own concern that the paving the road would bring in the trucks of the chicken processors linking Chimes with corporate America, a development that the old man simply had not assessed. Since the 1930's the poultry business had blossomed into the major industry in the northwest. It had also changed from a relatively easy way for the family farmer to earn a few extra dollars, in the era that the old man remembered, to a viciously competitive industry that exhibited most of the worst features of modern agribusiness. Jerry wanted jobs for the hill people also, but the price to be paid in terms of loss of isolation, pollution of the environment and the influx of people and technology was too high for him.

Through talks like this one, Jerry was getting a course in local culture. The main requirement for passing the course seemed to be patience combined with the art of skillful questioning. Fortunately, Jerry had an abundance of the former and had developed a good deal of skill at the latter. The old timers were masters of evasion and never told a short, illustrative anecdote if a long one could be remembered. Through careful listening and patient questioning, Jerry had been able to piece together a history of the area as well as obtaining a feel for local politics which he transmitted in his newsletter. A side benefit of these sessions was that the hostility between the oldtimers and the newcomers that plagued Chimes was considerably reduced. Jerry was no hippie. He had worked hard on his house and land in addition to building up the cooperative. This the oldtimers respected. They didn't fully understand why he was there, but they liked his genuine interest and concern with their community. Jerry, in turn, had developed an understanding and respect for them that was rare in "back-to-the-earth" circles. Through Jerry, the two groups began to talk to each other and to socialize. A barnwarming for the cooperative's new building provided the occasion for an old-fashioned hoedown with the oldtimers and newcomers alike joining in the dancing to music provided by a group of locals. The newcomers contributed their bit by featuring a jazz trio with Jerry on drums. By the end of the evening, each group understood the other a little better.

Communication with the locals was not the only barrier the newcomers faced. Keeping in touch with each other in the hills of rural Arkansas was a real task. With no paved roads, no electricity, or phones, getting together is difficult. Such isolation can also be dangerous. One woman who lived back in the woods in the Chimes area with her two children had, as her only recourse in case of emergency, a shotgun which she could use to fire distress signals. Many of the newcomers resolved the problem by installing CB radios which they kept in their homes and used like phones. As a dedicated communicator, Jerry's CB was one of the most active in the area. Some of the more dedicated "back-to-the-earth" types argue that CB radios are part of what they came to Chimes to get away from and will not have them in their homes. But others feel, as Jerry does, that communication is important enough so that they are willing to compromise their purity in order to maintain contact with others. But the problems that concerned most of the newcomers even more than communication is that of earning a living, or staying alive without a steady job.

Jerry figured that \$ 200.00 a month was all he and his wife need to exist comfortably. As the cooperative manager, he was paid a small salary which, barring emergencies, was adequate. He had a garden and a few chickens which helped keep his food costs down. His house was heated with a wood stove, the fuel for which he cut himself. Water came from a gravity - flow, spring -fed system that he hooked up to his house. So, except for an occasional tank of butane which he used as a backup for his wood stove and batteries for his CB, he had no fixed expenses. But Jerry was better off than many who came to Chimes. He had enough money to buy forty acres and the materials he needed to build his houses. He had the energy and the initiative to build the cooperative which helped support him. In addition to being a skilled mechanic, carpenter, and nutritionist, he knew a lot about life and people. Others came to Chimes less prepared. Some came with just the clothes on their backs. Others were well-educated but had no skills: a liberal arts education is not worth very much in the hills of Arkansas where staying alive requires an ability to cope with the elements. Occasionally, there are a few teaching jobs available in some of the local schools and some of the local farmers use hired help, but other than that, there are very few legal ways to make money in Chimes. Some of the newcomers work at seasonal jobs elsewhere, picking fruit, planting trees, ginning cotton, or whatever work they can find to earn enough to get them through another year in the woods. Some of the women with children end up on the county welfare roles, and that of course, is one of the reasons the locals resent the newcomers. That combined with the dope smoking, sexually-promiscuous hippie life-style of some of the newcomers, made some of the natives hostile to all outsiders. But, because life in the hills is difficult at best even for those who manage to earn a living, most of the hippie types did not last. They drifted back to the cities and universities they came from where the living was easier. Some, however, stuck it out. They learned how to work and to farm.

In fact, they have introduced a new industry to northwest Arkansas, marijuana growing. Despite the combined efforts of local and state authorities to combat the cultivation of the weed, it has become, unofficially, the second largest money crop in the northwest Arkansas (right behind poultry and ahead of cattle). The growers have become masters at disguising the marijuana fields they tuck away in various out-of-the-way spots throughout the Ozarks. There are just too many growers and too much territory for the police to catch everyone. Many of the law officers either smoke the stuff themselves or are unwilling to mess around with a business that is both profitable and popular. Busting a local grower could mean defeat at the next election. At least as long as marijuana stays illegal, the growers and the "back-to-the-earthers" have a mutual interest in keeping the Ozarks free of more paved roads and people, or anything else that would make it easier for their fields to be detected. Chimes has its share of pot growers, welfare mothers, and other people who have found ways to survive in the Ozarks without a traditional job. What was unusual about Chimes was that, through the efforts of Jerry and his supporters, there was a growing sense of community in the area that included both oldtimers and newcomers. Jerry and his friends worked with the local folks to try to preserve something they both valued, a rural way of life. In order to do this, each group had to learn to tolerate the different life styles of the other. To the extent that they have done so, they have avoided the excesses that have taken place in towns like Eureka Springs where the locals created a battle plan to rid the area of hippies (one of the slogans of which was, "fight long hairs on food stamps").

In the fall of 1977, the community seemed to be prospering both culturally and economically. Under Jerry's inspired leadership the food coop was growing. There were plans under way to start a birthing clinic and a Sunday afternoon discussion- meditation group was becoming a tradition. But in the spring of 1978, the community faced a crisis - Jerry was leaving. His house had burnt to the ground and he had taken this as a sign that he had perhaps been there long enough. There were rumors that the burning of Jerry's house was no accident. "Burning out hippies" is not uncommon in northwest Arkansas. Support for this theory was fueled by the fact that just before the burning, Jerry had uncovered some evidence of corruption in the county government, and, because he had vowed to publish it, the county Judge had, it was said, ordered his hired stooges to "get Jerry". But, for whatever the reason, Jerry's departure raised a number of questions. Could the community continue to grow without him? No one was sure. The food cooperative, especially, was in danger of folding. It had been largely Jerry's creation and his energy kept it going as the nerve center of the community. As kind of grim foreboding of what the future might hold, two hari-krishna types who had been helping out at the cooperative, ran Jerry's pick-up truck too long without water in the radiator and burnt out the engine.

In the years following Jerry's departure the cooperative did die and so did many of the projects that had blossomed under his leadership. But a hard core of people remained and new leaders emerged. Movements, such as, the northwest Arkansas Greens, have taken on some of the issues left unsettled by Jerry's departure. New causes have emerged. The struggle against the nearby Pindall landfill which threatened to pollute the Buffalo River brought some of the communities of the northwest together in a common effort that proved successful. The economic and cultural problems that Jerry faced are still there, but so are the methods that he developed to deal with them. Increasingly, the new leaders have come to see that the main struggle is not so much a matter of life style preservation, although that still is important, but an environmental struggle to prevent the pollution of their water and land. Faced with problems of the magnitude of acid rain and the placing of missiles in their midst, they have had to turn back to the broader political scene that Jerry and others like him had fled. The illusion that there now exists anywhere on earth that is free from the environmental problems that plague mankind has virtually disappeared as awareness of the greenhouse affect and the expanding hole in the ozone layer have increased. With these problems in mind, the new, emerging, community leaders will not only have to complete the synthesis of the best of the old values of the hill people with the creative enrgy of the new settlers in a revitalized system of communities in the Ozarks, as Jerry had envisioned, but they will also have to deal with the problems of the world as well.

Chapter 3

HARMONY

The old man dug in his pocket and the dog looked up expectantly. A biscuit appeared and the dog sat and his tail moved. The biscuit was not a reward anymore - it was part of long established ritual where the man gave to the dog as part of their being. It had once been a reward to encourage the puppy to return to her master, but there no longer was any need for that.

The two were joined by long years of living and of taking pleasure in the company of the other. Dog and man were well-matched, each content in their maturity and each resigned to a pace that reflected a contentment with where they were. Each had been through phases where rushing about seemed to be profitable - but no longer.

The man spoke to the dog as to an old friend, praising the dog's appearance and his behavior, "Good, old Dandy-dawg," he said quietly, stroking the dogs head and chest while the biscuit was being chewed. "And a pretty dog, too!" These words, every bit as much a part of the ritual that man and dog had gone through for years, seemed to evoke no response from the dog. It was as if she were getting no more or less than what she deserved; although, no dog-show judge would find any thing especially good or pretty about this beast. She was like thousands of other dogs, some kind of Shepherd mix, probably Australian rather than German. It was, indeed, the kind of dog many would find ugly, small head, rounded, medium-size body, ragged-black fur with only a splash of white on her chest that gave beauty to her otherwise nondescript appearance.

All that mattered little to the man. He had neither selected nor named the dog - she had come as a pup as part of an unsuccessful marriage that included a wife and stepdaughter who had been the pup's rightful owner. The girl had neglected the pup more and more as it grew into maturity and the man had taken over the dog by default. As a pup, it had started to join the man on his morning runs, at first straining to keep up, but gradually calling on its Shepherd heritage to roam rapidly ahead and off to the sides, as if checking the area for potential predators, but always returning to the man's side. As the dog grew the man was forced to seek mechanical help to ensure that both of them got a workout. He trained the dog to run alongside his bicycle on the streets and turned the dog loose when he biked over fields or deserted trails in the woods. The dog seemed to know instinctively where the man would go on his bike and would find shortcuts that would allow time for her own exp-lorative forays and still do the Shepherd thing - protect her master from predators.

Their rides on the neighborhood streets attracted some attention from local residents who looked with amusement on this crazy, bearded old man with his ugly Shepherd dog. Others shook their heads and made disparaging comments about how some men just never would grow up. Mothers worried about the old man falling and the loose dog attacking their children, but gradually fears subsided as people got used to the spectacle and when, indeed, the man did fall - yanked off as the dog was spooked by an approaching truck or pulled suddenly after a nearby squirrel - nothing happened except the dog returned to the man's side. The man, shaken and sometimes bruised, managed to get up and continue.

Man and dog even garnered a little fame as word spread that teen-age burglars had been chased away by the approach of the two, apparently mistaking them for a new, police bike patrol using trained attack dogs. The dog also got credited for chasing a coyote out of some nearby woods from which it had making raids on neighborhood houses making off with small cats and dogs. So with those two minor triumphs, the old man and dog became an accepted feature of the neighborhood.

The old man's favorite ride was on the golf course on a moonlit night. There were actually three courses separated by wooded areas, and the man could get to all three on his bike. It was beautiful in the moonlight, especially down where the moonlight reflected off the creek. The scars of human abuse were hidden by the night and there was usually no one

else around to disturb their enjoyment. The dog, Dandy, was nearly invisible in the darkness unless you could catch a glimpse of the white blaze on her chest as it glistened in the moonlight. Otherwise, the dog's presence could be detected only by the slight tinkling sound her dog tags made banging against her collar as she raced through the night.

The dog's instinctive sense of direction seemed to operate as well at night as it did in the day. The man had experimented with alternate routes and dodging through the woods to see if he could lose the dog, and he only accomplished this once. And that was because of a chance encounter with a skunk that temporarily disrupted the dog's senses. Even with eyes burning and reeking with the stink of skunk spray she made it back to the man's house where she waited patiently at the door for the man to come to her aid.

For the man, the dog's company helped to fill a deep gap in his relationships with the members of his own species, especially females. There was a sense of inadequacy about him that he never fully shook, but the dog with its constant loyalty and unfailingly genuine pleasure in just being with him helped ease the pain that stemmed from the lack of human closeness.

Once the dog was over her puppy stage the man worked out a rhythm with her. It was hard for the man to remember who had adapted to whom; the process seemed mutual, each blending with the other's pace and personality - the dog eager to please, the man hoping the dog would take pleasure in his company for it seemed no human would. He had tried four marriages and each had failed. There had been live-in lovers along with casual sex partners - all had eventually distanced themselves from him, or he from them. He was never sure which happened first and he never fully understood it.

Each failed relationship seemed to have a different set of facts defying an recognizable pattern. He had invested a lot of money in analysts and got many of the usual answers; communication failure, seeking women like his mother and then resenting them as he had her, immersing himself in self-absorbing depressions with no room for others...none seemed to adequately explain his plight or allow him to structure a cure.

The dog never seemed to mind his non-verbal ways. She knew that when he appeared with leash, it was time to go either for a run, walk, or a bike ride, depending on the time of the day. Whichever it was, she was ready - she read the signals from the man and adapted. The man, for his part, watched and listened to the dog - he heard her panting and paced himself so that the heat would not exhaust her and he kept her away from the streets where cars were a menace or where noises frightened her. This they did for each other in silence.

Since dog had experienced rejection from her first owner, the daughter of the man's last wife, who, with the irresponsibility that seems to come with some adolescents, had wanted the puppy but not the duties of dog ownership, man and dog had bonded as outcasts. The man's rejection was far more subtle as it was caused by something he was not fully aware of happening in his marriage. The two, man and dog, were each bound by circumstances beyond the control of either. Although it was hard to tell from outward appearances if either were suffering, it was obvious that each found pleasure in the company of the other, and, hence, they helped each other heal the pain of rejection.

The man felt himself become estranged from human companionship, but since that involvement had caused him so much pain, he did nothing to end his estrangement. He related increasingly only to his dog, his writing, his books, and his music. His wife seemed entranced by television; the soaps, the sitcoms, stuff that made the man cringe and walk off with the dog in bewilderment at the capacity of humans to amuse themselves with such drivel. He knew it was judgmental of him and in the vast scheme of things, what did it matter how one spent one's time? The shrinks, too, had warned him of the dire effects such judgments had on relationships, but he could not help himself and his wife felt his judgment and sought comfort and escape in the television, and later, after their separation - in the arms of a red-neck friend of her brothers - but this was kept from the man. He was aware only of the estrangement and the feeling of rejection he shared with the dog.

The man had retired in the first flush of optimism about the positive nature of his new marriage. No longer having to work, his days went by in a blur, each much like the other. There were the early morning runs, morning divided between reading and writing, afternoon bike rides, more reading and writing, evening rides followed by reading until sleep came. When his wife left with her daughter, his routine continued. It was remarkable to him how little of his life had been

taken up with her presence. Still he missed her body in the bed beside him at night, and, even more, their increasingly rare sexual encounters.

Most of all he missed the hope that had been there that somehow their relationship would become intimate. Just when that hope ended he was not sure, but he knew for sure it was over when he was told about the lover.

In his younger days, to ease the pain from the loss of other relationships, he had danced...and that was how he had found each wife after the first. He had danced them into bed and to the altar. Now he understood why. Dancing required little communication other than the physical. Hence, he never knew the mind of the woman he married. As with the dog so with each new relationship, each woman followed instinctive signals from the man as he led them through the dance and then through the sex that inevitably followed - a guiding hand to indicate what gave the other pleasure with the man leading but eager to give pleasure as well as receive it. The pain came when that pleasure was insufficient to maintain the marriage -when the relationship demanded a spiritual union to bolster the physical - then something in the man froze - this territory beyond the physical was unfamiliar. something deep within him rebelled and would not continue - hence the marriage stagnated as the man withdrew and the woman was left hanging wondering what went wrong. Eventually she withdrew too.

The dog never withdrew, never left, was always eager for the man's presence. What spiritual needs existed were never a barrier to the relationship between the two - hence neither made demands on the other that could not be fulfilled. It was a kind of harmony that is perhaps not available between humans because of the everlasting imperfection in communication that keeps dissatisfaction always a factor between man and woman. The man felt his isolation and realized the dog's company could not by itself fill the hole that he felt as a constant companion since his wife had left.

But he could not bring himself to make the effort to replace her. His spirit was depleted. He had tried and failed so many times, he no longer was able to go back to the dances to seek someone else who might fill the hole. He no longer believed that it was possible to ease his misery. His few forays back to the social scene had convinced him that he could no longer excite himself or any women with his skill on the dance floor or in the bed. The whole ritual just made his hole seem wider and deeper and he longed to get back to his dog. For a two years the man did not leave the neighborhood except to purchase food and other necessities. Otherwise he only left the house to walk and bike with the dog.

His life was tranquil. He was saddened by the lack of human companionship, but the sadness became like an old friend - a part of life that one endured because there was no way that he knew of to end it. Then, one day, the dog faltered as they biked and began to cough. The cough grew worse, and the man began to fear he would lose his only companion. He consulted with the nearest vet and the verdict was as he had feared. It was heart worm, so bad there was little hope for the dog was too old to live through the cure. The vet chastised the man for failing to give the dog the regular medication that would have prevented the disease. The man pleaded ignorance, his isolation had prevented him from taking care of his own health, let alone that of the dog...he had just assumed that they both would remain healthy.

For a week after, neither man nor dog left the house. The man seemed not to eat or sleep...he merely sat with the dog close by...only stirring to let the dog out or to get it food or water. Several times he called to the dog and looked deeply into her eyes while he repeated his comforting phrase, "Good, old Dandy-dog---and a pretty dog, too!" Then, at the end of the week, the man left the house by himself and returned with a paper bag.

The man called the dog and they walked into the woods behind the house as they had done a thousand times before. The man had carved a trail through the brush so that he and the dog could walk without disturbing neighbors or their dogs. The trail led to a small lake occasionally used by local fishermen. As a pup, the dog had irritated the fisherman with his mad dashes and barking so that she had to be put on a leash as they approached the lake. But as she aged the men grew to know the dog and she them and the leash was no longer necessary.

There was a special spot at the end of the lake by a creek that joined the lake where the man had usually waited for the dog to end her investigations in the adjoining woods and to finish her greetings to whatever fishermen were present. The man would read while the dog chewed on a biscuit or a hot dog from the man's pocket. They both would enjoy the day in silence.

Today, there was no need to wait for the dog's return for she could barely keep up with the man's slow pace. The man reached in his pocket and the dog managed an expectant wag of her tail. Here was a rare treat, for, in place of the usual hot dog, was a steak cooked rare and wrapped in a slice of bacon. The man placed the steak on a stone close to the creek and the dog lowered her head to eat. The man then reached in the bag that usually contained his books. The man drew out a large pistol and fired it quickly into the dogs brain as she chewed happily on the steak. The man then kneeled by the dogs body, carefully reloaded the pistol. Then muttering his apologies to the dog and giving the dead body a final stroke, he placed the pistol in his mouth and fired.

Chapter 4

Life and Death in the Ozark Caves

Throughout history, caves have provided refuge for many different types of earth dwellers; humans, bears, apes, wildcats, birds, insects, reptiles and fish have all dwelled there at one time or another. Some stayed and made caves their permanent homes. Unfortunately, nature inflicts a penalty on those who remain too long in the dark - blindness. Blind cavefish, crayfish, salamanders, isopods and amphipods reside in the dark in and around the pools that are found fed by springs on the floors of many caves. These "troglophiles" or "cave lovers" spend their entire lives in total darkness. Some, like the blind crayfish, have lost their color in addition to their sight and have become albinos; color as well as sight becomes useless in the dark.

Cavefish, alone in the dark with no natural enemies, have not learned fear and are easily scooped up by marauding intruders. Depending on the dark to hide them, and conditioned to respond to the stirring of water as the likely entry of a potential meal, the fish have no instinctual flight responses to use to avoid the human spelunker aided with artificial light. The Ozark blind cavefish is, then, not surprisingly, an endangered species; its refuge no longer the safe, womb-like habitat it had been for millions of years. A similar fate has fallen on its companion in the dark, the blind crayfish. The crayfish's ability to swim backwards is of little use when it is uncertain as to the direction from which danger is approaching. The plight of these strange and harmless, if not useless, creatures has stirred the imagination of most who have come to know them. How did they get there? What purpose do they serve? What do they tell us about evolution? Like the flightless Kiwi bird of Australia, the hapless quality of their existence stirs the caretaker impulses in the human heart. Even in Arkansas, a state not noted for its striving to protect endangered species, a major highway was curved some twenty miles to the east at great expense to avoid disturbing the recharge area of a cave containing about half the known population of the Ozark Blind Cavefish.

The caves in which these creatures are found are the most dramatic features of the karst terrain which dominates much of the landscape of the Ozark Plateau Province of northern Arkansas. This area is underlain by carbonate rocks consisting mostly of limestone (CaCO_3) and dolomite ($\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$) which are subject to the solutional and sometimes mechanical action of water which results in caves, sinkholes, and fractures of varying size and shape. Streams flow freely through thin soils from springs, sometimes disappearing through cracks and crevices and beginning the work of cave formation.

Except for those caves that have been remodeled to accommodate tourists with stairs, rails, and artificial lighting, the caves are uncomfortable and potentially dangerous places for the novice. Those containing the fish, bats and other creatures, are cool, damp, slippery, and vary from extremely cramped tunnels to larger rooms with pools deep enough to drown in. Bumped heads and knees are the most common and least serious hazard. Getting lost or trapped by flooding is the most feared possibility. Despite these unpleasantries, the caves continue to attract and intrigue all manner of people who seem not to be satisfied with the tamer offerings of the commercial or U.S. Park Service caves that have been opened to the public.

Tales of injuries and near deaths as the result of cave exploration abound. Almost as common are recollections of the use of the caves as hiding places. One commercial cave in north Arkansas advertises as the "Civil War Cave" in reference to its use as a hide-a-way by rebel troops during the Federal occupation. In Calico Rock, AR, one of the arguments used against building a prison in the area was that escaped prisoners would be able to use the caves in the area to hide from searchers (an argument that did not hold up since, once tracked to the cave, an escaped prisoner would have merely exchanged one prison for another).

Because of the relative ease with which contaminated surface water may enter groundwater through solution channels in limestone areas, concern over declining water quality has worried state agencies charged with protecting endangered species. The sensitivity of the cavefish to pesticides motivated state and federal officials to propose limits on pesticide use on the entire Springfield Plateau. Just how this could be done is still under discussion.

Nitrates and bacteria from human and animal wastes are also matters of concern since Arkansas is the number one poultry state in the union and caves are located in areas where both the human and animal population is growing rapidly. Statewide, Arkansas produces about a billion chickens a year. Benton and Washington Counties, where many of the caves are, have the highest rates of poultry production in the state (Washington County is first with 119 million birds marketed in 1991 followed by Benton County with 113 million). They are also the two counties which show the highest rate of degradation in both surface and groundwater in the form of nitrates and bacteria. One investigation conducted near the caves showed that 80% of the wells sampled had significant bacterial contamination.

Nitrates are nutrients that affect surface water by contributing to the growth of algae and create a significant biological oxygen demand thereby affecting the development of aquatic species. Sensitive species are affected at levels above one milligram per liter (nitrates measured as Nitrogen). EPA has found nitrates to be a possible carcinogen. Above ten milligrams per liter nitrates can cause methemoglobinemia (the blue baby syndrome) in children. The nitrates usually come from the spreading of chicken litter onto pastures and getting into surface water as runoff or into groundwater through leaching into the water table through the soil or cracks and fractures in the land surface. Bacteria comes from the chicken litter in the same manner. Both nitrates and bacteria can come from other animal and human sources.

Three recent studies that compared intensive poultry production areas with nearby forests found that wells around the chicken houses showed nitrate levels that averaged ten times higher than those surrounded by trees. Studies of streams in poultry producing areas surrounding the caves reveal a similar pattern with higher nitrates produced by runoff from the fields where litter from the chicken houses is spread as fertilizer. Normally, nitrates would be expected to occur at levels less than one milligram per liter in both surface and groundwater.

The University is also conducting a geological investigation of the recharge areas of Cave Springs Cave in Washington County which serves as the habitat for about half of the known population of Ozark Cavefish, an endangered species found only in the caves of the Ozarks. Concern over increasing nitrate contamination of springs in the cave is the primary emphasis. Nitrate levels in the cave have been fluctuating between 3 and 6 mg/l. Samples taken from nearby Osage creek within the recharge area of the cave were as high as 19 mg/l Nitrate-N. A similar study of nearby Logan Cave conducted showed high levels of nitrates running through the water during high flow periods. A Federal report on Beaver Lake, the source of a number of local community water supplies and a recharge area for springs that feed some of the caves, revealed that 81% of the nitrogen in the lake came primarily from poultry, hogs and cattle production.

Fortunately, the cavefish diet of crustacea and other tiny creatures who, in turn, feed from bat droppings from the creatures who sleep hanging from the cave ceilings above them has forced the fish to adapt to relatively high nitrates. However, more can come with the runoff from chicken farms than just nitrates. Heavy metals and antibiotics find their way into the chicken feed and from there into the litter (reports of arsenic contamination from that litter have surfaced in at least one study conducted by the University of Oklahoma). Atrazine and other herbicides are widely used on pasture against thistle growth in the cave spring recharge areas. All these add to the risks of cave life.

The fish are relatively small, attaining only a maximum length of slightly more than two inches. While they do not have normal eyes, they do have remnant eye stalks. They are carnivorous and live on cave creatures such as salamanders, crayfish, amphipods, and their own young. These creatures in turn live on bat guano and other organic matter that seeps into the caves from the surface.

The fish have always been objects of curiosity because of their unusual habitat and their adaptation to it and have even played a small role in the controversy between the American and the old Soviet view of evolution. In a sophisticated version of the "use it or lose it" approach to genetics, the famous French theorist Lamarck used the blind cavefish to bolster his theory of evolution through acquired characteristics. The theory was subsequently taken over by the Russian biologist Lysenko because of its political affinity with Marxism as opposed to the western, or Mendelian theory of genetic inheritance as the primary vehicle for the transmission of the characteristics of individuals among species. The existence of the fish as a living example of backward evolution continues to place a degree of stress on biologists who are called upon to explain it. Simply put, Lamarck's "use it or lose it" analysis and the loss of sight through generations of cavefish, the young acquiring the sightless characteristic of the old, seems to prove the Lamackian-Lysenko theory.

The two theories currently in vogue in America are material compensation and pleiotrophy. The first sounds remarkably like Lamarck in slightly new dress. It blames the sightlessness of the fish on the energy taken from the vestigial eyes by other rapidly developing organs that are being used by the fish, in much the way our own appendix remains in the body although largely functionless. Pleiotrophy refers to gene coding for more than one trait and buttresses the theory of material compensation by allowing for the indirect effects of the loss of one trait on the occurrence of others. Random mutation in the cave environment allowed the progressive adaptation of this rare species to its dark and aqueous habitat. In this case, the blindness was not so much an advantage leading to the survival of the fittest, but a condition which allowed the fish to expend scarce energy on those characteristics which were more important to survival in the darkness of the cave. If you are left with the feeling that not all questions have been sufficiently answered, that is only appropriate and is an integral part of the intrigue that the cavefish exercise on most all who come to know them.

Left undisturbed, cave life is a naturally complete and stable cycle with each link being dependent upon the other. The bats, as we have seen play a crucial role in this cycle by bringing into the cave the main source of nutrients upon which the creatures living around and in the water on the cave floor depend for their existence. Three of these bat specimens are listed as endangered species; the grey bat, the Indiana bat, and the Ozark big-eared bat. Arkansas bats feed almost exclusively on insects and are voracious eaters consuming up to one third of their body weight in insects each evening - which amounts to 3,000 insects per bat. Multiply this times the thousands of bats in typical colony and the benefits to those within the foraging radius of a bat colony are obvious.

Females roost in a special maternity cave separate from the males during the spring brooding period. The females activate sperm left behind during earlier mating to ensure appropriate timing for rearing young who might otherwise be devoured by hungry males. The environmental attributes that attract the bats to the caves on a regular basis have allowed the cavefish to live well over twenty years on the average, an indication that their food supply has not been seriously disrupted. Bats have been known to live even longer - up to thirty years. Disturbance by man, however, is a serious threat to the longevity of both bat and fish. In still unprotected caves, vandals and insensitive spelunkers can cause damage by catching the fearless fish or disturbing the bats. A single arousal during hibernation can cause the bat to expend the equivalent of two or three weeks food energy; hence, making it more difficult for it to make it through the winter. Mother bats may drop their young if disturbed while roosting in the summer.

Pesticides used to kill insects may accumulate in the bats and in their droppings and then to the crustaceans that are eaten by the fish. Pesticides from bat droppings may add to that which comes with surface penetration raising havoc among the sensitive crustaceans and fish in the cave. Other contaminants from leaking underground storage tanks and spills near the caves is a constant concern; especially with those caves near towns.

In Arkansas, a cooperative effort to offer the caves some protection is being developed by a Protection Planning Committee composed of members of several state, private nonprofit and federal agencies involved in pollution control or wildlife protection. Cave recharge areas have been roughly mapped, water quality samples have been taken, and local officials have been alerted. Still, despite these efforts, the fragile ecology of the karst area may not be able to survive the ever-increasing demands placed upon it by growing numbers of people and animals. The cave creatures may ultimately join the ranks of the thousands of species that have become victims of "progress".

Most evidence suggests that there is still time to save the caves and their residents. Water samples taken from several of the caves in Arkansas showed no pesticides and, with the exception of relatively high nitrates in one cave, water quality was good. The citizens have shown in the past that they stand ready to put their money where the fish are, so there is hope that they will do so again.

Chapter 5

LABORING OVER LOVE

Carol Thompson was my first love, puppy love though it surely was. It was a crushing blow when she moved across town. She may as well have moved out the country, because for a ten year old, across town was foreign country, an inaccessible and remote area. But even later when the elementary students from all over town were joined in one Junior High School, I found a new barrier in addition to the geographical one that made Carol inaccessible - she had moved in terms of class as well. She had joined the wealthy WASPS in the west end of town, and left me immersed in the poorer, French Canadian section where I was born and stayed throughout my school years. Carol was lost forever and it tore at my young heartstrings and no one seemed to understand or care. I just had to tough it out, even though, at ten, I wasn't very tough - still am not.

It was hard for me to understand. Carol had been the most attractive girl in my class and she was recognized as "my girl". It was not something I planned. It just happened. Then, just as mysteriously, she was gone. The lesson was quite clear. These things were a matter of fate and quite beyond my ability to control. I began to drift towards a succession of Carol replacements, none of which quite measured up to the original although each helped ease the pain of the loss that I carried with me.

That image of Carol has stayed with me, mostly in an unconscious way, and I have used it as a yardstick by which to measure other girls and then, as I grew older, other women. Their names and faces have blurred over the years, Ruth, Muriel, Beverly, Toppy's sister, Bob's cousin, Avis. Some of their names I can't remember at all. There was the Queen of the Junior High School dance that I dated until the past King beat my time. There were those neighborhood girls whose bodies we explored in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of sex. Then the inevitable loss of virginity in the bushes of nearby park with an older, more experienced sister of a friend followed by heartbreak when her regular boyfriend came home on leave from boot camp and I was cast aside. I could have returned when he left again, but my pride wouldn't let me.

Then there were those long dry spells in high school and in the Air Force in the early 1950's when I had no steady girl. Strange how that worked. In the period of my life when my biological sex drive was most intense, I had no woman to ease my frustration, only the occasional, hurried, uncomfortable liaison in the backs of cars, living room sofas, deserted beaches; wherever sufficient privacy could be obtained to relieve the constant pressure of screaming hormones. No wonder discretion was tossed to the winds. No question here of applying the Carol Thompson screen. Relief was what was sought. Anything else that was gained in the process was welcome but largely secondary.

In those days, the greatest danger came from unwanted pregnancies and the shotgun marriages that resulted. No one that I knew ever came down with a "social disease" - I never worried about it except in the whorehouses of Korea and there I came through unscathed even after some dangerous, unprotected encounters. Maybe I was just lucky, but it seemed like the statistics were on our side. The majority were as lucky as I was. It was only those unfortunate few whose encounters resulted in pregnancies or disease.

Why marry, then? It was a legitimate question. Love seemed even more remote than pregnancy and social disease. To me, love seemed to be something that happened in the movies and had happened once to me over Carol Thompson but seemed unlikely to happen again. No woman seemed able to pass the test. I could overlook their inadequacies as long as my hormones were screaming and fueled with enough alcohol to make the whole thing fuzzy. But when sexual relief combined with sobriety, I wanted out, at least until the hormones kicked in again.

But the game got old. All around me, single folks dropped off. The pool of Carol replacements grew smaller. In addition, graduate school loomed on the horizon. For the poor like me who were not scholastic whiz kids, one of the established routes through graduate school involved a working wife. A year spent as a bachelor in the cold expanses of northern Wisconsin teaching high school and trying to save money convinced me that it was time to give up, get me a working wife, and get into graduate school.

It was not hard to do - there were lots of women around who were willing to help their mate through school. The hard part involved the sacrifice of dreams of love and finding Carol. I also was only dimly aware of the kind of pain this tradeoff would cause my wife. I think she realized right from the beginning what the trade was about and what was in it for her (to ease my guilt, I offered to work on alternate years so that she could get an advanced degree also), although we never verbalized the emotional part of it. We did a minimum of pretending and settled rapidly into a cold, career-oriented deal, moderated only by occasional forays into drunken hormone release.

It was on one of these releases that fate finally caught up with me. Always sloppy about birth control because I had been so lucky in the past, my wife became pregnant. Neither of us let the pregnancy interfere with our career plans, but it played hell with our social lives and extended our marriage considerably. Surprisingly, I really got involved with fatherhood and became a house husband while I worked on my Ph.D. thesis. That experience gave me a taste of intimacy with another human quite unlike any I had ever experienced before. It awakened untapped reservoirs of love and tenderness that I hadn't realized existed. Some of this spilled over into our marriage, enough to stretch it out but not enough to save it.

Over the years, since our marriage was virtually love less, my wife had taken on a string of lovers. After I graduated and was no longer dependent on her, to put me through school, I began to do some serious searching for someone else. We separated and I drifted off to Arkansas to take a teaching job in a small college.

One would have thought that given the passage of years, my hormones would have cooled considerably and I would have stayed out of relationships based on mundane sexual or economic attractions. Not so. I embarked on a series of unsatisfactory relationships with a number of women who relieved my loneliness/horniness and even married a couple of them, but was unable to achieve a lasting relationship. I guess I was still searching for the virgin Carol in a field fogged with lust, alcohol, and the insecurity left behind by years of near poverty.

By this time, however, I was not completely oblivious to the fact that something was wrong. I quit drinking and became aware of an increasing problem with depression that seemed to follow every failed relationship. I began to seek help, drugs for the depression and therapy for the relationship problem. But changing my behavior proved to be a slow process. Getting rid of the accumulated bad habits of the previous half century has not been easy. In addition, there were painful lessons about learning to value my own being and behaving in a manner consistent with my new self image.

I have learned a lot about the consequences of not achieving an equal and intimate relationship. Each failed relationship carried with it its own peculiar pain. The first divorce was the hardest since it involved leaving my son as well as my wife. Then there was the humiliation of my first affair with a young woman who ultimately ran off with a truck driver. This was followed by a marriage to a woman who was enmeshed with her mother and daughter and would not let me in. Then I found an addict (alcohol, nicotine, marijuana). Then I married a perfectionist followed by an affair with a food addict.

Since they were all so different, it was hard for me to see a pattern until I stopped blaming them and looked for what it was in me that caused me to try to relate to these unavailable women. That's when I discovered I was still carrying around this image of mother/Carol and they all in some way reminded me of that image.

Chapter 6

What Does it Mean to Be Spiritual?

Have you ever wondered why most gurus are old men? There are occasional exceptions as in the Beatles famous spiritual leader, the fourteen year old Maharishi Marijuana. But he was a flash in the pan - most gurus are your typical, 60-plus, old geezer. I always assumed that this was because as one grows older the body dissipates, one approaches death and affairs of the spirit become more important. Also earthly distractions are less evident - the kids are gone, the hormones no longer course through the body in the same abundance, retirement brings the leisure to contemplate the world of the spirit. Naturally, concerns about an afterlife begin to assume a higher priority as the grim reaper begins to dog your tail.

I watched my father go through this process. He kept busy enough for most of his life to avoid thinking much about his spirit. When finally forced to quit working at the ripe age of 83, he confronted his spirit and decided the Catholic church of his youth still had the most correct answers. The priests helped him along with this thinking and a friendly Catholic funeral director sold him a package deal that would ease his way into the hereafter. He got a casket, a mass, grave-side service, two wakes in the funeral home along with some additional open casket praying by the priests thrown in, and a free lunch for those grievors that stuck it out all the way through the services. The price for this deal just about equaled the sum total of the old man's remaining savings. The priests clinched the deal by reminding him that his prepayment would prevent him from being a burden to his heirs.

Or, at least, that was the story that was passed along to the relatives. My own theory was slightly different. I had never known the old man to unload any extra dollars in the direction of the church. Nor had he ever been too concerned about the "burden" factor. My suspicion about what had turned the old man on was the idea of control - he intended to take advantage of whatever feelings his death inspired among his heirs to put them through one last round of ritual reminding them of his power and that of the church. Only by appealing to this primeval guilt over the death of the father could he get his atheist son and various other strayed and straying nephews and nieces to attend all these services. Herded along with the remaining "believer" relatives, these wayward travelers would once again be corralled into a final performance of Catholic ritual. No doubt such contemplation was of great comfort to him in his final hours, for he certainly had enjoyed inflicting that ritual upon us when we were young and he could personally herd us into church each Sunday. Now we were all in for a final round of parentally-inflicted religious instruction in how to go out Catholic style.

It turned out to be not as bad as I had expected. The wakes were like cocktail parties with the alcohol kept under cover. Old friends and relatives wandered in, gave the coffin where the old man was perched in the front almost submerged in flowers the once over lightly, and then proceeded to engage in the sort of banter people engage in at gatherings the world over. The only difference I detected is that some made an effort to be more reflective and were generally more subdued than at a normal party. I managed to avoid most of the formal praying at the wakes, sneaking out for coffee with like-minded relatives.

Only at the funeral mass itself did things get a little difficult. Our family had been well-known at the Irish Church that my mother had insisted on attending. But after she died my father had married again to a woman who shared his French-Canadian heritage and so he switched churches. The result was that few of us had ever been in this French church before and neither the family nor my father seemed to be known to the priest who conducted the service. The priest proceeded to deliver a painful and irrelevant sermon that made no connection to my father and only served to alienate still further those of who had long before stopped believing in the Catholic version of salvation. The priest had no idea who he was addressing and had made no effort to find out.

I had to bring out all the coping methods I had developed as a kid for enduring similarly long and boring rituals inflicted upon me by sadistic adults; twisting my fingers, ears, and hair and studying the pained reactions of others. Somewhere in the this period while I was involved in these diversionary efforts, my older sister reached over and grabbed my hand - something she used to do when we were kids and my twisting was about to be disciplined by irate nuns who sat at the end of pews just waiting for kids like me to let their boredom be reflected in their behavior. I smiled at my sister and gave her a hug which, I think, helped both of us through the agony.

It had been thirty years since I had sat through an entire mass. Not much had changed. The altar had been moved off to the side and priest used a table out in front-center stage to perform his body-blood transubstantiation. It amazed me that I had ever believed in this stuff and I found it even more amazing that any one still did. The only other change was that the priest was assisted by an old man and a old woman. In my youth, priests were assisted by altar boys. I had even flirted with the idea of becoming one under the encouragement of the nuns who taught us Sunday school and were always on the lookout for Catholic boys who were bright enough to memorize the required Latin. Apparently the pool of such boys had

dried up and the priests had to revert to the old-timers. This guy at least offered some amusement as he spent most of the service engrossed in picking his nose - much to the disgust of my sister.

At communion time, the split in the family between believers and non believers became dramatically evident as the former lined up to receive the host and we rebels stuck firmly to our seats. I noticed that for those who took communion, the old lady assistant offered a drink of wine out of the communion cup - something that was never done in the old days. My recollection was you had to get that dry unleavened bread down as best you could - not an easy task for a dry-mouthed kid who really thought he had the Lord's body in his mouth and it was a sin to chew it. Couldn't help thinking the new church was getting soft - no more Latin, professional altar assistants, and wine to the communicants!

In the communion line the geezers were certainly in the majority although a surprising number of the younger generation still participated. My super-religious oldest brother (for years I had referred to him as the "pope"), sister and oldest niece went. Everybody else that had my mother's blood sat it out. In this ritual at least, most of my family had strayed with me and I felt less isolated and closer to my mother, for I remember it was from her that I learned that it was alright to sit out some rituals (she often stayed home from church) and to be tolerant of other people's religion. In this respect, she had encouraged our questioning if not our rebellion.

Try though I did to keep from being hooked by the priest and his doctrine of fear, I could not help getting a little angry at both him and my father to the extent that I sensed neither really believed in what was going on but they both were ready to inflict these painful rituals on others. In a feeble attempt to find inspired words, the priest periodically scanned the rafters of the church - he never looked at his audience. But the skyward searching failed him for his oratory seemed stale and was without noticeable effect as both the audience and God seemed to ignore him. For, if God is defined as the spirit of life, surely this exercise was in violation of what funerals are supposed to be about. The priest was not honoring the life of my father - he knew nothing about it. He was wallowing in death, implicitly threatening us all with damnation unless we believed him and followed his ritual to salvation.

It was only by focusing on the absurdity of it all; the nose-picking, old geezer, altar boy, the toothless ramblings of the has-been priest, the plaintive manipulations from the grave of my wily old man - defeated but still giving it his best shot - that I was able to keep the anger from spilling out rebelliously as it used to. Instead, I smiled and hugged my sister and took comfort in the knowledge that I wasn't the only one squirming in their seat. More than half this gathering was there as I was - a captive audience to a dead man's hired mourners who neither knew nor cared why his life had been worth living.

It saddened me that no one had placed any mention in the service of how the old man, with only an eighth grade education himself, had motivated his offspring to get an education and they all were successful by most of the usual measures - an engineer, a business man, a schoolteacher, a college professor, a chief bookkeeper. They, in turn, had raised large numbers of bright, creative, successful children.

To do this, surely my father and mother had shared some knowledge of how the spirit of life was fostered for they had produced good citizens, good workers, good people. Out of poverty in the middle of the Great Depression, this family had emerged, held together, and, ultimately, prospered. Without exception, they had all pushed America and the world in the right direction. It was how the system was supposed to work.

This priest with his focus on death had no awareness of the value of that creation. God as the spirit of life was present but not acknowledged. How the old man had endured all that poverty, the years of labor, the lack of personal accomplishment or material reward for his own efforts, and still never succumbed to bitterness or alcoholism was the unrecognized mystery that should have been the primary focus of the funeral service. His chief accomplishment was that he had nurtured a spirit in himself and the members of his family. That spirit kept him going for 93 years, generally in a direction that leads to what a consensual diagnosis would call beneficial for both himself and the world. That spirit he had passed on to his heirs.

It is that spirit that I would have called upon had I been conducting the service. And, I would have asked all who were present to join me in honoring both the man who was with us and his spirit that is still here with us. For we can say of him that his spirit promotes life and, in that sense, it does God's work.

Chapter 7

FATHER FIGURES

Johnny Warrington was the first of these that I can remember. He lived across the street and was three years older than I was. For me he was an entry into the world of sports and friendship. I idolized him. I had older brothers but they rarely paid any attention to me. They, like my father, were too busy for the likes of me. Johnny wasn't. He had things for us to do. Scrub football in the street. Baseball in nearby fields. Games on the radio to listen to; the Boston Red Sox and the Braves. Johnny and I were unusual in this French Canadian neighborhood where I grew up. Neither of us spoke French like the others. We were outcasts and thrown together because of it. Despite the gap in our ages, I had a certain usefulness for Johnny. I was pliant, cooperative, and completely at his service. I would catch for him for hours as he practiced his pitching. I would chase fly balls, field grounders, or whatever else he felt the need or desire to focus on. I acquired some skill in the process as well, but left to my own devices I probably would not have bothered. Pleasing Johnny was my interest and the game was only secondary. Throughout this period, it was like my father did not exist. I only saw him at mealtimes and we never talked except for a ritualized, "How did it go at school today?" To which I had an equally ritualized response, "O.K." Neither of us removed our eyes from our plates during this empty formality. I never thought anything about his non-existence - I assumed all fathers were like that. Once, to my amazement, the old man suggested we take a trip to Boston to see the Red Sox play. In addition to being amazed I was also somewhat distressed - What could we possibly have to say to each other during the trip down and back and during the frequent pauses in the game? I solved this (to what I think was our mutual relief) by inviting Johnny to come with us. I always felt guilty about the solution though and suspected I may have hurt his feelings. Naturally, neither of us ever said anything and we continued to ignore each other. Nor did I realize there was anything wrong with my almost total devotion to Johnny. I guess Johnny did and he was preparing to end it. Although I wasn't aware of it at the time, my eyesight was failing and the difficulty I had seeing a baseball began to limit my performance. My usefulness to Johnny diminished and he began to seek out others closer to his own age and skill levels.

I, in turn, found a collection of losers, kids whose interests were in things other than sports - pinball machines, smoking and girls - to hang out with. That is how I stumbled into Duke. He was older too. Duke seemed to have the kind of skills the girls admired. He had a certain macho flair that they liked. I'm not sure why Duke wanted me around except that he was confident that he could outshine me with girls and I was so loyal he never had to worry about me. I was always there ready to go wherever and whenever he wanted to go. I let him do the thinking and I just followed along for the ride - to keep him company when the girls were unavailable. I fell for some of the girls, too - the less attractive ones that Duke claimed no interest in. Duke always made fun of my girlfriends, calling them names and putting them down. I usually joined his games and even adopted his names for them. Like most of the other losers, Duke quit school as soon as he could and went to work. I couldn't wait to join him in the factory, but my mother had different ideas. She wanted me to finish school. So Duke and I drifted apart. I learned things from Duke about how to relate to girls but it wasn't very positive. I learned how to put them down verbally and to relate to them physically. It took me years to learn that this was not a productive way to relate to women. I also learned how to drink from Duke - a habit that would plague me for most of my adult life.

I drifted for a long time after Duke without a male rudder. There was no "Iron John" in my life to take the place of my ineffective father. There were no elders to initiate me into the life of an adult. I was no one's apprentice and no vocation beckoned. I limped through high school in a semi-catatonic state, depressed and lost. I drifted through four years in the Air Force in much the same fashion. College started out that way, too, until I met Earl. Like my other mentors, Earl was a little older. We fit like Duke and Johnny had earlier - he needed a follower, I needed a leader. Earl took over my intellectual life - told me which courses to take, books to read, and how to lead a studious life. Since I didn't have a life, I lived his for a couple years. And, it worked - I eventually became a student and began getting good grades, high enough to carry me into graduate school.

Earl drifted away like the others into a career in Mathematics where, though I tried, I could not follow. I drifted into History which is where I met Steve. Steve's father had been a Communist Party member at some point and had lost his teaching job because of it. As a "red diaper" baby, Steve had assumed the leadership of what little radical activity existed on campus. I began getting my assignments in life from Steve. I had been impressed by Ray Ginger's book on the life of America's greatest socialist leader Eugene V. Debs. Steve seemed to me to be living out that tradition. It was with Steve and his friends that I took part in my first demonstrations, and tasted the thrill of rebellion.

I was hooked. Even without Steve to guide me I began confronting authority. I was fired from my first teaching job for taking part in a peace demonstration. I was then thrown out of the Peace Corps for psychological rebelliousness. Then it was on to the University of Wisconsin in the sixties where rebellion was the major activity. The action there was centered on two fronts; one in opposition to the burgeoning war in Vietnam and the other in support of civil rights. I was involved with both and so was Brian. He was pure rebellion when I met him. He was fresh from a sojourn with the Civil Rights advocates who had marched into the heart of racism and wrestled mightily with the evil giant during Mississippi summer. After the deaths of Goodman, Cheney and Schwerner, many had left Mississippi happy to be alive and licking their wounds.

Not Brian. He went to North Carolina to work for the Congress of Racial Equality in the city of Greensboro where the sit in movement had started. I had come down from Wisconsin, escaping a bad marriage and a graduate school career that seemed to be going nowhere. I was also unhappy because the revolution seemed to be leaving me in its wake while I wasted away in meaningless pursuit of a Ph.D. Brian was just what I thought I needed. We moved into a dormitory room together in the local all-Black college where we were to act as part-time teaching assistants while we worked at our main role of pushing the revolution forward. Just living in that dormitory was a small revolutionary step in itself for we were the first and only white residents of that enclave of segregation. Since the rest of the dormitory residents were Black freshman and sophomore males, many of whom were registered for the Western Civilization courses that we were teaching, we were objects of a mixture of fear, curiosity, and some loathing. What were these white guys up to, anyhow? And why were they living in our dorm? The administration had intended our stay there as only temporary until we found suitable quarters on the white side of town. However, for Brian and I, the dorm had two main virtues; rent was free and it offered an ideal opportunity to seek out cadre for the revolution - or so we thought. Anyway, we stayed there the whole academic year, despite some attempts on the part of the Blacks to make us uncomfortable. The room was one of those classic 1950's ten foot by four foot cubicles, designed I guess for monks and adapted for college students. We were on the second of five floors and each floor had a community bathroom at each end. Our room was not far from one of these and we soon learned that this was not the advantage that it appeared for the bathroom served as a practice room for doo-wopping quartets practicing the Motown sound at all hours of the night. Also, we found it was considered great fun to stop up the commodes and basins and cause a flood of water to flush out the white guys in the middle of the night. We also woke up one night to find one very drunk Black Freshman urinating in Brian's closet - he had been steered into the room by several of his not-quite-so-drunk peers who were giggling in the hall. Brian had only one real leg. His other had been lost in a childhood accident and he normally got around just fine on an artificial one which he took off and laid by his bed at night. The difficulty with it was that it took some time to attach it properly. When I awoke on this night Brian was already shouting at the drunk pissing in his closet and finally hopped up on one leg and beat him out of the room with his artificial leg. It was a bizarre apparition for me and it caused much merriment in the hall once the drunk urinator's companions caught sight of the enraged and hopping Brian swinging his leg with great gusto.

Some of the expressions of discontent with our presence were not funny. The uglier incidents grew out the students increasing displeasure with our attempts to impose white folks' grading standards in our history classes. This was, after all, a student body that consisted primarily of the disadvantaged, many from rural schools that had not changed much from the period after the Civil War when the segregated systems were formed. Traditionally under-funded, the neglected Black schools generally had lower standards that catered to the lower expectations that was forced upon them by a society that had never allowed them to advance. I had had some experience in white high schools and tried to grade about the same as I always had. But even with that not very high standard, I ended up giving a large number of D's and F's.

Despite his rebellious nature, Brian was a tougher grader than I. He insisted that Blacks should not be coddled and the need to develop cadres involved weeding out the natural leadership. This was a fine theory but the result was that we became the target of a lot of hostility from kids who thought we were picking on them by unfairly imposing an alien standard. Rocks crashed through our window at night and the tires on my old station wagon were slashed. Trips to the

bathroom were reduced to the bare minimum required by nature and we never ventured above the second floor which was as far as the influence of the dorm resident- police-person counselor extended. The fact that we stood our ground, were as fair as we possibly could be, and had an open door policy for anyone seeking help, gradually won over a measure of support from both the administration and a portion of the student body. Many of the students heard of our work with CORE in the Black community and approved of that.

They had never experienced white people that worked and lived among them and were seemingly always on duty at the school or in the community. That we did all this for practically no pay (\$3,000 for the year) made it even harder to understand - but they did respect what we were doing. And we did find talent - not many who were willing to become revolutionaries, but we found a number of kids with ability that we placed in special sections and encouraged to stretch their academic wings. Some of these, we were able to place in our parent university in Wisconsin where most blossomed and went on to successful careers. Brian later talked with disgust about how we had helped fill the quotas for Blacks in racist corporations that were opposed to all the principles that guided our actions, and generally he was right.

The students were receptive to Marxist interpretations of history since these fit their life experiences as part of America's oppressed race, but to carry that intellectual recognition into the sphere of action was beyond all but a very few. And, you couldn't blame them. The rewards for becoming a token Black were quite high while the revolutionary road offered little but sacrifice. Most had sacrificed enough just by growing up Black in America. Our calls for action in support of CORE's neighborhood work fell largely on deaf ears. Often, as Brian and I and these few trudged off for voter registration work or manning picket lines in support of some local protest, I felt depressed and lonely because of the lack of a mass movement here in the birthplace of the sit-in movement.

It was the beginning of a gradual recognition on my part that the cause of racial justice was not going to go very far beyond the legal boundary to which LBJ had pushed it. This feeling of exposure was made worse since, as the only whites involved in these protests, we were singled out for special abuse from the inevitable white hecklers who always assembled where ever we maintained a picket line. Of all the Black leaders of the period, only Martin Luther King could draw a crowd and he was busy in other places. Organizers from other Black organizations including Stokely Carmichael's Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee stopped by and held interesting week-end workshops but nothing seemed to affect the massive apathy that permeated the college and the Black Community. We visited other colleges and other communities in the state and they all suffered from the same malaise. Recognizing our impotency, Brian began to spend more time studying Russian and I began writing a lot of letters to my wife trying to patch up my married life. The final episode in our organizing career came on a Saturday afternoon voter registration work day when only three people showed up - Brian, myself and the President of the local CORE chapter. We made a half-hearted door-banging tour of one neighborhood and then squandered some CORE expense money on a six-pack and quit, convinced that the revolution was not coming to Greensboro in the near future.

Still, I had learned a lot from Brian and the whole experience even if we had not brought the white capitalist power structure to its knees. We had taken a long look at that structure from the vantage point of the oppressed minorities and gathered a lot of respect for its power and a great deal of empathy for its victims. I took renewed interest in pursuing my history degree to explore further this question of how power is obtained and the masses are restrained. I eventually wrote a long manuscript based on my Ph.D. dissertation on the "Politics of Social Control." It never got published although bits and pieces of it showed up as articles in academic journals. My left-wing friends considered it too pessimistic for their presses and the traditional presses didn't think it would sell well enough. I had hoped it would serve as a guide for future movements; pointing out what to expect and hopefully giving some indication as to what could be done. By the time it was finished there were no movements to guide. I did manage to prop my marriage up for awhile. Brian got married, too, and it looked like we were both off to quiet bourgeois careers as college professors. We both took part in anti-war demonstrations and continued to refine our class analyses of the revolutionary process but we both knew there was not much hope.

What the nation settled for was Nixon, Reagan and Bush - the rich white guys had won and Brian and I had to face lives of restrained disgust with frequent episodes of complete nausea. But the spirit of the sixties never completely left us. We both did what we could to keep our own spirits alive and to nourish the demand for justice in others. In this we joined Abbie Hoffman in not accepting the proposition that there will be rich and poor for all eternity, but unlike Abbie, neither of us saw suicide as way out of the dilemmas posed by the triumph of the conservatives.

Meanwhile I had found a new leader in a neighbor - Harry. He lived on the other side of a duplex and taught English in the same University as my wife did. He was a writer and a weight lifter, and under his tutelage I tried to do both. We published a couple textbooks and a few articles together before he moved and I was hooked again. I added writing and weight lifting to history and rebellion as part of my regular life's activities. I had written historical stuff before but Harry was the first to alert me to the idea that my writing was good enough to be sold. When I knew him Harry and I, shared a similar philosophy regarding alcohol; it was to be taken frequently and in as large amounts as were consistent with good health and career advancement. A corollary of this basic philosophy was that extra measures had to be taken to stay in shape if our intake of alcohol was maintained at a sufficiently high level to meet our standards.

When I think about Harry, Earl, Brian and all the others, it is usually with a sense of sadness; a feeling that the relationships were unfulfilled and lacking. Part of it was because I kept trying to turn each of them into a father substitute and never met them on an equal plain. I guess I wanted something deeper from them that none of them were able or willing to give - something permanent. I wanted to learn how to be person but they only gave me things to do. I learned to rebel, to write, to drink, to run, but I never defined myself except as someone who did these things for others. None of the relationships lasted. They all entered my life and left it, never to be seen again. Yet I was far closer to these men than I had been to my own father or any of my brothers. Certainly they seemed to have more of a lasting impact. What I took from them lasted a lifetime. Most everything that I consciously learned from my father I rejected. I know he spoke with respect of Dale Carnegie and How To Win Friends and Influence People. I rejected it on the grounds that it was phoney - a strategy for insurance salesmen, but not for me.

I knew that we were Roosevelt Democrats, but so was everybody I knew. It wasn't until my father's 90th birthday that I found out I had a socialist grandfather - a philosophy that I now shared and that knowledge drew me closer to the family heritage. The family was exposed to the rituals of the Catholic faith, but it never took with me. It just seemed empty and irrelevant, like my father. Until recently, I never knew what it was a boy is supposed to get from his father that I had failed to get. I realized that I had wanted his attention but did not know what to do with it when I got it. I never had his attention for very long - both of us were busy doing other things; I was seeking father substitutes and he was working. Once we worked together for a day - I pasted while he wallpapered somebody's house - but he never talked and I have no idea whether he was happy with my work or not. My guess is that a son should get some idea about how he is doing in the world from his father. A father's positive affirmations build self-esteem. Negative one's do the reverse.

I never got either and so my sense of self had to come from others - that's why these guys were so important. I borrowed their sense of how to live, tried it on and incorporated some of it into my being. Inside, I was mad at the old man for ignoring me. I never expressed it consciously but the anger emerged as depression or rebellion. I held a similar attitude towards my mother although my expectations from her were in the area of love and affection which I also never got. Since I was never beaten or starved, it was hard to focus on what was wrong with my upbringing and it took a long time for the picture that I have described above to emerge with enough clarity for me to get a handle on what was happening with me in my relationships with men and women because of this early deprivation.

I have been in three different men's groups trying to see how much my experience was shared by other men. And the general thesis that it is difficult to attain and maintain friendship in American society seems to hold. Just as I did, other men defined themselves by what they did. It seemed to me that many more of them were doing what was expected of them by their parents and few had rebelled against either their parents or society. Many showed symptoms of having been dominated by their parents rather than neglected. None of the men I knew had a very good feel for how to be in this world. If asked they recited a litany of deeds. Women, it is said, do a better job of being with someone since they are naturally nourishing, better listeners and more inclined to be empathetic. However, this is not true of all women and even though most of them can relate to each other better than men can, lasting friendships are rare among women, too. Friendship seems to require an enjoyment of another's presence for its own sake between people who see each other as separate and equal. This seems to be as difficult to attain in friendship as it is in marriage, people being far more accustomed to dominance and submission than to equality. People will merge for all kinds of neurotic reasons; caretakers finding those who need care, father-figures finding daughters, sadists finding masochists.

Friendships are probably as sick as most relationships. For just as I have not been able to achieve a lasting friendship, I have not been able to sustain a lasting marriage. For in both kinds of relationships I have known only how to be pleasing, loyal, and dependent - until I became depressed and rebelled. I have not known who I was or what I wanted. By devoting myself completely to the other, be it wife or friend, I was able to merge with others for a time, but it never lasted

for, in the process of giving up myself, I gave up my chances of enjoying the relationship in a healthy way - a time-tested route to depression. The primary thrust of my being in the last four years since this realization about the root of my dysfunctional relationships has been coming to consciousness has been to correct it - to bring myself into focus, to find out who I am, what I want, and how I go about getting what I want. It has not been easy. Awareness is not immediately followed by a change in behavior. There are years of conditioned responses to be overcome. And, awareness comes in layers. Big awarenesses such as my becoming conscious of what was left out of my life by my father's neglect are followed by smaller steps as the behavioral results of that fact become apparent. At each stage the behavior under question has to be examined in the light of new knowledge. And, as awareness of self has grown so has awareness of others. Once the old barriers that keep a person from understanding himself or others fall, when you stop living on conditioned responses and introduce flexibility and choice in responding to your own emotions and to your contact with others, the world opens up.

Still, the age old problem of reach exceeding one's grasp has to be worked in. Do you settle for what you can get or do you keep on trying until you get what you want? Is there never to be any peace or must life always be a struggle against the ghosts of our parents? It is hard not to yield to the old solutions - it is easier to find a leader than it is to lead one's self, to place the responsibility for deciding questions about how to live with selected leaders. Then there is always the steady onslaught of old age with its concurrent fears of death or disability. Who will care for me then? Should I not hurry up and find a caretaker before I fall desperately in need of care? Also, as my growing awareness peels back the false images that I created over the years, I grow afraid that my internal core may be, like an onion, empty inside. I have had the help of a shrink and group therapy and have benefitted from the self-knowledge and the awareness of others that come with such efforts.

Sometimes I worry that my shrink has become another leader - that I become a loyal, shrink-pleasing, dependent person while I am in the process of learning how to avoid becoming one. To become authentic, autonomous, self-sufficient and to find another person who would join with me in a union based on mutual growth and a respect for the other's individuality is my foremost aspiration. Is this what I really want or do I mouth these goals because I know that is what my shrink wants me to want? Are my past patterns so strong that they are even working their magic on this relationship? I'm not sure about the answers to these questions. Presumably my shrink is paid to understand these neuroses and work towards dissolving their impact on my life. The job of defining myself and identifying my choices is largely mine although he stands ready to help. It is a new type of relationship for me. All my other relationships, male and female, had for the most part played into my neuroses; used them and me to meet needs that were part of their agenda. Sometimes this was to our mutual benefit in terms of accomplishing tasks or acquiring skills, but it never was an emotionally healthy relationship.

Now, for the first time, there is at least the hope of a healthy life.

Chapter 8

The End of One American Dream

"That's not a house, it's a cracker box." That was my drafting teacher's pronouncement on my first exercise in architectural design as part of our Junior Year High School drafting class. He was right in the sense that I looked upon the exercise as just one more in a series of futile efforts to engage my interest in public education. My response always had been to try to get out of the effort entirely and; if that was impossible, to proceed to do the minimum consistent with getting by. Hence, I had found the simplest design around and succeeded in making it even simpler. No one in my family had ever owned a home and I couldn't conceive of my breaking with that tradition. Given this economic perspective, it was senseless to put any unnecessary effort into this "design your dream house" project our drafting teacher was demanding. I knew that he was trying to "motivate" us and he drew his paycheck from a system that operated by fostering such illusions. I recognized that his effort, like mine, was a minimum one designed to get us through the day.

Generally, my instincts were correct and it wasn't until the ripe age of fifty that I found myself thinking about purchasing a house for the first time, and began reviving that old cracker box mentally as I began to explore the possibilities of living the "American Dream." Even then, it was not so much that I wanted a home, but I sensed that the woman I was courting considered home ownership part of married life. Hence, we went after a home together. We looked at a number of houses which passed my "cracker box" specifications but failed her more ambitious requirements. Her tastes were just too expensive to meet our limited income. I had about given up the effort when I bumped into an old acquaintance who had, by chance, formed his own business building solar houses and had a prize-winning design for afford-ability and simplicity that he was peddling. Here was my "cracker box" with class, a possible solution to my dilemma.

And it worked; the combination of prizewinning solar afford-ability with its implication of being on the cutting edge of a new wave made her overlook the simplicity that she had rejected in the earlier houses. We picked out a site and told my architect friend to start building.

Unfortunately, although we agreed to build the house, we agreed to very few things thereafter and after four months of fueding, we agreed to split. Since she claimed she could not afford to meet the payments, she moved out and I bought her interest in the house. I was left alone - a homeowner by default. It was a tremendous strain on my budget. The mortgage payments alone were over 60% of my income. The only way I could afford it was by keeping the totalutilities' bill and other costs as small as possible.

Fortunately for me, the benefits of having purchased a prize-winning passive solar home began to pay off. By cutting my own wood and using the wood stove as a back up for the solar features, I was able to heat the house for the cost of keeping my chainsaw running. During the worst of the winter, I moved my mattress in with the stove and closed off the bedrooms. I added some home-made passive solar collectors to the existing solar collecting space. I have since added energy-conserving landscape; deciduous trees and shrubs placed on the southern side so as to allow maximum solar income in the winter and providing shade in the summer with wind-breaking evergreen trees on the northern side. The savings here are more long term and will not fully pay off for several years as the trees and shrubs mature.

To save electricity, I packed half the refrigerator with old newspapers wrapped in tinfoil reducing the cooling area by two thirds - more than sufficient for just me. I bought super efficient flourescent life bulbs and turned the water heater down to the coolest level I could tolerate (I investigated solar water heaters but was told they were not cost efficient).

I already had low flush toilets, but to save even more water I collected my urine in a quart jar and only flushed when it was full. Major bowel functions I reserved for work where I flushed away on my state job at tax-payers' expense. By these efforts, my entire utilities expenses (water, trash, and electricity) hovered around thirty to forty dollars a month in an all-electric home. I had recently quit drinking and had quit smoking years ago, so my socializing costs were minimal. Dates consisted mostly of dollar movies, bike rides, or dances at the local YWCA. Expensive dinners at fancy restaurants were a rare event, reserved for the birthdays of special women.

I have continued this regime fairly consistently for the last ten years and have been able to keep the house. Home ownership was no economic bonanza for me as it had been for some people in the seventies. I recently refinanced my

home and found to my surprise that it had decreased in value along with the rest of the houses in the area. When the refinancing expenses were added in, I ended up with a larger mortgage than I had had when I started. I now have difficulty understanding why banks don't make more money than they do since the major portion of my income was devoted to paying the interest on my debt. The principle over those years had only been reduced a trifling amount. It's like that song Tennessee Ernie Ford used to sing about getting another day older and deeper in debt.

I guess that even though I have been a committed socialist for years, there was a residual capitalist down deep inside of me that believed in the American dream. Maybe that high school drafting teacher had been more effective in selling the dream than either of us had recognized at the time. Although I hadn't worked hard (it is almost impossible to work hard as a state bureaucrat), I had been a sober, responsible, bill-paying homeowner for years and I was left with little to show for it. I had done my part even though as a cynical high school student I had figured out it was probably all lies. I was right about that, the bankers had milked me dry.

I guess as a teenager I instinctively knew more about the system than I did as an adult - even after I had studied Marx and a bunch of other guys that had exposed the American system. What really surprised me is that Marx had been so right about the American system where he has been ridiculed and so wrong about the Soviet system where he has been revered.

I had believed Marx about the Soviets, but had allowed my judgement to be swayed about conditions here. It's hard to be objective about a system when you are so far away it doesn't have any reality or so close to it you get sucked up in its dreams.

In any case, the emotional impact was as Langston Hughes put it many years ago, dreams that are too long deferred dry up and shrivel like raisins in the sun.

Chapter 9

The American Way of Eating

During periods of stress, food looms ever larger in importance. Prisoners of war have reported that their greatest needs revolved around food. When asked about their first requests following release it was not for a talk with a loved one or a bath or some other need gratification, but, almost to a man, their first and primary interest was in food. The same is true with fantasies. One prisoner reported he was able to drown out the sounds of prisoners being beaten in adjoining cells by pretending he was strolling along the Main street of his home town with an ice cream cone in one hand and a box of popcorn in the other.

Even under more normal circumstances, America's interest in food is high. Diet and recipe books compete with the Bible for all time most sales records. Books on nutrition are on the best seller lists as America's concern with healthful living increases. Estimates from the National Center for Health Statistics claim that 60 percent of all women and fifty percent of all men suffer from food disorders. Food addictions plague most Americans sometime during their lives. Sugar is the prevalent addiction followed by chocolate, and a variety of other sweets.

Over fifty percent of all Americans are considered overweight (15 pounds or more). Obese men are more likely to die from colon, rectal, and prostate cancer than men of normal weight. Obese women run a higher risk of death from cancers of the gallbladder, biliary passages, breast, ovaries, and uterus than women of normal weight. Food related diseases - heart disease, cancer, and stroke in that order are the top three killers in the U.S. They far outstrip smoking, and alcohol related diseases as the all time killers of Americans (lung diseases are fifth and liver diseases are ninth).

Close to a hundred percent of American women are concerned about their weight - more because of the fashionable emphasis on slenderness rather than because of health concerns. Models and fashion queens today are almost all under fed. For men and women, thin is definitely in. It wasn't always so. Fashions change. Gone are the old Ruebenesque, almost rotund, buxom models the classical artists loved so much. Even Twiggy (who was really not skinny but perfectly proportioned) appears fat next to the current crop of models. Nutritionists, impressed by the fact that under fed rats live longer than those who answer their natural inclinations, devise diets that could do the same for us even though it has not been proven that people who follow these diets will emulate rats and live longer.

Some changes were necessary for the health of the nation. Most of us no longer do the hard physical work of our fathers so we don't need the large number of calories to sustain that level of physical effort. Most of us need artificial exertion in the form our diets have been slow in conforming to our changes in life style. The staples of bacon and eggs, meat and potatoes still appear on American tables along with fried chicken, steaks, and ribs. Topped off with pies, cakes, and cookies, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, practically every major holiday is an invitation to dietary disaster. And the social pressure to conform and indulge is almost irresistible to all but the most disciplined among us. So strong are ties between food and celebration that to refuse to partake is to be isolated and alienated from family and friends - the moral equivalent of staying sober in the company of drunks.

While the church and other value transmitters in society have come around to supporting sobriety, they are not yet comfortable with encouraging practitioners of healthy eating. Attend any church-sponsored pot luck and you will understand why - deserts and other fat saturated foods are in abundance. Ministers and priests while condemned for alcoholism are tolerated if they are merely overweight like their parishioners. Gluttony, of course, is still a sin, but the definition of where a healthy appetite becomes gluttonous is not clearly defined. And, as nutritionists are finding out, the old quantity measures for gluttony do not apply today. The percentage of fat in the diet counts more than the number of servings - you can stuff yourself on carrots and lettuce with little damage while limiting your intake to fried chicken, ice cream, and cookies can kill you.

Armed with this knowledge as most of us are, we set ourselves up for a conflict between theory and practice that just as easily erodes our self esteem as any of the old classical conflicts between good and evil did. We know the roles of fat surrounding are bodies are evidence of our sins as clearly as the alcoholic knows that his hangover is the hallmark of his own self indulgence. The difference is that while the alcoholic becomes skilled at disguising both his drinking and his hangovers, it is hard to hide the fat. Our sin is out there for all to see. We can seek solace in the fact that so many of those pillars of the community, church, and state, that we see around us also suffer variations of the same affliction.

Still there is this nagging question about our ability to exercise enough discipline to live up to our full potential - to live authentic life styles where theory and practice are at one; sound mind and sound body in harmony with the free expression of our emotions, creativity, and physical presence. For those of us who grew up in the period of the great depression when mere survival was always a matter of getting enough to eat, it is hard to adjust to a world where your biggest enemy may be what is freely available at the church supper, the local fast food outlet, and with your mother's Sunday dinner. We are enticed almost every time we turn on the TV or drive down the street. Seemingly everywhere, people want us to eat and drink what we know may kill us.

Especially, men, for we are subject to all the macho messages of our youth "real men don't eat kiche, rabbit food, grass clippings, etc." Real men make mother happy by polishing off all of mother's pie, they clean their plate, drink their milk, eat second helpings, etc. Women are allowed to be finicky eaters as long as they cook what their real men want. Hence women live longer, are thinner and more alert to the theory of healthy eating even if they aren't always the best practitioners. Many women have found out that the easiest way to get rid of an unwanted husband without losing half the family fortune is to kill him with the food he loves so much while she makes do with the soup and salad.

For women, when the pressure to stay thin is combined with low self esteem and a family history of psychological abuse, it can often lead to a different and increasingly common set of eating disorders, bulimia and anorexia. The bulimic stays thin by vomiting after eating while the anorexic slowly starves herself to death in the effort to stay young and thin. Both obsess about food to avoid facing deeper and more painful problems from their past. They seek control over food and their pain but instead find addiction.

My own relationship to food was that of a typical American male for the first twenty odd years of my life. That is, like most of my peers, I ate what was put in front of me without much complaint and without any thought. I didn't like sitting at the dinner table for any length of time because of the boredom, and if I lied a little my mother would let me grab a sandwich and skip the worst of the Sunday dinners. I had no real grievance with the food, just the company. It was only during college when I got out on my own and had a tight budget did I experiment, mostly with stretching a buck with low cost stuff like macaroni and cheese and chicken gizzards.

In the late fifties, most folks were incredibly ignorant when it came to health. We still smoked, drank and ate whatever we could afford and liked. I was never sick and considered myself immortal. I first heard the word cholesterol when I was in graduate school when a Home Economics major visiting us commented on all the eggs I was eating. Eggs were real cheap, I liked them, and was considered a master of the art of flipping over-easies; a skill I had nourished over the years along with a related talent for spicing and flipping burgers (I was happy to discover that after a long period on everybody's negative list because of cholesterol, eggs have been making a comeback). From then on, life was a seemingly endless series of attempts to eliminate all those things that had made it pleasurable. First it was eggs, then cigarettes, beer, hamburgers and steaks. Increases in the availability of sex through the introduction of the pill in the sixties somewhat compensated for these reductions, but the Aids scare of the eighties cut that avenue of pleasurable increase off once more.

Mostly, I responded to each revelation, restricting my vices according to the dictates of each successive Surgeon General's Report as was my duty as a parent and a role model for the nation's youth. But my system rebelled against the joylessness in my life. Where could pleasure be found once all those things were gone? My professors espoused intellectual pleasures and to some extent I was able to find rewards in good literature and exciting intellectual discoveries, but my body ached for the soothing embrace of nicotine combined with the sedation of alcohol, and the wonderful blend of my famous cheeseburgers. Where could suitable substitutes be found? I tried soyburgers and exotic fruit juices, but nothing worked. Finally I came up with a cheap recipe, easily thrown together that contained little that was bad and much that was nutritious, and by making bunches of this at once and packing them in old TV

dinner containers, I could eat without thinking and concentrate on finding my pleasure in human relations dancing, and the world of the intellect - and tried hard not to think about eating, drinking, or smoking. It was not perfect, but it was a system that allowed me to live with myself in a fairly healthy, reasonably happy style.

Now, I know that improvements can be made. I still allow myself daily doses of caffeine (I am working on reducing or eliminating this most obvious evil from my life but have not yet worked up sufficient resolve to do so completely). I throw a little tuna fish in with my beans, grains and vegetables because I still am dubious about the vegetarian claims to be able to supply sufficient protein from those sources alone and I am not sure that I can live as well without the benefit of Omega 3. I have stopped buying sweets but will not turn them down if they are offered or come as part of a buffet meal.

I also make concessions to the feelings of my hosts when I am eating with someone else who has obviously worked hard to please without knowing what my exact food requirements are. There are times, when driving for example, where the need to stay alert outways the health prescriptions against caffeine. If the edge the drug gives me keeps me alert and alive, it is worth the health costs it carries.

This, for me, is where I have come in my efforts to balance competing needs - to be healthful, to be thrifty, to be ecological, and to find pleasure in life, and to operate effectively in my work and play. My current goal is to make my eating more pleasurable without giving up the health component. This means spending more time and effort in food procurement and preparation. I have found that I have much to learn from those who have been at this vegetarian business longer than I have. I have discovered that with little more expenditure of effort and money I can come up with a far more enjoyable menu. Still, I have to be cautious, for there is always the need to balance my pleasure sources so that I do not become obsessed or addicted..

Also, there are competing health problems. Some healthy foods are not grown in a healthy way. Lettuce is a prime example. While an excellent source of fiber and the basis for most salads, it accumulates all manner of pesticides both on its leaves and in the plant. Tuna fish is a great source of protein and Omega 3, but the big fish bio-accumulate mercury and there is no way of knowing that the tuna you are eating was not the cause of the death of dolphins who were caught in the same net and drowned. To avoid all meat and fish and go totally vegetarian involves health risks and these have to be balanced with the risks and benefits of an occasional indulgence.

An eight year stint of working in the water Division of the state pollution control agency has alerted me to the curious role fish play as barometers of the health of our nation's waterways. Toxic and carcinogenic chemicals appear in fish flesh in all but the most pristine streams. Some dioxins and polychlorinatedbiphenols bioaccumulate in fish flesh and internal organs.

Fruits present both health and political problems. Pesticide residues are found both on the skins and in the flesh of most fruits. The Alar (daminozide) pesticide scare in 1990 represented only the tip of the iceberg. Similar pesticides are sprayed both on the fruit and are present in the soil and water where most fruit are grown. The science of establishing safe levels is at a low level even if those doing the testing could be trusted. Buying organic fruit and vegetables is expensive and not always an indicator that what you are buying will be pesticide free. Even if the farmer does not use pesticides on his crops, chances are that the water he uses for irrigation and the land on which the crops are grown contains some residues. More pesticides may ride the winds from neighboring spraying practices.

Crops, like bananas, which are grown overseas are most likely grown with the help of pesticides like EDB and DDT which are banned in the United States. Grapes and bananas are usually grown on plantations with repressive labor policies and are usually boycotted by groups supporting migrant farmworkers unions on those grounds. Most fruit and vegetable crops that are not harvested by machines, are harvested with migrant labor under conditions of real danger for the workers. Not only are they exploited in terms of pay but they often are exposed to high levels of pesticide residues that are biodegradable and do not affect the consumer but may still be dangerous to the picker.

Most people who are sensitive to environmental issues also feel a duty to support farm workers. The first modern, inter-racial farm-workers union, The Southern Tenant Farmers Union, was born and grew to maturity here in Arkansas. The leaders continued their organizing efforts among the sugar harvesters in Louisiana and the fruitpickers of California long after the tenant farmers of Arkansas had disappeared. Supporting boycotts of products and the efforts

to ensure the safe use of pesticides sponsored by these unions is the least one can do on behalf these most exploited of workers

As the food and farm person of a major consumer research organization, I monitored the ecological and political backwardness of the farmers, and food manufacturers for years. The rape of the land by farmers and the disregard for health concerns on the part of food producers is obvious to any one who is willing to spend the time examining the facts. Some, like the poultry industry, produce a product that is relatively unsafe to eat and is a threat to the water in those areas in which the poultry is raised. Most efforts to improve the situation through legislation is thwarted by powerful farm lobbies.

Difficult as it is, however, the struggle must go on because there is no way to ensure a safe, healthy, nutritious food supply unless all aspects of the system are addressed.

Chapter 10

Eco-skimming - Arkansas Style

Recent reports in the news and on the TV program "60 Minutes" have revealed that Saddam Hussein and his family have "skimmed" an estimated \$10 billion from Iraq's oil revenues. The reports condemned Saddam's actions as the "largest skimming operation the experts had ever seen - far larger than that of the Philippine's Marcos family or Panama's Noriega. This kind of skimming is easy to condemn because this use of political power for personal enrichment is done by tyrants at the expense of impoverished Third World citizens.

There is, however, a different kind of skimming of resources that takes place in most places in America that no one has really addressed that, for a lack of a better term, I will call eco-skimming - the taking of excess profits by avoiding the payment of damage to the ecology. Because eco-skimming may do irreparable damage to the land and water, it may be ultimately more expensive to the citizens than the plain, old-fashioned thievery perpetrated by tyrants. And its results are similar the enrichment of a few industrial owners and their stockholders at the expense of the entire people.

Ecoskimming results when industries use their political power to prevent the enactment or enforcement of environmental regulation. For example, the poultry industry has fought long and successfully against the regulation of the broiler industry which is causing widespread damage to ground and surface water in northwest Arkansas. The industry's opposition of the attempt to restructure the Pollution Control Commission was but the latest of these efforts. No one has been able to assess the costs of such lack of regulation on this state. We are aware of some of its effects since rising levels of nitrates in surface and ground waters in northwest Arkansas have been measured.

Tyson was sued successfully by a coalition of citizens affected by its poultry plant discharges in and around Green Forest, but the awards granted were hardly scientific measurements of the damage done. We do know that cleaning groundwater is an incredibly difficult if not impossible task. Most of the groundwater in the state that has been cleaned has been on Superfund sites that cost millions but covered relatively small plots of ground. To clean all of northwest Arkansas would run into billions.

Because such damage to the state's waters is not assessed in advance and added to the cost of the finished product, raising broilers here is quite cheap and Tyson and his stockholders have been getting far richer through ecoskimming than they would if the environmental costs were included in the price of poultry.

A similar eco-skimming analysis can be applied to Sam Walton's billions. If the true costs of building and maintaining solid waste land-fills were applied to all the items and packaging that is sold in his stores and ends up as solid waste, Walton's costs would rise considerably and his profits would diminish correspondingly. Instead, Walton grows richer and the landfill costs are imposed on city and county governments. Since the cost of building and maintaining landfills has grown dramatically along with the mountains of trash, the situation has reached crisis proportions, forcing the state legislature to pay some attention to the problem during the last session.

The eco-skimming analysis may be applied to all businesses that are not covered by regulations that accurately assess and collect fees that correspond to the damage being done to the environment by their activity. Farmers and the poultry industry are among the most obvious political "sacred cows" that no governor or legislator dares to offend in Arkansas; hence, they continue to be virtually unregulated. Some states, however, are beginning to come to grips with the problem. Taxes on each tire sold to cover disposal have become fairly common. Some states have fee systems imposed on groundwater discharges to cover regulatory costs and remedial action. Some cities have experimented with taxes on plastic bottles.

But in those states where agricultural interests are the strongest and legislation is most needed, there is little being done. Scandals involving the President and his Secretary of Agriculture have prevented strong leadership from coming from the central government. Recycling, while commendable does not solve the problem for it has proved successful for only a relatively small percentage of the total waste produced. In the next chapter we look closely at trash.

Chapter 11

One Man's Trash:

New York Garbage and the View from Arkansas

Arkansan Jeff Davis was known, briefly, as the savior of the Buffalo River. As the Hearing Officer that heard the arguments for and against the Pindall landfill, he was in a critical position to affect the outcome one way or the other. He chose to side with the environmentalists and the area residents who were in opposition to the landfill. Since his boss, then Director of the AR Department of Pollution Control and Ecology, Dr. Phyllis Garnett, was in favor of permitting the landfill and Hearing Officers traditionally were hired to rubber stamp departmental decisions, Jeff Davis' stance cost him his job. He is largely forgotten now as he works quietly on his own legal and real estate business. But, for a moment he shared the limelight with the citizens in the Pindall area who, so it seemed, had fought successfully to maintain the purity of the Buffalo River. Appropriate shots celebrating the natural beauty of the River appeared shortly thereafter on national television and in the Arkansas Times. Shortly after the publicity died down that Davis was fired. No one seemed to notice or care.

The controversy over the Buffalo River had briefly provided the media with both good copy and dramatic visuals for television coverage. The problem that lay behind the incident, however, the growing concern with landfills nationwide and the enormous garbage producing capacity of the American people which has resulted in a scramble to find a way to unload it was neither visually dramatic nor a welcome subject for polite dinner table discussion.

Perhaps the most dramatic event of our present garbage disposal crisis happened two summers ago when the Mobro 4000, a garbage barge from Islip, New York, wandered up and down the Atlantic and Caribbean coast fruitlessly trying to find a place to unload its stinking cargo. While affording a certain welcome humorous relief from the summer doldrums, the ship's problem was deadly serious for the Captain and crew and for public officials who were forced to deal with the garbage (one beneficial result of the fiasco was the initiation of new recycling plan which, when effected, did much to remedy Islip's waste problem).

Most Arkansans found both incidents, the attempt to rescue the Buffalo River from the Pindall landfill and the wandering garbage scow, interesting and sometimes humorous diversions that filled the air waves on dull news nights until they became aware that their state was being seriously considered as a fine place to bring "Yankee" garbage. Suddenly the crisis was brought home and the diversion of watching others struggle with the problem was changed to one that could affect their lives. Plots to bring garbage from New York up the Arkansas River to Chicot County and for filling in the abandoned bauxite mines in Pulaski County were uncovered. Visions of the state awash in a sea of foreign garbage induced a crisis atmosphere into the state legislative meetings in the winter of 1989.

Randall Mathis, current Director and onetime head of trash for the state's regulatory Pollution Control agency, called to testify before state legislative

committees charged with reviewing legislation designed to keep out foreign garbage cited statistics on out-of-state trash dispersal faster than most evangelists list the seven deadly sins. "Fiftythree percent of of all municipal garbage shipped between states comes from the New York-New Jersey area - that's 7.9 million tons. Twenty percent of West Virginia's trash is shipped out of state, 34% of Tennessee's, 18%..." Mind and pen go numb before the onslaught of figures. No matter, the point is made. There's a whole lot of moving going on in the world of garbage between states, and all almost all states are both exporters and importers (Arkansas both imports garbage from Texas and exports some there as well).

All kinds of waste products are moving on the high seas, also, but the flow tends to be one way - from developed to underdeveloped countries - just as traffic between the states tends to flow from the urban-industrial north to the more rural southern and mid-western states. The environmental group, Greenpeace, reports that more than 3.6 million tons of waste were shipped to third world countries between 1986 and 1988; some of it hazardous. Like Arkansas, many of these countries on the receiving end object to being the depositories for other peoples waste.

Why all this movement? "There's money to be made in garbage," says former EPA administrator, J. Winston Porter, and the garbage tends to flow to "where the price is right." Since costs have tripled in the New York area in the 1980's, it has become cheaper for New York to move garbage than to landfill it.

But garbage is piling up all over America because we have become so prolific in its production. In the mid 1980's Americans generated 1460 pounds of garbage per capita annually (4 pounds per day). This represented a total municipal solid waste flow of 180 million tons. North Americans produce 50 percent of the world's garbage. Even though they represent only 8 percent of the world's population. Garbage accumulations were much lower in the other industrialized nations - 950 pounds per capita in Canada, 690 in the U.K., 580 in Italy, 700 in West Germany, and 758 in Japan.

About 2.4 to 3 percent of North America's solid waste is accounted for by disposable diapers. They contain sufficient material to stretch between the Earth and Moon seven times. Thrown into a landfill, diapers can take as long as 500 years to decompose. About 180 million razor blades are discarded every year in the U.S. In 1987 3.4 million tons of major appliances went to landfills along with each adult's discarded 1,429 pounds of containers, packaging, clothing, food scraps, newspapers, boxes, yard wastes, and disposable tableware. All this means that some gigantic artificial mountains have been created. For sheer size, New York's Fresh Kills Garbage Dump takes first prize as the largest man-made object on Earth and, at 500 feet high, the highest point on the U.S. East Coast.

What goes in a landfill is an ever-more controversial problem. Besides the mandated distinctions between hazardous and non-hazardous waste, some communities distinguish between garbage (that which spoils, usually food residues) and rubbish (everything else that is non-hazardous). Fees paid for the disposal of each can be different and in San Jose, California a major war between competing trash disposal companies was set off as each competed for the more lucrative garbage collection contract. Increasingly more common are the distinctions made between compostable yard waste and other forms of rubbish as communities try to make more room in their landfills for only that trash that cannot be recycled or dealt with economically in any other way.

For communities who, like New York City, are running out of landfill space, garbage disposal has become a serious issue. Long Island communities, for

example, which produce twice as much garbage as the national average, have seen waste-disposal taxes increase 500 percent since 1975 because of disposal problems. An increasing amount of garbage must be transported to ever more distant landfills as local ones are filled. Some Long Island garbage must be trucked 900 miles to landfills in Illinois.

Even export overseas is being seriously considered. One scheme to get rid of west coast garbage calls for shipping at least ten percent to the Marshall Islands for a five year period. To make the natives more receptive to the forthcoming tidal wave of refuse, the garbage fees were to be used to help solve social and economic problems caused by a rapidly increasing population. A similar scenario was presented to Latin Americans by a private east coast garbage firm, Scoot Corporation. It offered to pay Paraguay \$15 million to take between 100,000 and 200,000 tons of New York's garbage every month for ten years. The Paraguayans are still considering the offer.

U.S. railroads are transporting more and more garbage to key landfills. One railroad, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Co., is planning a joint-venture to take garbage from Los Angeles to a landfill in the Mojave Desert. Boxcars filled with New York garbage bound for a landfill in Dewitt, Arkansas were left stranded and stinking on a siding in nearby Stuttgart while state officials debated the legality of the permit under which the garbage was to be dumped. It took the personal intervention of the state Attorney General to get the garbage returned to its rightful owners.

Americans recycle 8 percent of municipal garbage compared to only 2 percent in Canada and less than 3 percent in the U.K. As much as 65 percent of garbage in some European countries is recycled. Some Canadian garbage is exported to New York State to avoid costly recycling and waste reduction programs in Canada. Japanese municipalities recycle almost 50 percent of waste; Massachusetts is a leader in the U.S. with 10 percent waste recycling. Studies indicate solid-waste generated in the U.S. grew 34 percent between 1972 and 1987, but the amount actually discarded grew 28 percent because of developing recycling and recovery programs.

Even some developing nations have much higher recycling rates than those in North America. The Zabbalee-Cairo's unofficial garbage collectors-recycle about 80 percent of their collections. Some of this recycling is done because of the abject poverty of the residents of third world countries such as Guatemala where large numbers of natives eek out a living sorting through the garbage at the massive landfill near the capital city.

Normal garbage is expensive enough but hazardous waste is in a class by itself both because of the menace it poses to humans and consequent expense involved in its disposal. As one would expect the problems associated with locating waste sites are even more complex than with trash. The ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY has identified 4,300 hazardous waste dump sites in the U.S. 3,400 of those sites have been designated as "suspected leakers". Of those 3,400 only 43 had "comprehensive cleanup" measures in effect in March 1993 according to the General Accounting Office. Only 12 had completed their cleanup and another 185 had taken some sort of action such as fencing in the site. The Council on Economic Priorities says 80 percent of the American population lives near a hazardous waste site. The Economist reported in 1984 that two thirds of the rural population of the U.S. drew water from supplies harboring BACTERIA and trace elements leaking from underground dumps.

Are there alternatives to burying garbage in landfills or shipping it elsewhere? Often promoted as a more convenient alternative to landfills, many cities burn at least some of their garbage in giant incinerators. Incinerators reduce the garbage they burn 70 percent by weight and 90 percent of volume; the

remainder, in the form of ash, must go to landfills. Incinerator ash is dumped into the oceans or mixed with cement and sand to produce a block which is about 64 percent ash. Some of these blocks have been dumped into shallow oceans to produce fishing reefs. Emissions from burning garbage include gases which add to the greenhouse effect and acid rain as well as toxins such as heavy metals and dioxins.

As the price of land and the cost of shipping rises incineration and recycling become more attractive. Japan, for example, only landfills 30% of its waste compared with 80% in the U.S. Their motivation is easy to figure out - land is much scarcer and more expensive, too much so to waste on landfills. While land is still relatively cheap in Arkansas, landfills and the garbage that comes to them are still unwelcome neighbors, and nothing brings out the "Nimby" (Not-in-my-back-yard) in folks more than a public hearing on a landfill site especially when the threat of New York garbage is in the air. The Pulaski County Quorum court hearing on a permit request for a commercial landfill using the abandoned bauxite pits in Benton that was to bring in out-of-state garbage brought out close to two hundred protesting residents. And, such emotion is not to be confined to the local level. No less than eighteen bills outlawing such attempts to blight the Natural State with foreign refuse came before the state legislature in the winter and spring of 1989 - almost all are, according to Director Mathis, to no avail because they were patently unconstitutional - clearly in violation of the interstate commerce clause.

One that wasn't called for a tightening of state regulations applied to commercial landfills and an examination of the financial and environmental records of the permit applicant. This would at least slow down that New York garbage. "But, even if the law didn't stop the garbage," commented Joe Doughty, a solid waste engineer, "look at the bright side: Would you rather have New York garbage or New York people? If you don't take their garbage, New Yorkers will have to move out from under their own trash, and they may move here. And, besides, given the wastefulness of the rich New Yorkers, there was sure to be some treasure in their trash that would provide a new opportunity for dump-pickers and trash collectors in the impoverished Delta."

Out of the forty or so bills that came before the legislature dealing with all aspects of solid waste, only three became law. One of the more naive bills to pass the Senate (fortunately it died in the House) was Senator Charlie Chappin's earthworm bill. Senator Chappin was convinced she had found a panacea for all landfill problems in earthworms who would eat up all garbage. The Arkansas Earthworm Act would have required landfill operators to keep "tons of Earthworms" on site. Solid Waste experts at Pollution Control, however, were more than a little dubious about the ability of the worms to do much about the problem since the diet of the worms consists of organic material that is bio-degrading in the soil near the surface and that is not the source of the major landfill problems. Most of the newer landfills are covered and lined so that the material within is inert and never reaches the stage where it is digestible to the common earthworm.

Several more serious bills made their way through the legislature to the desk of Governor Clinton whose duty it was to select the best and veto the rest. The most important of the three bills he finally signed divides the state into eight sections; each to be responsible for its own waste and each restricted to land-filling only that waste generated in its own district. This, it was hoped would get around constitutional objections involving the interstate commerce clause.

The second bill provided for a two year moratorium on the importation of solid waste into the state. The third called upon each district to come up with a trash recycling plan and installed a tax based upon the amount of waste

produced in the district to pay for the planning. This was a relatively farsighted move which at last addressed the problem of eliminating the source of solid waste and reducing the need for landfill space (solid waste people are sensitive about the distinction between a dump and a landfill - the latter being permitted by the state to accept defined categories of waste whereas dumps are illegal and may contain anything).

The threat of New York garbage invading Arkansas, then, has had some positive effects. Awakened by an irate public and informed by state officials as to the extent and breadth of the problem, the previously moribund state government had been stirred into action. "This is," Solid Waste Chief Witherspoon had warned them, "just the tip of the iceberg - the first wave of an ocean of garbage waiting to come into the state." There is a nation-wide shortage of landfill space, and, he wisely used the opportunity while he had the legislators attention to point to an emerging crisis in their own legislative districts. That problem would continue to grow even if New York garbage never entered the state. He cited specific examples, such as, the city of Jonesboro that had no landfill near the city and had to ship its garbage some 75 miles to Monroe County.

He was not sure whether these trips would be outlawed under the the new legislation which forbade the crossing of district boundaries. In addition, he pointed to a garbage crisis that has been looming over the city of Fayetteville where a proposed incinerator which would have disposed of much of its solid waste, was recently turned down by the voters because of fears that it would contaminate the air. This left the city without sufficient space to dispose of its accumulating garbage and would result in more cross-district shipments.

The roots of the problem as described by Witherspoon, were to be found in the years of neglect suffered by solid waste as the country focused its resources on the more glamorous areas of hazardous waste. The state closed down hundreds of illegal open dumps upon which people had depended and made the price of new landfills unaffordable. Only fifteen new landfills have received permits from the state since its new code went into effect in 1984 and of the 70 existing permitted municipal landfills, 37 are approaching capacity and are expected to last only 6.4 years - the nine largest landfills in the state have only an 8.1 year capacity. According to Witherspoon, the shortage of landfill space has been made even more difficult to overcome with the introduction of stricter rules laid down by new federal standards that would lead to closing some landfills and discourage the development of new ones - the division estimates that by year 2000 there may be only 12 landfills in the state unless some special effort is made.

All this newly generated publicity has increased the sensitivity of the general public to landfills in their backyard and has made the long and difficult permitting process even more arduous. The struggle over the Pindall landfill dramatized the issue primarily because of the alleged threat to the Buffalo River. According to Tony Morris, a geologist who was closely involved in the event, the triumph of the environmentalists deprived Newton County of its only permitted landfill. And, while admitting that the department made some mistakes, the basic concept of the landfill was sound and much better than no landfill at all - which is what resulted. The Director, Mathis, still maintains that more damage is done to the river by residents who allow their cows to graze in or near the river than was ever possible from leachate from the landfill.

Most landfill controversies do not attract national attention, but they are all time consuming; more so than any other pollution problem handled by the state. Most other public hearings are poorly attended, but hearings over a landfill

in Jonesboro brought in bus loads of people and ultimately the landfill permit was denied and the city now faces that 150 mile round trip with four loads of trash daily. Heightened public opinion has motivated the state to spend more money on the problem. More engineers and planners have been hired to help municipal and county governments meet the stricter regulations for landfills and to speed up the permitting process. A new task force has been assigned with the job of cranking out those recycling plans called for by the new legislation.

Increasing concern with protecting groundwater motivated the department to require all new landfills operators to monitor the groundwater flow around the newer landfills. Geologists now have to be hired to verify the suitability of the chosen landfill site design to contain potential leachate. Background water quality has to be documented and monitoring wells sited and drilled. And, one could, as with the Pindall landfill, spend fairly large sums of money on planning a landfill only to have the permit turned down on environmental grounds. Meanwhile not much is being done to slow down the rate at which Americans produce waste. Recycling has been highly touted as one method and some of the larger cities, Seattle and Minneapolis, have achieved great success with that approach. Because of the small size of Arkansas cities, it has been difficult to convince city leaders that the effort is worthwhile. However, some efforts have been made, most notably by the citizens of Fayetteville, at overcoming the size deficit. Unfortunately, as interest has peaked, so has the glut of recyclable materials and the subsequent decline in the price of these materials has hurt those efforts. Most agencies that once collected newspapers no longer have a market for them and will not accept them. This has kept many Arkansas communities from even trying to do it.

Of all of the nonhazardous materials used by Americans, plastics are among the hardest to deal with in recycling programs. At the same time, more plastic is being used. Peanut butter jars, egg cartons, milk jugs, are increasingly found in plastic. By 1990, estimates are that 90% of all grocery bags may be plastic. The career advice given to Dustin Hoffman in the 1967 hit movie, *The Graduate*, summed up by an old friend of the family into the one word "plastics" may be more timely now than it was then. Our estimated 15 million tons of plastic discards is expected to double in the next ten years. The light weight of plastic containers means a lot of bulk has to be collected before enough containers are collected to make a ton. It costs around \$500 to collect a ton of plastic that has a recycled value of \$100. Although they constitute only 7% of solid waste they take up 20 to 30% of landfill space because of their bulk. Some innovations such as equipping collector trucks with shredders can reduce these costs but most cities have found it cheaper to just not bother with plastics in their recycling programs and Minneapolis - St. Paul have banned the use of some plastics outright - giving notice that they are no longer willing to bear the cost of disposing of non-recyclable products. In addition to its light weight the technical difficulties of recycling plastic are enhanced by the varieties of plastic contained produced (five separate plastic resins). Each must be melted down separately or manufacturers cannot use them. Distinguishing one type from the other is nearly impossible. Dye tags and numerical coding is being discussed but is not yet operational. One use of impure strains of mixed resins, conversion into plastic lumber, has been in use in Europe since the seventies. Four plants in the U.S. have begun production although plastic houses have yet to be sold, one mixed plastic and conventional materials model house has been built. A new plant in Atlanta has developed molds for pallets, and other plastic products from this mixture. Hopefully, there is more to come for every advance will make it easier to convince communities to recycle rather than fill up their landfills.

Industries, like cities are having increasing difficulty in disposing of their waste. Onsite landfills fill up and new ones are expensive and difficult to get permitted. There are no landfills in Arkansas for the disposal of hazardous waste. The attempt to site a commercial hazardous waste landfill near Hope set off one the longest and most bitter permit battle that the state has ever seen. Ultimately, the citizens of Hope, like those of Pindall, were able to defeat the landfill by the effective tactic of purchasing the site upon which the landfill was to be sited. To get rid of hazardous material in this state, a generator has to either get it burned at ENSCO in El Dorado or has to be shipped out of state; carefully tagged and recorded from source to final resting place. Much of the waste ends up in the chalk formations of Emmett, Georgia which has the dubious honor of being the site of the world's largest landfill; run by Waste Management, Inc. the world's largest garbage disposer. In theory, the system tracks hazardous waste alright. However, a chemical that is hazardous when spilled or part of a waste stream in a manufacturing process and, therefore carefully tracked is no longer controlled once it is packaged or bottled and becomes a product even though it may be just as hazardous to the environment. A lot of what is purchased in stores; pesticides, cleaning fluids, oil, to name a few, are hazardous as wastes but no one knows where they go once they leave the store.

A friend of mine told me how he once caught a neighbor with his car backed up over the storm drain in front of his house. "This is how we change our oil in Arkansas," he replied to my friend's incredulous look. This blend of ignorance and irresponsibility is all too common in the nation as well. Until this attitude is changed, not much can be done for trash, as with many other environmental problems, begins at home.

Chapter 12

THE DIGNITY OF THE KICK-BALL PITCHER

A lifetime spent mostly hiding behind books had not prepared me for the priorities of the American private school system of "muscular Christianity," that is, athletics came first, good morals second, and only then was anybody interested in scholastic achievement. When jobs were plentiful for teachers in the 1950's and 60's, one could pick and choose between the big city public schools where straight teaching jobs were available and the smaller public and private schools where coaching was demanded as part of the job. Teachers, like me, not interested in sports could teach academic subjects and ignore the jocks in the bigger schools. However, times changed.

Coming to Little Rock, AR, in the late 70's and looking for a history job at a time when public school enrollment was declining, left little room for maneuver. To work at all, one had to look the part of the "muscular Christian," for given the inability of the citizenship to work out its differences over the racial composition of the public schools, private schools offered the only job opportunities. So, in spite of my reservations about contributing to white flight and my weak credentials in the field of athletics, I swallowed my liberal political attitudes, broke out my rusting set of old iron weights, and hit the private sector in search of employment.

As luck would have it, I snared a job on my first casting teaching history to a bunch of spoiled white kids in North Little Rock. And, best of all, since they were almost as inept at sports as I was and cared even less, I would only be required to supervise their efforts at recreation - not teach them anything. That is how I came to be a kick-ball pitcher. Kick-ball, as most teachers know, is a low skill game usually reserved for pre-schoolers and the handicapped - perfect for me and my charges. I got to be designated pitcher for both sides since, in this game, that position is neutral in the sense that the pitcher merely rolls the ball up to be kicked and doesn't try to strike anyone out. The ball is then kicked and the rest of the game resembles a very sloppy version of scrub team baseball.

I functioned wonderfully in this position up until Visitor's Day, when I spurned my usual durable blue jeans for a more appropriate scholarly garb befitting an employee of the parents of rich white kids. I took my usual position on the mound with a wave at the assembled spectators, mostly mothers waiting with baited breath for the forthcoming feats of sporting splendor. The very first batter/kicker took aim at my offerings, kicked mightily, and fell flat on his keester; in the process just barely topping the ball and sending it rolling slowly toward the mound. I waved off the infield and indicated that we would give the batter another chance, a power invested in me since I functioned as umpire as well as pitcher.

To impress the assembled parents, I dashed off the mound towards the ball intending to bend over and scoop it up with one smooth motion, thereby assuring them that, despite the simple nature of the game, I had all the qualifications of the most admirable "muscular Christian." As I bent over, I heard a barely audible tearing sound, followed by a somewhat louder gasping noise from the nearest mothers. Then both teams began laughing uncontrollably and pointing at my backside which, I now noticed, felt somewhat cool. Slowly, I realized what had happened, dropped the ball, and with all the dignity I could assume placed both my hands over my exposed rear.

At that moment, horror struck, I remembered that in the rush to get ready for Visitor's Day, I had, as I often did when I was out of clean underwear, simply gone without. My dress pants, holdovers from another slimmer era, simply were not up to the stress of kickball and, hence, I was now exposed - more fully than I guess any previous teacher ever had been. The glee expressed by both teams came not only from my exposure, but from my acting out of every rich kid's fantasy - I had mooned their mothers. The game was over and so was my budding career as kick-ball pitcher and educator of spoiled, rich, white kids from North Little Rock.

Chapter 13

Old Fool on a Couch: Conversations with my internal Father

"There's no fool like an old fool." That's exactly what you are, an old fool, for ever thinking a good-looking woman fifteen years your junior would go for a horny, old, bastard like you. Sheeit! As soon as she got what she wanted, she was gone - you're lucky she only got a TV set, some dance lessons and a few assorted trinkets. She could have run off with all your earthly possessions and cut your balls off to take home as a trophy! No amount of shrinking is going to change an old fool into a mature adult capable of a loving relationship. You've got to purge yourself of this adolescent longing for this mystical woman who's a cross between the playgirl of the month and your mother. Quit this constant striving for the unobtainable and settle for what you can get.

And so it went. I never knew when that kind of mental badgering would start. Sometimes it would hit me when I opened the front door. This feeling emerged first starting in my stomach and ending up in my eyeballs with a flood of tears. I was never sure what would trigger it. This one could have been set off by that picture that she gave me on the opposite wall. The one that she said looked like me holding a woman who resembled her in dancing pose - gazing at her with that total rapture that she inspired in me when we danced. The sense of loss, the anger at the stupidity of it all, the incomprehensible departure from the bliss of her presence - all that rushed through my system.

The Czechs have a word for it, "litost": it's supposed to sound like the wail of an abandoned dog and it is not translatable. The Czechs use it to describe how they feel when they have had a sudden insight into their own miserable self. These "litosts" had coursed through me almost hourly ever since I opened her letter with its semi-classic "Dear John" message (she had not actually left me for another man - just revived her old attachment to a not-yet-divorced-husband). Anyway, the effect was always the same. After the tears subsided, the punishment began and the voices within me started off with their recitations of whatever the "litost" or insight into my miserable self was about:

"How can a grown man (mature, maybe aged, although well-preserved at a ripe double nickel), triple-divorced with several thousands of dollars worth of therapy under his belt, be stupid enough to fall for a married woman?" That internal voice sounded like my father. My mother sometimes would take up where he left off, more like a machine gun rather than the shotgun approach he favored. "Why did you fall so hard in such a short time? Why did you pressure her for time and commitment like a lovesick, pregnant teenager?" Then dear old Dad again: "Why can't you do the old 4F (find 'em, feel 'em, fuck 'em, forget 'em) routine like the macho guys of your youth? With you, it's always the same tragic nonsense. You're off on your own private trip to the stars, and she's not even free from her last lover, husband, gigolo...whatever, whoever. You deserve to have your feelings trampled. Anybody that dumb is lucky to be alive, and certainly doesn't deserve the undivided sexual attention of a smart woman."

Such a pleasant dialogue to have with yourself several times a day and far into the sleepless night. Guaranteed to turn the old self-esteem into oatmeal and bring back big time depression. It's all so familiar. Too bad it can't be bottled and sold to Pollyanna types to give them an understanding of the perils of romance. God knows I could have used a little reality orientation before I took off on my own private space odyssey. For a hard case like me, daily interveinous feedings with bottled messages alerting me to all the signals that I'm about to go into my "old fool" act might help.

Quotations from my hero Thoreau would be appropriate. Like, remember Thoreau's equation, happiness equals desire over consumption and the key is to balance the equation by limiting desire. For example, if you are an old fool, and you surely are, who keeps falling for younger, good-looking women the thing is to just quit desiring princesses - be happy with celibacy or marry some equally old, has-been, ugly-but-grateful widower and pretend she's everything you ever wanted. That way, there is at least a chance your heart won't get broken and the ugly broad you marry will be

happy for awhile until she finds out what a fraudulent asshole you are. See, I can do this "litost" business myself without any help from my parents. Speaking of litosts, remember your dear old mother! She was good for at least one litost a day. Several on an average day and ongoing on those days when she was blaming you for her misery. In spite of all that you still wanted the old broad to sleep with you instead of that boring old man she married. She probably ignored you because even as a kid you were more boring than even the old man who carried boredom to a fine art. About the only exciting thing he did was snoring. He could drown out a Harley Davidson with just a nap. When he was drunk the old man had his own private thunderstorm right there in the bed. No wonder the old lady was mean. She hadn't had a good night's sleep since they were married.

That's what you learned from your old man - boredom and dramatic snorting. That's why those women of yours always find that same boring kid behind that facade of cocktail chatter you learned in group therapy. Most women will see through that line in ten minutes unless they're half drunk or high on some kind of happy pill. Even then, their eyes glaze over and they begin looking around for some way to escape. "Excuse me, but I need another drink." Or, "I just have to find a bathroom." And, if for some reason, you do get close to a woman, your hormones start kicking up and trying to sound tender and loving when you've got a hard on and just want to get laid is not going to give you a believably authentic exterior. You are just going to look like that ridiculous horny old man you've become. You ought to give it all up and just hire a prostitute and pay her not to laugh at your feeble attempts to hide your lust under a veneer of intimate bullshit. She will let you fantasize your mother and even think a premature ejaculation is wonderful since it will reduce her work time.

Think positive about whores! There's no worrisome straining to let the old whore have an orgasm and you don't even have to talk to her after you've fucked her. And then, possibly the biggest advantage, there is only one easy payment. I know you've tried whores and there is that guilt and lowered self esteem that goes along with it. You are just not a very good capitalist. No burgeoning captain of industry feels guilty about a straight forward financial transaction. They hire whores all the time, just like in the movie "Pretty Woman." Did John Gere ever feel a moment's guilt. Hell no! He was so used to buying and selling people, he had long ago purged that emotion from his system. In fact the entire capitalist structure is built on various kinds of prostitution. Your problem is you believed all that bullshit about not oppressing women those socialist profs sold you in college. It's made a wimp out of you and the women you relate to sense that. Despite all this talk about sensitivity, when push comes to shove, most women, even the semi-liberated ones, want a take-control man that they can try to manipulate. Given a choice between you and John Gere, who do you think they are going to pick? You got to get tough and get rich to make it with most broads.

With a wimp like you, women boss bitch the relationship to death like your mother used to do to that sorry son of a bitch she married. Your mother would probably think Thoreau was a wimp, too. I can hear her now, "Who gives a rat's ass what Thoreau said, anyway. You always felt an affinity for the old bastard because his mother seemed like a nag, like yours. He sure wasn't as horny as you are unless he was cornholing Emerson all that time back there in Walden Pond. Nobody cared then and they don't now - except for a few boring Ph.D's like you who use that kind of talk to drive everyone else away. Where can you find a woman who wants the simple life? Women want big cars, big houses and big dicks - with you everything is small. So this is what, 4,5,..10 women in the last five years who couldn't stand the boredom? Maybe you ought to be celibate like your hero Thoreau."

Trouble is, mother dear, you know celibacy won't work. I've tried celibacy. It just makes my wrist tired. And I've tried marrying ugly women. They get mad at me because they can sense I know they are ugly and that I'm not passionately in love. They end up making me miserable and it's almost laughable the way they keep trying to pussywhip you even if you long ago have lost the ability to consummate the act with them. That's another sure-fired route to depression if cirrhosis of the liver doesn't kill you first from trying to get drunk enough to turn your ugly wife into a princess long enough so you can get a hard on. It's like the old man keeps saying. Better to get back in the harness - polish up your act! Improve your dancing! See your shrink! Find someone you can respect! Give to! Be proud of! Get rid of vestigial male chauvinism! Learn how to be intimate! Get in touch with those feelings! Try a little tenderness - even if you feel like kicking some broad in the crotch! See, your ex-wife was right - your a died in the wool misogynist and you didn't even know what the word meant! It's back to the shrinks for you to be confronted until that old stuff is beaten back so far up your ass it will need a searchlight to find its way out. Then, maybe, you could get a woman your own age who will not object to your growing enfeeblement. In fact these old broads will even applaud your periodic, Nardil-inspired

limpness - or that's what Ann Landers says. Remember how she was deluged with reports from folks who gave up sex after fifty and haven't missed it. Your problem is you think like a horny adolescent even though your getting limper every year. That's why you've got to master this tenderness line - what the shrinks really mean every time they say "tender" is I'm O.K. limp, so you should be O.K. limp. That will allow you to be serene enough to find your bliss in visiting Disney land every other year with the rest of the de-horned geriatrics.

You keep trying to screw these postmenopausal broads back into paradise and all they can think about is how boring its all become - and it even hurts some now because that wonderful wetness has dried up. They wish you'd grow up and by a vibrator, and you really wish they would finally learn how to give a decent blow job. I keep telling you, forget about this tenderness crap, go for the authentic geriatric contract - a blow job for a vibrator. Oh, I can hear you whimper now about how lonely that sounds. What you want is the lovely togetherness of the old in-and-out. Here we go again, candlelight and hugging, soft music and dancing, a lot of intimate bullshit about how close your feeling. No wonder you're feeling close. With that hardon pressed against her leg you couldn't get any closer. But, as Jackie Gleason, used to say, all that is fine, Ralphie boy, except the tradeoff is big trouble. For the old romantic in an out you pay with your life. From then on she has you by the short hairs. It's all in that self help book by Goldbergh which every body reads but nobody pays any attention to, "sex for commitment" - that's the trade. That wise old SOB even spotted your weakness for the mystical pose - you always chase those aloof broads who keep you at arm's length wondering about what turns them on and if you will ever get laid again. They make you feel like they are doing you a big favor by turning loose a little pussy and that you could do them a bigger favor by leaving them to hell alone. The challenge of warming up those icy broads never fails to excite you even though you always fail.

Women can sense your tenderness, you've had it ever sense you were a wimpy kid always reading books instead of playing football and joining the boy scouts like real American kids. And, its done about as much good as a continuous case of Scarlet Fever. No wonder you grew up to be a fucking Communist. You never learned that woman see tenderness as an opportunity for exploitation, not a manly value they can respect.

I know all that Dad, but I've always identified with the writer Malcolme Lowry who said about himself, "It's like I was born without a skin." I know you think Norman O. Brown, the famous shrink, probably described me better with his theory of polymorphous perversity - since I kind of ooze horniness from every pore. You can call that sensitivity or another form of vulnerability. Most women know tender, sensitive men are usually nice guys who don't win and damn few of them want to be associated with a loser. Most of them are like the woman in that book about women who love too much who finally found "nice guy" husband who didn't get drunk and beat her and she was bored stiff. It's not that they want to be beaten, they just like the excitement that comes with an association with someone that exercises power and control - like their fathers.

Well, if you insist on being sensitive instead of acting like a real man, at least you could be more creative, son! You can't just walk up to high class broads and say "let's fuck", but you should be able to get them in bed with something that works better than that sensitivity crap. Impress them with your knowledge and that string of degrees you wasted so much time getting. Hell, you must of learned something that a broad would be interested in. Tell them about the perverse sex life of the early Greeks you used to shock your mother with. That should at least get them thinking in the proper direction. Might even inspire them to let you have a little corn-holing during those times when they have the old rag on. You could try convincing them that if Socrates did it, it must be a class act. Anything would be better than that eighth grade stuff you're still using - trying to warm them up on the dance floor with a few not-too-subtle thigh thrusts. Dancing may be like sex with your clothes on but the classy broads like to wait till you got them between the sheets before you start rubbing their crotch. These professional women require a talking to. You've got to lie a lot about how goodlooking and smart you think they are. Make them feel like they just stepped out of a playboy foldout. The smarter they are and the more flat-chested they are the greater the likelihood they will lay down for that line since nobody ever noticed their tits before. That's where your vaunted creativity should help - You can imagine all that and lay it out like you really believed it.

Look at Woody Allen. He's even a worse wimp than you are. Yet, his creative allure brings him some real classy broads. Of course being rich and famous might help, too.

But Dad, I'm supposed to be authentic - you know, have my expressions match my feelings. I can't be conjuring up all these lies just to get laid. I'm supposed to use my creativity to find ways of making relationships based on authentic expression work, not just develop another fantasy trip. I'm not sure how to do that yet, but I think it has a lot to do with being flexible, finding different alternatives to the old, rigid and even primitive ways of relating I learned from you. Sure, I need to be creative sexually, but more than that I need to find creative ways of solving problems that arise over emotional issues that have very little to do with sex - like finding ways of giving and receiving more effectively, avoiding power struggles and exploring different approaches to disputes based on variations in life-styles and expectations.

There you go trying to talk like your goddamned shrink again. Nobody gives a good shit about authenticity - it's money that talks. That's the trouble with you neurotics - you make life much too complicated. Your neuroses give you a Woody Allen exterior without the talent. Instead of this degrading wimpiness, you could have at least developed a more productive neurosis. If you had only turned all your anger at your poor mother into an oral-anal fixation, like Norman O. Brown recommends, you could have turned into a capitalist pig with no trouble accumulated a bundle of filthy lucre and found all kinds of women to help you spend your money. Instead, you always try to change the system to fit your neuroses, trying to foment socialist revolution - which gets you nowhere but fired from every decent job you ever had. Once you're fired it's real easy for the system to ignore you. Without money and a decent job, no women in her right mind (except maybe some equally neurotic hippy chick) wants to put up with your Man from LaMancha complex. It's hard enough making it when you act like a normal, good American worker and you brownnose and kiss ass to keep from losing that sorry, low-wage job you've got. Why don't you grow up and stop reminding capitalist bosses that the system screws blacks and poor folks. Hell, no one cares except blacks and poor folks and they only care when they can't get drugs. So wise up, kiddo, and become an exploiter. It's like your dirty old uncle used to say when he was sober enough to be understood - there's only two kinds of people in this world, those who fuck and those who get fucked. Take your choice old fool.

And, speaking of old, what about your incipient senility that that wonderfully verbal ex-wife of yours used to laugh at. Do you think you can defeat the Grim Reaper and keep the old weapon hard by huffing and puffing around the neighborhood and tossing a few weights around. That senility isn't so incipient any more - it's here, man. You can measure it by the increasing amount of time you spend daily chasing around looking for your keys and eyeglasses. And you never can remember whether you've taken your antidepressants. It's a goddamn wonder you haven't O.D.'d on Nardil. You'd go bankrupt if you tried to get up with a high class YUPPY drug like Prozac at a buck and half a throw.

You are probably one of the few people alive that has extended your middle age crisis into senility. You've even still got that vulnerable kid act that you never grew out of and it reemerges more frequently with your descent into senility. That gets confused with your juvenile delinquent imitation that you tried on in the eighth grade and didn't drop until they almost threw you out of the Air Force. Then on top of all that you grafted this pseudo-intellectual, academic revolutionary pose which is just real enough to destroy any chance of ongoing employment in a decent teaching job. Now you've got this crazy idea that as you approach old age you can make your living as a writer.

Talk about split personalities! Yours is more like shattered into bits and pieces. You need to figure out who the hell you are, or who you want to be - put some of those pieces together. No wonder nobody knows who you are. You switch every time they start to get a fix on you. Women get confused as hell. Your ex-wife was convinced you had a Jeckyl and Hyde complex - the bad guy appearing right after the wedding. She never figured out she wasn't getting anybody new, she just hadn't noticed the other parts of your personality until after the marriage and the juvenile delinquent and the dirty old man parts of you appeared. She didn't like them, but, then, she didn't like tender and loving much either. It would have required her to be tender and loving back. She wanted that straight old-fashioned swap - sex for your life.

You need a little consistency in your life. Figure out what women want and then give as little as possible to them in exchange for some steady pussy. Get rid of all those old parts and put on a new successful image. That way you can screw a better class of women! Or as Woody Allen put it, you can strike out with a better class of women. I know you're going to tell me that you've spending all this money on shrinks to mold this new identity. How many years is it? Twelve or thirteen? And how many thousands of dollars? For What? To be told you should be authentic, intimate, tender and loving. Exactly what gets you into trouble. No successful man in America is like that. Look at your shrink

- how loving and tender is he if you don't pay your bill. How many poor folks and Blacks do you see in his office? He's learned how to suck in the rich broads and he keeps his hands in their pocket books for years. Probably gets laid right in his office any time he wants to. You should do as he does not what he says. You don't see him running around in a beard and jeans. He's got them new Brooks Brothers suits and wing tip shoes. The rich broads don't want no slob associating with them.

The only reason your shrink tolerates anybody that looks like you is you have that good state insurance that keeps those guys rich while the state extracts funds to pay the bills from the poor working stiff's who pay taxes. Remember how it was when you lost your job. How much help did you get from your shrink then? And, let me tell you how that intimacy scam that they try to sell you really works. It's the same trade, sex for commitment, except the shrinks have different words for it. According to them intimacy is when you share feelings and you give to each other. Sure, she puts out a little pussy - you give your life. The only difference is you talk a lot. You tell her you love her, that she's beautiful, that you feel close to her, etc., and she tells you about this expensive vacation the two of you should take to bolster your "intimacy," of course. You agree to pay for the vacation - she opens her legs.

I mean, the nerve of those shrinks. Ever since Freud, they been charging bunches of money to tell us men we are horny bastards who will fuck just about anybody we can get our dick into - before that the church made us feel guilty about screwing and now both the priests and shrinks have had their hands in our pockets - one charges money to tell you fucking's bad, the other to tell you fucking's good. The shrinks have the better message so they've been winning - but it ain't changed the cost of pussy, guilty or not you've still got to pay. You just feel better about getting laid if there isn't a guilt trip that goes with it. So, we are back to the vibrator - the thing about a vibrator is that the broad gets to feeling so good about her orgasm she forgets to charge. All that vacation talk is gone. You can stay home fire up the vibrator, set the old lady to sucking on your dick while the vibrator is working its magic and, if you think about how you hate your mother with enough vigor, you'll both come about the same time. Whamo! Matrimonial bliss. No more bugging your ass to take that eleventh trip to Disney World, or to visit her sister - she's happy at home with her orgasm. The shrinks and the church get no richer from you, your retirement fund grows, and you get to afford a fancy nursing home for your dotage.

]Ah, American technology, it's wonderful! I know it sounds too good to be true and it probably is. Most likely, you'll just fuck that up like you did everything else. You never would listen to me or your mother. You drove her into an early grave and now you're trying to do the same to me. It's a good thing I never swallowed that tenderness crap your shrink spits out to you gullible neurotics or I'd be deep-sixed like your old lady. You've got to be tough to endure a worthless son like you!

Chapter 14

The Single Scene; An Aging Male's View

You hear it at practically every mature males discussion group or social gathering where the battle scarred veterans of multiple marriages congregate: "Second marriages don't work," "The single scene spoiled me for ma' life," "I can never get married again," "marry a divorced women and you are buying double trouble - yours and the baggage left behind from her other marriage(s)." How much fire is there behind all the smoke? Is it getting harder to stay married the second time? Unfortunately there are no firm statistics, but if you are in singles' groups long enough, you are bound to see enough of the same faces returning from unsuccessful marriages to make you wonder. Having gone through two failed marriages to two divorced women, personal experience buttresses the evidence of my own informal survey. Almost everyone agrees that its hard to make a second marriage work and that the chances of it not working are greater if you pick someone from with children..

Some of these failures are caused by poor mate selection. If you look at single divorced women in a calculating way, you can determine three major categories that you should avoid at all costs: The first are the divorced women I call "barracudas." They will go after any male who splashes in their water, and carry him off. Any man weak and lonely enough to allow himself to be carried off will soon regret it. Then there are the "pariahs." They don't want a man as much as they want security. Watch out all you men with pensions! The pariah will fill you with fried chicken and other high cholesterol foods so that she can collect your pension after you stroke out, and she can go back into the singles world to look for another victim. The third major category are the "Southern Belles," found in the north as well as below the Mason-Dixon. These are usually good-looking, but spoiled-rotten, weak sisters. They appeal to macho men who want to take care of someone. Taking care of someone and their children gets real old even for the most macho of men, and good looks fade fast when they are all a person has to offer.

But, the number one cause of second marriages not working are not related to these obviously sorry examples of marriageable material, but by the problems created by children from other marriages brought into the home. Marry a woman from the major singles organization for the divorced, Parents Without Partners (PWP) and, by definition of membership eligibility, there are going to be other people's kids involved in the relationship. This will undoubtedly increase the stress and weaken the financial position of new marriage. Males are usually burdened with alimony and/or child support payments and females with almost-always insufficient support payments and with of raising the children - all of which has gets the new relationship off to a rocky financial start. I know that my first PWP marriage died from child-related causes. Besides being a financial drain, I just could not get along with my wife's daughter. I tried everything including family therapy, individual therapy, and ministerial intervention. We gave her riding lessons, bought her horse and brought her to rodeos.

Everything failed. She remained angry and resentful at me for taking up her mother's time. It was even harder on my wife - she was caught in the middle. Ultimately, she was forced to choose between us and, since loyalty to family is usually stronger than that towards the spouse, she chose her daughter. My experience was just a severe case of what is normal in second marriages - children resent the new male that has joined the family and a struggle ensues as to who is going to be the main focus of the mother's attention. The older the children are, the worse the potential for trouble becomes. Young children can be more accepting and even proud of their "new Dad." But with younger children, the burdens of babysitting can become more difficult. A few months of either struggle to get love and attention from a harassed mother, or sitting in front of the TV watching someone else's young children and most males begin to think fondly about the good old days when there was a single's function to attend practically every night with loads of different women around, all willing to give him time and affection. Such a male has been "spoiled" by the single's and may never marry again. If he yields to the lure of freedom, he may feel guilty and society may reject his hedonistic view of life, but he sure is having a lot more fun.

In my second marriage, I thought I had found the secret to successful marriage - find a woman whose children have left the home. Unfortunately, I ran into an unforeseen snag - a woman who used sex to control me. It did not take long to figure out what was wrong with this relationship and one year later I was back on the scene again free from my controlling mother of a wife, but feeling guilty for having failed once more.

I was never converted by the single-for-lifers. I had struck out twice, and would do so again, but I have a more realistic understanding of what I want and need. I still would rather share my life with one "significant other" than with a series of

different women. It took some looking, but I think I can find a woman who is not so burdened by problems from her past that she cannot give me the minimum amount of time, attention, love and affection that I need to keep me from straying mentally back to my swinging single existence. I know now that this is not just a matter of having children or not but the emotional availability and loving capacity of the woman and the man. Given that. Most everything else can be worked out.

Chapter 15

Environmental cost of yuppies

The costs of providing plush, mostly white, bedroom communities for Yuppies and rich folk in West Little Rock are mounting. The Chenal Valley project, for example, includes a road through to Highway 10 paid for by taxpayers. Now the Army Corps of Engineers comes in with a cost of \$23 million for the most recent phase of the Fourche-Rock Creek channeling project. Yet these costs are only the tip of iceberg. When environmental effects are figured in, the costs become inestimable. Every time channels are cut in creek beds, normal flows become deeper and faster. Runoff from the surrounding drainage basin is no longer filtered through vegetation and the slow meandering of the stream. Contamination is focused. What was once a healthy stream can become an open sewer.

If the stream then runs into a wetland area, then the potential for habitat destruction becomes magnified. This process is most evident in Florida, where the abundant wildlife of the southern Florida swamps faces extinction from the runoff associated with agricultural development.

With the Rock Creek part of the Corps project, the cause of the increased flow is not the kind of channeling associated with agriculture where farmlands are drained of excess water, but the destruction of trees and covering vegetation in western Little Rock to make room for houses for rich white people and apartment complexes for yuppies.

The true environmental costs of such reckless expansion have never been measured. The immediate effect on Rock Creek is obvious. Every rain turns the creek a deep tan as soil from western Little Rock washes down. The resulting turbidity chokes the stream, which lowers the dissolved oxygen level and can kill whatever life is left in the stream. The sediment carried by the creek tends to accumulate in places like Boyle Park, where there is some remaining vegetation and the creek slows down. Tons of this sediment were removed last year. Great ugly piles of it could be seen until just recently, when it was taken, in all probability, to West Little Rock to be used as fill replacing what was washed down before and will be washed down again.

The most recent West Little Rock project to contribute a massive load of sediment to the creek is the construction of the golf course associated with the Chenal Valley, rich-folk-housing project. The builders conducted an assault on all covering vegetation in a vast tract of land (7,000 acres) near the creek, in effect creating a desert. The effects on the creek were so bad that it triggered a response from the normally moribund Pollution Control and Ecology Department. Belatedly, the contractors have agreed to work with the Soil Conservation Service to take some protective measures.

But this is only the worst case of an ongoing problem that has social as well as environmental implications. The building of these wasteful big houses at a time housing for the poor is at a premium is a social crime. Building so far from the urban center leads to wasteful commuting and road-building, two obvious results that increase energy consumption. Perhaps worse are the effects of further dividing the city between rich and poor.

Whatever the ultimate result of this misguided use of society's scarce resources, Rock Creek is the first victim of westward expansion; every time a tree goes down or a house is built in West Little Rock, the runoff increases. Maybe it is time to put a restraining halter on Little Rock Realtors and builders, or at least make them pay some of the costs associated with their environmental and social destruction. It would also help to tax some of this excess wealth so that this kind of gross conspicuous consumption (membership fees to the golf course alone are supposed to be \$15,000) is not affordable.

The money could then be spent to address the problems of education and housing in the city, which would improve both the environment and the social system. Without all this building in the watershed, including that 7,000-acre golf course,

the Corps would not have to spend taxpayers' money to control flooding, nor would it be necessary to build new highways to speed yuppies away from the problems in the city.

The ancient Mayan civilization went through a similar process. It cut away at the rain forest around its center in an effort to support a growing population. As the land wore out and would no longer support agricultural production, the Mayans drifted ever further from their urban center until ultimately the whole culture collapsed. Gradually, the forest returned. But by then, the people were gone. The only way we know anything of the Mayans is from the ruins they left behind. Is that how future historians will know Little Rock?

Chapter 16

Who Pays for Urban Sprawl

In the past few years, the federal government has produced several studies, the major one by the Office of Technological Assessment, and the Sierra Club has produced eight regional studies on the theme of the cost of urban sprawl. These studies all agree that the kind of annexation that brings widely separated dwellings, built in traditional subdivision, is costly to the inner city in that it drives up unit costs of city services. But, more importantly, it is extremely costly in a sociological and environmental sense. It exaggerates the separation of rich and poor, black and white, and urban vs. suburban - a recent claim has been made that such suburban isolation breeds the alienation that produces the Columbine-Jonesboro syndrome. Sociologists are saying that sprawl (like that described above) is partly responsible for Columbine and other school problems because these large house, large lots, outside the city, sprawlville, isolate the young - unwatched partly because parents spend so much time working and commuting long distances. Bored, unsupervised, lonely kids get their kicks ...and you know the rest.

That is why they push New Urbanism as a possible community building strategy. Cluster houses, neighborhood parks, stores, grid streets, many different income groups, promotes community, walking, biking - healthy communities produce healthy teens. The point to remember is that, under current law, there is little to protect you from sprawl once the land is annexed. All you have to do is look to the west of Little Rock and you can see the result of unplanned growth - congested traffic, massive, unrestrained commercial development, large houses - all tied into the city's over-burdened infrastructure at considerable cost to all citizens in terms of rising costs for utilities, fire, and police protection. This was a major part of the need for the recent sales tax election (think soccer fields and fire stations as examples).

Little Rock, like many cities, has reached the limits of its natural boundaries as originally defined by the Fourche Creek Basin (which is the basis for our gravity flow wastewater treatment system). To push beyond those limits with unplanned expansion will cost us all heavily - but some will pay more than others.

Who pays unfairly for unplanned expansion? You do if you live in the older sections of any city. Much of the new development in recent years has been to create expensive, single family dwelling units on nearly an acre of land. Sprawl is defined as three or fewer dwelling units per acre. Density is the key. A study done by the Federal Office of Technological Assessment in 1996 shows that it costs roughly the same amount of money to provide police, fire, solid waste collection and disposal, library, and health services and general government to a large single dwelling on one acre of land as does to provide the same services to 15 dwelling units of Garden Apartments on the same one acre of land or 60 dwelling units in high-rise apartments on that same acre. The other rule of thumb is the further you are from treatment plants or delivery centers the more the services cost - includes water sewage electricity, phone, mail, newspaper - anything else that is delivered.

Those of us living in small houses and apartments in the central city have been paying taxes at the same rate as those who moved west. Because costs are so much higher per dwelling for these large houses, these houses effectively raise the total costs for those left behind in the central city and they have been paying for these higher costs through higher taxes and utility bills. Garbage service costs, for example, have risen from \$4.9 million to 11.8 million in the last ten years. House size doesn't matter. Everyone pays the same but the cost to the city to service the far west big house is much greater. Similar figures can be found for police and fire services where costs have doubled in the same period. Much of these cost increases come from the huge expense involved in protecting these big isolated houses, but again, those in the central city are taxed the same even though the costs of serving them have not increased that much. In effect, we have been subsidizing sprawl.

Of course the federal government subsidizes sprawl on a much larger scale, 63 percent of total housing subsidies will go to folks with an average income of \$123,000, only 19 percent will go to those who make under \$9000. It's no accident that housing for the poor grows scarce while the big houses sprawl.

Good planning reduces costs for everyone. Unfortunately, many annexations are taken in on demand. That means there has been little or no planning involved. According to the same Federal study cited above, such a lack of planning increases the costs of development to the city up to 40 percent - the difference coming from savings between planned, high-density growth and low-density sprawl of the type we have seen in Chenal Valley. Between 1990 and 1996, the density of our population in Little Rock dropped 45 percent. As we have seen costs for services have increased proportionately and the new tax plan has a bunch of sprawl related special charges in it.

Increasing asphalt can kill. Annexation on demand has vastly increased the amount of land within city boundaries covered by asphalt, as roads have been built and widened and parking lots extended in shopping malls built to serve this westward expansion. This has made Little Rock's #1 pollution problem - ozone pollution coming from auto exhausts - a much bigger threat. A recent NASA study reported by CNN and Time magazine showed that such increases in land covered by asphalt in Atlanta had raised temperatures in the city an average of ten degrees - making ozone pollution that gets worse with high temperatures - more threatening, especially to people with asthma. Another study reported that asthma cases among inner city children were on the rise - as much as 37 percent among a group of New York children. Every time we annex land we make the distances people travel and hence the ozone they put into the air that much greater. From 1990 to 1996, the number of miles people traveled in their cars increased by 20 percent in Little Rock. Let us stop unplanned growth while our children are still healthy.

Storms can get worse. Another byproduct of sprawl and the subsequent increases in temperature is the effect this has on storms. The same NASA study found that storms became more violent upon encountering the higher city temperatures in Atlanta (Remember Mayor Dailey's famous projection about Little Rock having the energy to become a small Atlanta). What that kind of energy and direction got us is a rating among the top five sprawl-threatened small cities in the country. Certainly Little Rock can do with less sprawl and without more violent storms.

We don't have to just let the city grow. We can plan. Other cities have. Pasadena, California forced Target to occupy an empty building downtown. Rutland VT did the same to Wal Mart. These guys don't have to build their big boxes out in sprawlville. We can make them move downtown. Portland, Oregon has had development boundaries for twenty years. Chattanooga has planned greenbelts and already has introduced electric, non-ozone producing, public transport. Madison, WI has whole neighborhoods built according to the New Urbanism, planned communities that address the environment and the question of sustainable growth. Hundreds of other cities have begun their "smart growth" planning. Even Fayetteville, AR has a law that plans for the acquiring of land for the expansion of city parks. We can, too, but we have to take the time and spend the money necessary to do it..

Chapter 17

Goliath of the Grand Prairie

The origins of Riceland Foods were in the downward spiral of rice prices in 1920, following years of high wartime returns for farmers. In 1920, rice went from \$3.00 a bushel in the summer to 30 cents at harvest time. Rice growers, like other farmers, were being taken advantage of by millers and other middlemen who had storage facilities and could await higher prices. In order to gain a modicum of control over the sale of their crops, some farmers had already formed producer cooperatives along the lines outlined by America's foremost advocate of cooperatives, Aaron Sapiro. The "Sapiro Plan," as his guidelines came to be called, was a simple mechanism for setting up democratically controlled cooperatives on a single commodity basis, for purposes of orderly marketing to receive the best possible price. The cooperative idea was gaining wide support in the country as a whole, and this support was ultimately translated into the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922 which expressly released cooperatives from the restrictions of the Clayton Antitrust Act.

In Stuttgart, the chief admirer of the Sapiro Plan was a local attorney named Clyde Pettit. A widely respected liberal, Pettit responded to the plight of the rice grower and donated his services to the organization of the Arkansas Rice-growers Cooperative Association. His dynamic speech-making brought enough support to the Cooperative to launch it off to a shaky start on September 23, 1921. In addition to the usual birth pangs of all new organizations, in the early years the Cooperative had trouble establishing its role and credibility as a marketing organization. It was faced with legal challenges from some of its own members who objected to the way the marketing was done. In addition, rumors of chicanery and outright theft were common, and the cooperative managers bickered amongst themselves. Despite these problems, the Association managed to survive through the difficult 1920's and even the near-disaster years of the Great Depression.

Meanwhile, out on the farm, rice growers continued to operate as they had for years. Teams of mules and horses could still be found at harvest time pulling binders and hauling carts of rough rice from the threshing machine well into the 1940's. Trucks and tractors were gradually taking over many of the animals' customary tasks, but most farmers still used their draft animals in some phase of their operation; usually, at harvest time when the demands on men, animals, and machinery were at their peak. Before the introduction of modern combines and mechanical dryers, rice harvesting was a complicated and drawn-out process. Rice had to be bound in bundles, stacked in shocks and left in the fields to dry before it was ready for threshing. The threshing process separated the rice grain from the straw. The grain was hauled away to the mills for processing while the straw remained in the fields piled in huge stacks to be used as cattle feed (and, occasionally, as slides for the farmers' children). The whole operation usually involved the efforts of around twenty-seven men, in addition to the animals and machinery. Under the contemporary system of harvesting, the whole process is completed by three people - one driving a combine assisted by two others in trucking the grain out of the fields to a dryer.

The new system of harvesting was perfected during World War II when the demand for rice was high and the supply labor low. Combines had been in use for years with other grains and had been adapted to rice, but were not used because there was no method of drying rice mechanically. Earlier experiments with rice driers had proved too expensive and so the old methods of binding, shocking and threshing continued. The War brought new pressures to develop a viable drier and the rice experimental station outside of Stuttgart was charged with its development. Under the leadership the station's director, L.C. Carter, such a drier was developed in the early 40's. In 1944, Carter became General Manager the Cooperative where he supervised the building of rice driers, first in Stuttgart and then at convenient locations throughout the rice growing area of Arkansas. The new methods were highly successful and within four years 90 percent of the rice in the state was processed in this manner. The Cooperative expanded dramatically in size and membership. From 1943 to 1947 rice sales increased from 4.2 million 16.4 million - a fourfold increase. In subsequent years, the Cooperative expanded dramatically in size and members. From 1943 to 1947 rice sales increased from 4.2 million 16.4 million - a fourfold increase. In subsequent years, Cooperative expanded geographically beyond the limits of the prairie. In so doing, it carried the Cooperative principle beyond the one-crop marketing scenario envisioned by Aaron Sapiro. By the

1970's, it was ready for a name change that reflected these developments in scope and function - hence the adoption of the name Riceland Foods.

The city of Stuttgart and the surrounding communities were dramatically affected by these developments. While the city of Stuttgart grew from 5,628 in 1940 to 10,473 in 1970, the surrounding communities shrunk, e.g., Crockett Township went from 635 to 257, Arkansas Township from 632 to 16, Bayou Meto Township from 838 to 450; all during the same period from 1940 to 1970. Schools and churches in the surrounding communities closed down, places with names like Hector, Olena, Casscoe, and Lodges Corner saw their population base dry up and their existence as viable communities end. Small farmers who did not have the credit or the capital to invest in the new combines either rented or sold their land to someone who did and moved out. Many landed in Stuttgart where they took jobs with Riceland Foods or with other associated businesses in the booming mill town. The large successful farmers also moved to town where they could build comfortable houses with indoor plumbing and city water, close to schools, recreational facilities, and especially, the churches. Since there were only a few jobs left on the farm for agricultural laborers, many of them headed for the city and took assembly line jobs packaging rice products and other assorted menial tasks provided by the mills and the seed companies.

Black farmers, because they tended to have small operations, had difficulty getting sufficient credit, and most importantly, could not rent sufficient land to make the operations competitive under the laws of the new technology, had an even higher mortality rate than white farmers. In 1978, only three black farmers could be found in the Stuttgart area. Black farm laborers suffered similarly from economic disadvantages, mostly from the last hired, first fired syndrome that Blacks have faced in most areas. Hence, many of them drifted into the city as well, providing a pool of unskilled labor for the mills. But since job opportunities for Blacks were scarce and usually limited to menial tasks, many of them left the county entirely (from 1960 to 1970, in spite of a high birth rate, Arkansas County's black population declined from 5,771 to 5,338).

The ironic fact of the situation was that while Riceland Foods was expanding and prospering, that prosperity was being shared by an increasingly smaller group of rice farmers. It is true that by 1975 the Cooperative had increased its membership to some 25,000, but most of these new members were primarily soybean rather than rice farmers - they continue to outnumber the rice farmers four to one. It also is true that the mills have given jobs to a substantial number of people, but except for the management positions, these are generally low-paid, unskilled, assembly line jobs that do little for the people who have them other than to keep them alive.

Also, it is perhaps unfair to call Riceland Foods a cooperative, for the management calls most of the shots and the average member plays no role in the decision-making process. Lip service is still paid to the idea of one man, one vote, but only a fraction of the membership even shows up at the yearly meetings to exercise that privilege. And most decisions are not even put before that small group, but are made by the management without consulting the members. This separation of management from the members was perhaps the inevitable companion of expansion, prosperity and bigness, and cooperatives are prone to bureaucratization like any other organization.

Recent decisions by the management have served to highlight this estrangement of the management from the farmers. The management supported the government's decision to end the rice acreage allotment system. Most of the rice growers were opposed to that decision since it ended their privileged position and opened up the industry for competitors. Here, management interest in expansion of the production of rice conflicted with the rice farmers' interest in limiting production. Another recent decision which involved the awarding of a \$100,000 professorship to the University of Arkansas' Department of Agricultural Economics also caused a stir since the expenditure was not approved by the membership and the professorship was promptly awarded to retiring President, L.C. Carter. Other members express resentment over the elaborate new building built to house management headquarters and the rumored purchase of a yacht on which to entertain customers.

By the middle 1970's, Riceland Foods had become a giant business with sales of close to half a billion dollars which brought it up to about halfway on the list of *Fortune's* top Five Hundred companies. Sixty percent of its sales were abroad. Contrast this with the figures for 1944 when gross sales were only slightly over three million and all sales were on the domestic market and a picture of dynamic growth emerges. As in most other businesses, the technocratic elite that emerged during the explosion became entrenched in power positions within the Cooperative. The organization that had been spawned by the economic collapse of the 1920's had transformed itself beyond the original goal of providing a better way to market rice and was now an entity unto itself capable of acting in its own interests without regard for the interests of originators, or without any great concern for the environment either.

In a message to members in 1978, Riceland's Chairman the Board, Bill Jones, called upon farmers in the Riceland area to bring additional land into rice production "through land forming, clearing and the diversion of farmland devoted to other crops." This call comes at a timewhen the water table in the area is dropping two to three feet per year and the prairie has been denuded of the trees that once grew in patches in islands in a sea of grass. No doubt the farmers of the prairie will respond as requested, chop down the few remaining trees, plow up the remaining patches of virgin prairie, and buy even more powerful pumps to bring the water up from below to irrigate the additional land. For these farmers no longer living on the prairie and have no need of the trees, and all but a **few** have forgotten what a beautiful sight the virgin prairie had been before the coming of the rice industry.

Chapter 18

Cotton Town of the Future?

Unlike many of the state's communities, in Wilson, Arkansas, most of the visible signs of poverty have been removed; the few remaining sharecroppers' shacks are earmarked for destruction and new housing subsidized by HUD has been built in the town. The Wilson family has incorporated its holdings and the family generally shuns the mint julep image. The three sons of Robert E. Lee Wilson III who run the Lee Wilson company are carbon copies of the type of junior executive that can be found in almost any company in America. The difference is that in Wilson and to a lesser extent, in Mississippi County, they wield far more power than your average junior executive.

For they are, after all, the inheritors of a way of life that was, in a way, an American variety of feudalism, the one-plantation town. At one time the Wilson family had owned all the land for miles around and all the buildings on it. They even owned other surrounding towns, such as Victoria, named after one of Daddy Lee Wilson's daughters; and Armolee, a composite word put together from Ar., Mo. and Lee Wilson. They still own most of the land, but they have been selling lots and homes (built by the Lee Wilson Construction Co. and financed by the Wilson Bank). Until the 1930's the Wilsons didn't have to bother much with government. They were a law unto themselves much in the way the medieval lord held sway over the manor, and the towns, such as they were, were places where the tenants picked up their provisions, watched an occasional movie or minstrel show and/or got drunk. Riding bosses made sure the necessary work was done and settled whatever arguments arose.

No one knows for sure just how many people lived in the Wilson area at its population peak at the end of the 30's, although an accurate count was kept of the mules (there were 4,000). A good guess would probably place the population around 10,000, most of them living outside the town in shacks with one family working anywhere from fifteen to forty acres and a riding boss or foreman for each Section (640 acres). Not a dense population, but one that maintained a kind of harmony between land and people through economic necessity. There was a kind of bondage, the tenants bound to the landlord through debt, living off provisions that the landlord furnished to be paid out of tenant's share of the season's harvest. The work was hard and monotonous; plowing, chopping, picking and planting were the main tasks; simple work that had occupied most of the people since childhood. As a retired riding boss explained it to me, about all he had to do was see that the traces and the harnesses were in order and the croppers went about their business. Yet there was room in this simple work for a great range of skill and diversity of talent. Some took pride in their skill at driving mules and horses. Others were swift and clean pickers (the acknowledged champion cotton-picker in the area was a black woman from Birdsong who reportedly could pick up to four-hundred pounds in a day, two-hundred being considered a good day's work for the normal picker).

As in other cotton areas, the countryside around Wilson was dotted with little mini-communities, each with its own church and one-room schoolhouse, frequently, one building serving both functions, church on Sundays, school during the week. What social life there was centered around the church and the school. I talked with a retired minister from one of these mini-communities who had watched his congregation agricultural workers gradually disappear, their jobs taken over by machines. He had stayed behind and ultimately resided one of Wilson's low-income apartments. His only function now as a man of the cloth was to give the blessing at the local neighborhood center's lunch for the elderly. He seemed to have accepted his fate and that of his congregation as the "Lord's doing" and harbored no ill feelings toward the agribusiness trends that had ended his life's work.

An elderly school teacher who had suffered the same fate in a nearby community was not nearly so Stoic. She open mourned the loss of community life, her job, and the social life that went with it. She worried about the breakdown of "discipline" in the young and saw it as a natural result the end of the close involvement of families with the community schools. Parents drove miles to the city to find work, children were bused more miles to a consolidated school, and no one had any time for the community. For her the decline of the community was especially tragic for she had no outlet for her still vigorous intelligence and accumulated wisdom, and, unlike the preacher, she was too proud to venture over to the neighborhood center (transportation was also a problem for her, there are no buses or taxis).

Wilson has been, in a sense, the beneficiary of the collapse of these little communities around it, absorbing their students as the schools closed and their parishioners as other churches disappeared. In spite of this it has lost population continuously since the late 1930's (Wilson was incorporated in 1950, so there are no census figures for the town before then). The 1970 figures put the population 1,009, down from 1,301 in 1950, a significant decline, but not nearly as high as that in the surrounding countryside. Nearby Whitten Township, for example, dropped from 1,786 to 799 in the same period (these township figures include land that is owned by the Wilson Co.) The big factor in the town of Wilson's survival has been the continued growth and prosperity of the Lee Wilson Company.

Boss Lee Wilson, the founder, had established the basis for the company in 1880 trading 160 acres of cleared land for 2,100 of Swamp timber land. He cleared the land of timber and bought more. Unlike most timber barons, Boss Lee kept the cleared land, had it drained and began to farm it. Benefiting from rich soil deposited over the years by the flooding of the Mississippi, the plantation proved to be remarkably productive. The Wilson holdings grew to 65,000 acres in the 1930's, at first concentrated exclusively on cotton. In what was becoming classical agribusiness procedure, Wilson began integrating vertically as he expanded his land ownership horizontally. Cotton gins, stores, houses and a bank were integrated into the Lee Wilson Company. Boss Lee left his estate to his son, Robert Lee Wilson II (or Roy, as he was called to distinguish him from his father and his son R.E.L. Wilson III). Roy continued to expand and to diversify the company. In the mid 30's, soybeans were added on a large scale, and the Wilson Soya Company was built to process the beans into oil and meal. A cottonseed oil mill was built on the outskirts of Wilson and a cooperative named the Delta Products Company was formed to operate the mill.

In forming the Delta Products Company the Wilsons gained the tax advantages of the cooperative organization and still maintained control over its activities by the sheer size and wealth of the parent Lee Wilson Company. The same reasoning was behind the incorporation of the town in 1948. The legal fiction of a democratically-elected mayor and five aldermen was created so that the family could receive tax benefits, and, more importantly, the town could become eligible for federal grants. As the Wilsons readily admit, it is profitable to build federally-funded housing financed through the Wilson bank, built by the Wilson Construction Company, supervised by the Wilson Housing Authority and insured by the Wilson Insurance Company. The people who live in these houses will then buy groceries, cars and drugs at Wilson-owned stores, eat out at the Wilson restaurant and drink at the Wilson club, buying gas to get there at the Wilson Service Station.

In the tradition of benevolent, authoritarian, communalism begun by Robert Owen in the early nineteenth century (whom the Wilsons claim as an ancestor), the Wilsons provide social services to their residents as well. There are a poorly-stocked library and a non-staffed medical-dental clinic, a lake for fishing and an eight-hole golf course; all available to the residents, gifts to the town from the Wilsons. They approve of the local Economic Opportunity Agency's neighborhood service center and have been known to help out with donations of money and equipment. The low-income housing for the elderly built by the Wilsons is as good if not better than similar projects in the state. Employees of the company are treated well. They have their own pension plan, and many of them have been able to purchase their homes from the Wilsons at bargain rates.

The result is that the town of Wilson is highly unusual in appearance. Unlike many rural communities in the Delta where decrepit housing is the rule, there are only a few remaining shacks in Wilson. There are no boarded up stores and vacant buildings. As fast as the old sharecropper shacks were vacated, the Wilsons had them torn down. Employees are encouraged to buy homes in town which is almost a necessity since, except for the low-income projects, there is no rental property in town. What little migrant labor is needed, is housed in trailers on the outskirts of town. By such measures the Wilsons have been able to maintain control over who lives in town.

The main square in town has been done over and each store now has an English Tudor front that makes the square look like a movie set for *Tom Jones* (the effect however, is spoiled by the pickup trucks and cars that are usually parked in front of Ye Olde Pub). Despite the tackiness of this architecture, the Wilsons at least have made an attempt to make their town unique and interesting and have been willing to spend some money to do it. No other agribusiness community in Arkansas has even tried. Most of the wealth extracted from the soil by agribusiness tycoons is spent on homes and cars, and, if there is any money left over, it usually is plowed back into the soil. There is almost never anything left for decoration, culture or public improvement.

The Wilson interest in public improvement has extended beyond the town itself. Robert E. Lee Wilson III sat on the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas for a number of years and is Chairman of the Local Board of Education. Mike Wilson, the current president of the Company, is a Justice of the Peace and sits on the Mississippi County Quorum Court, the legislative body of the county that has been made more significant under a recent reorganization that took a

good deal of power away from the county judges and put it into the quorum courts. This political activity pays off in terms of the Wilson's economic interests. Given the close links between agribusiness and the land grant universities, (the universities and the Branch Experimental Station are doing basic research that is put into practice by the agribusinesses) it doesn't hurt to have company leaders placed in a position to supervise their activities. The primary concern of the Wilsons with county government is with drainage and flood control on which their land is highly dependent. Decisions on taxes, solid waste disposal, water and sewage systems are also made at the county level and since the members of the court are mostly large farmers (so is the Judge), there is a built-in consensus for most measures. The controversies that arise are over which region of the county is to receive whatever roads are to be built or graded, schools improved, etc..

The Wilsons then, by using a combination of economic clout, political influence, and aggressive use of government programs, have turned their town into a kind of model community. There is, however, some question as to the usefulness of their experience for the communities that surround them. Mike Wilson, for example, speculated aloud during one interview about what he would be able to do if he moved to Joiner or Turrell, towns with huge proportions of poor people and hundreds of shacks. There are wealthy farmers in the area, but no single enterprise with the wealth and diversity of the Lee Wilson Company. Could even the highly-talented Mike Wilson break the cycle of poverty an despair that makes these towns such ugly places?

And, even if it were possible, is the Wilson model a healthy one? It is based, after all, on a kind of dictatorial plan that is foreign to American ideology, if not to southern practice. And, if we assume that workers for the Wilson Company and dwellers in the town of Wilson are relatively happy with the jobs and environment, and I found no indication that they were not, one has to remember that they are the survivors of an extensive weeding out process that is still continuing. The Wilsons at one time employed over three thousand farm workers, even more during harvest time. These employees, in turn, supported over ten thousand people. These people started leaving during the depression. More of them left during World War II - some to fight, others to seek jobs in the cities - but the greatest population drop came after 1950.

There was, during this time, "a happy marriage," as Hudson Wren, recently-deceased vice-president of the company, use to put it, between the fact of the laborers leaving and the introduction of ever-more powerful and sophisticated machinery. But once a new balance was achieved between the supply of labor and jobs available, the mechanization did not stop. In the late 40's tractors capable of cultivating two rows were considered amazingly efficient and were rapidly replacing mules. Those who could learn to drive the new tractors had a chance to stay on, those who could not or would not had to leave. The introduction of six-row cultivators and more powerful tractors that could distribute loads of herbicides and fungicides as they cultivated made the operation more efficient and practically eliminated the need for hand labor as well as reducing the number of drivers needed. Land and management also needed to be reorganized to accommodate the new machinery. The old riding bosses became farm managers in the 1950's under Robert E. Lee Wilson III and put in charge of 1,500 acre farms and a team of about ten tractor drivers. The old cropper shacks were removed as fast as possible and the land was leveled and graded to give it that uniformity that makes for efficient use of the huge tractors. Currently, with the availability of 18 row cultivators, the Wilsons are contemplating further consolidations into fields that are a mile long and a mile wide, and of course, further reducing the human component.

Tractors, however, could not be used for chopping weeds and harvesting cotton, and with the croppers gone other cheap labor sources had to be used. In tackling this problem the Wilsons showed some ingenuity. In the 1960's, for example, when government restricted the entry of Mexican migrant labor, the Wilsons tried replacing Mexican chopping teams with geese. The geese were known to have a fondness for weeds and a corresponding distaste for cotton shoots. And, turned loose in the fields, they would eat from dawn to dusk, seven days a week without pay, a seemingly economically and ecologically perfect idea. But the geese experiment was done in by three factors: the noise the geese made reached intolerable levels, the fences needed to contain them proved expensive, and the development of chemical herbicides that could do the same thing with far less hassle, made the end of this fascinating venture inevitable.

The Mexicans had been brought in to pick cotton, as well as to chop it, and most of the landowners in the area liked the system. During harvest time, the Wilsons used as many as 3,000 of them, most at work in the fields and a smaller number manning the cotton gins and doing other odd jobs. The Mexicans would work long hours for little pay and complained little about their dismal living conditions. But their foremost advantage, in the eyes of the farmers, was that unlike the old croppers who had to be provisioned throughout the year, once the Mexicans finished their work they left, and with their leaving, any obligations of the community as to keeping them alive or educating them left also. There were some problems with Mexicans and some of the old riding bosses objected to them because they had to be supervised so closely in order to ensure that the cotton they picked was relatively clean and that the bottom of their sacks were not filled with leaves. And, unlike the old croppers that the boss had most likely known all his life, these people were strangers who did not even know how to speak English.

The cutting off of this source of labor, not only inspired the Wilsons to experiment with geese, but also led to demands for new and improved cotton pickers. The basic idea for the pickers had been around since 1927 when the first successful picker was field-tested by two brothers from Arkansas, John and Mack Rust. International Harvester took up the Rust invention, which was to use moistened spindles to collect the ripened cotton bolls, and was ready to go into production by the end of the 1930's. It was discouraged from doing so by Eleanor Roosevelt who feared that the machine would deprive millions of Americans of needed income from cotton harvesting. By the 60's, Eleanor was gone and so were most the croppers she had originally been concerned about, and the path was cleared for mechanical picking.

By the middle of the 60's, all of the big farmers had bought mechanical cotton pickers. But for many of the small farmer in Mississippi County and elsewhere, mechanization spelled the end of their ability to compete in the cotton industry. They did not have enough land to use the new machinery efficiently and they were forced to either sell out completely or rent the land to an expanding neighbor. Statewide the number farms decreased from 216,674 in 1940 to slightly over 50,00 in 1974. Over 200 farms went out of business, most of the small farms. Average sales per farm in Mississippi County went up from around \$19,000 to \$65,000, a three-fold increase which demonstrates that those farms that remained in business were producing far more in volume per farm, but significantly, not more in total production, which fell by four per cent from 1959 to 1969. It did rise, however, by 10 per cent from 1969 to 1974, bringing total production only slight above what it was in 1969. Cotton production in Mississippi County has fallen off significantly in the last fifteen years from 229,000 bales in 1962 to 88,900 bales in 1976. Yields per acre also fell from 559 pounds per acre in 1962 when they were still picking by hand, to 363 pounds per acre in 1971 reflecting some decline in soil fertility, but mostly indicative that higher yields were the result of cleaner and more intensive picking done by humans before their replacement with the picking machines.

All of the above has been a round-about way of getting to three basic points about mechanization: It has had tremendous human costs in terms of the loss of jobs and family farms. It has increased the costs of production without increasing yields per acre. It has transformed the social structure of rural America in a dangerous way by widening the gap between the classes and reducing the possibility for upward mobility in agriculture. The rich, like the Wilsons, may get richer, and through their housing projects they may provide some relief for the elderly poor in their town, but that does nothing for the thousands that left their farms and are now "piled up in the city," functionless, unemployed or underemployed.

Chapter 19

The End of the Independent Poultry Growers

In the early days of the poultry business in Arkansas, independent farmers grew baby chickens into adult birds and, for his services, the farmer could usually expect around a nickel a bird. He grew the birds for a local feed store, a hatchery or a local broker. He never actually owned the birds and his main concern was to keep as many of them alive as possible. The farmer contributed his labor, his land and buildings, and he, in turn was supplied with chicks, feed and medicine by whoever he was dealing with. The system had developed in the 1930s when the farmers of Northwest Arkansas turned away from growing apples and turned to poultry as an alternative. Conditions were good for growing chickens in the Ozarks. The rocky soil of the hills dried quickly and that kept down the spread of disease. Abundant breezes aided the drying process and provided sufficient ventilation. The farmers did not get rich, but for many the poultry business was what kept them on the farm. The industry continued to expand steadily into the 1940s.

For veterans returning from World War II, the poultry industry still looked attractive. For those who wanted to come back to the Arkansas hill country, it was the only readily-available answer to that longstanding quest of farmers in the area for a way to make a living on their unproductive soil. Ellis Hale of Waldron, Arkansas was exactly that kind of veteran. After his discharge, Hale returned to the hills in 1946, invested in three hundred acres around Waldron, built some broiler houses, and went into business. After five years as an independent broiler grower, he left Arkansas in 1951 to work in a factory in Kansas. When he returned to the chicken business in 1961, things had changed dramatically. In the ten years from 1954 to 1964, the broiler industry went from three per cent to 98 per cent integrator-controlled. Feed companies like Ralston-Purina had integrated forward to develop markets for their feed, and processors like Campbell Soups had integrated backwards to control costs.

Technological innovation had made it possible to grow chickens on a large scale while controlling disease, process them, and transport them all over the country for sale in supermarkets. The American appetite for chicken seemed to be growing with no end in sight. (The average consumption went from 18 lbs. in 1940 to 39 lbs. in 1969, and up to 52.9 lbs in 1976). If the poultry industry seemed to be the answer to the perennial search of the hill people for a way to make a living, to Hale and other growers, integration seemed a way to end the fluctuation in the market and assure them of a living wage. It didn't work that way. Competition between the integrators forced prices down. The weaker ones fell by the wayside. The growers were called upon to pay their share in the struggle for efficiency and lower prices. A crisis of overproduction hit the industry just at the time Ellis Hale returned to Arkansas to devote his time, energy, and life savings into the broiler business. By 1961, Hale had \$50,000 invested in an operation capable of growing 50,000 broilers - a huge operation in the early 60s. All forecasts were optimistic. But in 1961, Hale's dream of a comfortable living began to fall apart.

Promised \$1.50 per hundred pounds of finished broilers by the company (Arkansas Valley Industries) he had contracted with, Hale was paid only \$1.35. No trace of the \$1.50 contract could be found by the company, or so they claimed. The experience caused Hale to look more closely at the situation he and his fellow growers had gotten into. They had support the integration of the industry on the basis that it would bring stability to the marketplace - they were guaranteed a price for their birds. But what could they do if the company did not live up to its promises? Not much, as Hale and others soon found. One individual could not fight the company by himself and expect to win. Realization of that fact had been the fundamental motivation of labor organizations for over century. The answer for the growers seemed obvious - get together and present a united front to the integrated companies.

Growers organizations had already been formed elsewhere in the South, particularly in Alabama. As the growers in Arkansas came together, they found that they shared common grievances. They all complained of a feeling of powerlessness and dependency when dealing with the integrators. The company counted the chicks that were brought to their broiler houses - the grower had no way to check that count (if you can visualize a large, long room filled with thousands milling baby chicks, you can understand the problem counting presents). The company hauled the feed to the grower in its own trucks and the grower had to accept the company figures on how many tons were delivered - a highly

important item since the measure of the efficiency of the grower was determined by how much feed he used in growing the birds. The more meat he produced per pound of feed, the better. The feed conversion ratio, as it is called, is used by most companies to rate the growers and determine the price per bird they received. That ratio would appear much lower if the grower were short-changed on feed. If he actually received less feed than the company said was delivered, his feed conversion ratio would appear lower than it was and his pay would suffer. The growers suspected that grain deliveries were manipulated to give better ratios to favored growers and to punish those out of favor with the company.

Finally, when the birds were grown, the company came a picked up the birds, and brought them to the process plant - again, the grower had no way of checking the company's results. The grower had to take the company at word. If the company determined his efficiency was low, he could be told to invest in new houses or better insulation, new fans or heating systems, and, if he did not or could not afford to, then he could be dropped as a grower. And a grower who is dropped is worse off than a worker who has been fired for he cannot move his land and equipment to another area and no company in his locale is likely to deal with a grower has been dropped by another company for inefficiency.

It was a kind of sharecropping - a "poultry peonage." But these were not ex-slaves who were caught up in this new bondage - they were independent farmers with a of history of fighting for their rights. And fight is exactly what Hale did. In the spring of 1962, he and his father and brother began to organize for the Northwest Poultry Growers Association in and around Waldron, Arkansas. Company reaction was immediate. Membership meetings were surrounded by company officials taking names of growers attending. In August of 1962, Hale learned that he was being dropped as a grower, and he has not grown any chickens since. His father and brother were cut off shortly afterward, along with various other growers who had played an active role in the Grower's Association. The Hales tried to get growing contracts with other companies but were not able to. A blacklist was passed among the integrators.

The Hales tried to take their case to court, but, because they could not afford attorney's fees, they did not. A complaint was filed with the government and, ultimately, in 1966, hearings were held in Fayetteville, Arkansas by the Packers and Stockyards Division of the Consumer and Marketing Service of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. On January 23, 1968, three companies - Ralston-Purina, Tyson's Foods, and Arkansas Valley Industries - were ordered to "cease and desist" from dropping growers for trying to organize or joining an association of growers, to reinstate any growers so terminated, to stop harassing Association organizers, and to stop blacklisting Association members. However, the companies appealed the order in the Federal Courts and in 1972 the decision was overturned by the St. Louis Court of Appeals on the grounds that the Packers and Stockyards Division lacked jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, the blacklisting of the Hales and the others had effectively halted the attempts of the growers to organize a strong association. The companies had shown that they could put individual growers out of business and that the growers' appeal through government channels was an expensive, lengthy and ultimately fruitless exercise. Since most of the growers had their life savings tied up in broiler houses and other equipment necessary for growing chickens, they had no choice except to take what the integrated companies gave them or get out of the business. As one Campbell Soup official put it to me recently, "The grower has the right to deal with Campbell or not to." If he does, then he grows the birds according to Campbell's specifications for the price that Campbell pays.

To make it difficult for the growers to play one company off against the other, a kind of geographical zoning has taken place over the years - the growers in the area closest to the processing plant all tend to deal with that same company. There are also economic factors that play into this since delivery costs of feed and chicks are correspondingly reduced. Recent increases in transportation costs have accelerated this tendency. Because of this zoning, a grower who incurs the displeasure of his company might as well leave the area.

Perhaps the ultimate in the effects of the poultry industry on a single community can be seen in the Lloyd Peterson chicken empire in and around Decatur, Arkansas. The location of Decatur, tucked away in the extreme northwest corner of Arkansas next to the Oklahoma border, isolates and exaggerates the effects of this one poultry processor on that community. There is virtually nothing else in the town except Peterson Industries and a few retail outlets that feed and clothe Peterson employees. The company employs over a thousand people in its "totally-integrated poultry operation." The population of the town itself is only 800. People come into work from surrounding farms, husbands or wives, whose partners are left behind to tend the broiler or egg houses. During the height of the processing season, Indians are brought in from Oklahoma to work the assembly lines.

Peterson's is a relatively small company compared with Ralston-Purina or Tyson's, but it has won an international reputation for breeding "high performance broiler-breeders and the company maintains a fleet of five jets to fly these valuable specimens around the world. In addition to the usual provisioning of chicks and feed to his growers, Peterson

also sells them LP gas and insurance. The whole operation designed to, as the company brochure describes, "insure quality production by leaving nothing to chance or random discretion." The breeder research facilities at Peterson's are far better than anything to be found on any University campus. In fact, the Arkansas University occasionally makes use of Peterson's laboratories for some of its experiments. Total control from research to marketing under the Crystal Lake brand name has enabled Peterson to compete with bigger companies.

All of the 250 farmers who grow broilers or eggs for Peterson's live within a 14 mile radius of the town. They are watched and graded carefully by grower supervisors. Their pay is dependent upon a complicated feed conversion ratio. Needless to say, there was little action in the Peterson country when the growers association was organizing in the 60s. Still occasional signs of the old hill people's independence crop up. The tale of one angry grower who was being cut off for inefficiency was making the rounds when I visited Decatur. The grower greeted the catchers who came to collect his lac batch with several rounds from his shotgun and only relented when they returned with the sheriff and several deputies.

But such antics are unusual and, under Lloyd Peterson's benevolent dictatorship, quiet reigns in Decatur. Peterson himself, dispenses moral lessons in the company newsletter which are guides to correct thinking directed towards those who might otherwise stray from the path of righteousness. In the News and Views for August-September 1977, for example, the lesson was on political systems. There are, we learn three basic systems: Communism, Democratic Socialism, and the Free Enterprise System - the first two are bad and the good one (ours) is threatened by things like national health care planning (socialized medicine). Since "private enterprise is the best system to come along yet," Peterson's word to his readers is, "Let's not sell it out cheaply!"

One would assume that such simplistic moralizing would send any true ancestor of the Brothers of Freedom to reach in for his shotgun, and occasionally, as we have seen, one of them does. But most of the remaining growers walk with bowed head and have long since learned not to think. Having lost control over their economic operations, the growers have succumbed in other areas as well. The company keeps a tight reign on local government and everyone accepts the fact that the Mayor of Decatur works for Peterson too. Decatur may be an extreme example, but similar loss of economic and political influence among small farmers can be found throughout the state

To be fair to the farmers, one should point out that the demise has been hastened by the arrival of vast numbers of migrants moving in to take advantage of the climate and the natural beauty of the Ozarks. Many of them see in the broiler industry a chance to supplement a meager retirement income. They invest their life savings in the best available equipment and spend their declining years carefully tending their flock. Some of them are highly-educated, technically-trained people. They are attracted to the technical aspects of the modern broiler and egg industry. They are not about to quibble with Lloyd Peterson or Don Tyson over a few cents per bird one way or the other or join any association to help them get more. They are content with what they get as long as that return seems stable.

Many of them don't realize that they are making things more difficult for the local farmer with his old broiler house who can't afford the new equipment. But the integrators know what is happening and they use the inability of the old farmers to modernize their operation as a vehicle for getting rid of them and hiring newcomers. That way the company gets the use of added capital in the form of buildings and equipment purchased by the newcomer. Some companies, like Tyson's, have their own loan companies that will aid in financing the new operation. The newcomers dilute further whatever was left of the old sense of community. Without relatives and with no feeling for the community, the new growers are committed only to protecting their investment, which they do by cooperating closely with the company. Content with the returns from their new investment, they don't look down the road to the day when that equipment will be old and its inefficiency will cause them to be driven out just as they drove out those who preceded them.

In such a situation, the possibility of creating an effective growers' association is virtually nil. For the present, it is to the advantage of the integrators to contract with individual growers who provide them with capital and cheap labor. But it doesn't take any great imagination to see that the day is rapidly approaching when the integrators will start doing their own growing in massive houses close to feed mills and processing plants, and linked with vast pastures where cattle are raised on grass made fertile with chicken litter. Peterson is already breeding prize stock. Tyson has developed and built massive pig-growing facilities, and there remains only a few technical problems to be taken care of before he does the same with chickens. Once that is accomplished, the companies will have that total control that they have been after for so long and thousands of growers will have to join the Hales in seeking other uses for their chicken houses.

The recent development of a solar heated chicken house by the University of Arkansas is a case in point. In its current state, the solar house is far too costly and inefficient for the average grower to consider. But for a company like Tyson Foods, building on a massive scale, who knows?

There is no doubt that the poultry industry has brought a great deal of money into Arkansas, and especially Northwest Arkansas where the industry is most concentrated. The figures for the production of broilers are dramatic. Arkansas has led the nation in the total number of broilers grown every year since 1971 until 1999 when the state was overtaken by Alabama. Farm income from broiler production has jumped from slightly less than a million dollars in 1935 to 36.9 million in 1950 to 577.3 million in 1978. Tyson Foods, the single largest company had gross sales of 22 million dollars in 1976. The company employed 5,400 people and contracted with 1,239 farmer/growers. This generation of money and jobs is not to be scoffed at, especially in a state that ranks close to the bottom in per capita income. The poultry business has rescued many of the hill people from dire poverty. But, in the process it has also robbed them their independence and turned them into lackeys and robots. The wealth has been shared unequally. Tyson and Peterson and a number of their high executives can live in opulence while the growers eke out an existence. The poultry processing plants pollute the rivers and streams of Arkansas some of the most beautiful in the world, and the companies respond by fighting against water quality control legislation because it would add expense to their business.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by its actions breaking the Growers' Association and in pitting one grower against the other in an unceasing quest for efficiency, poultry industry has contributed to the erosion of the spirit of the hill people and all but eliminated the old sense of community that inspired the Brothers of Freedom. The young people in the back-to-the-earth movement have recaptured some of that spirit and are rebuilding old communities, but on a very small scale. The Daddy Warbucks mentality of chicken tycoons is frightening enough by itself, but erosion of the conditions which fostered the democratic ideas that could combat the technocratic fascism of Don Tyson and Lloyd Peterson is a source of both sadness and alarm, for without those ideals, who will do the work of the Brother of Freedom?