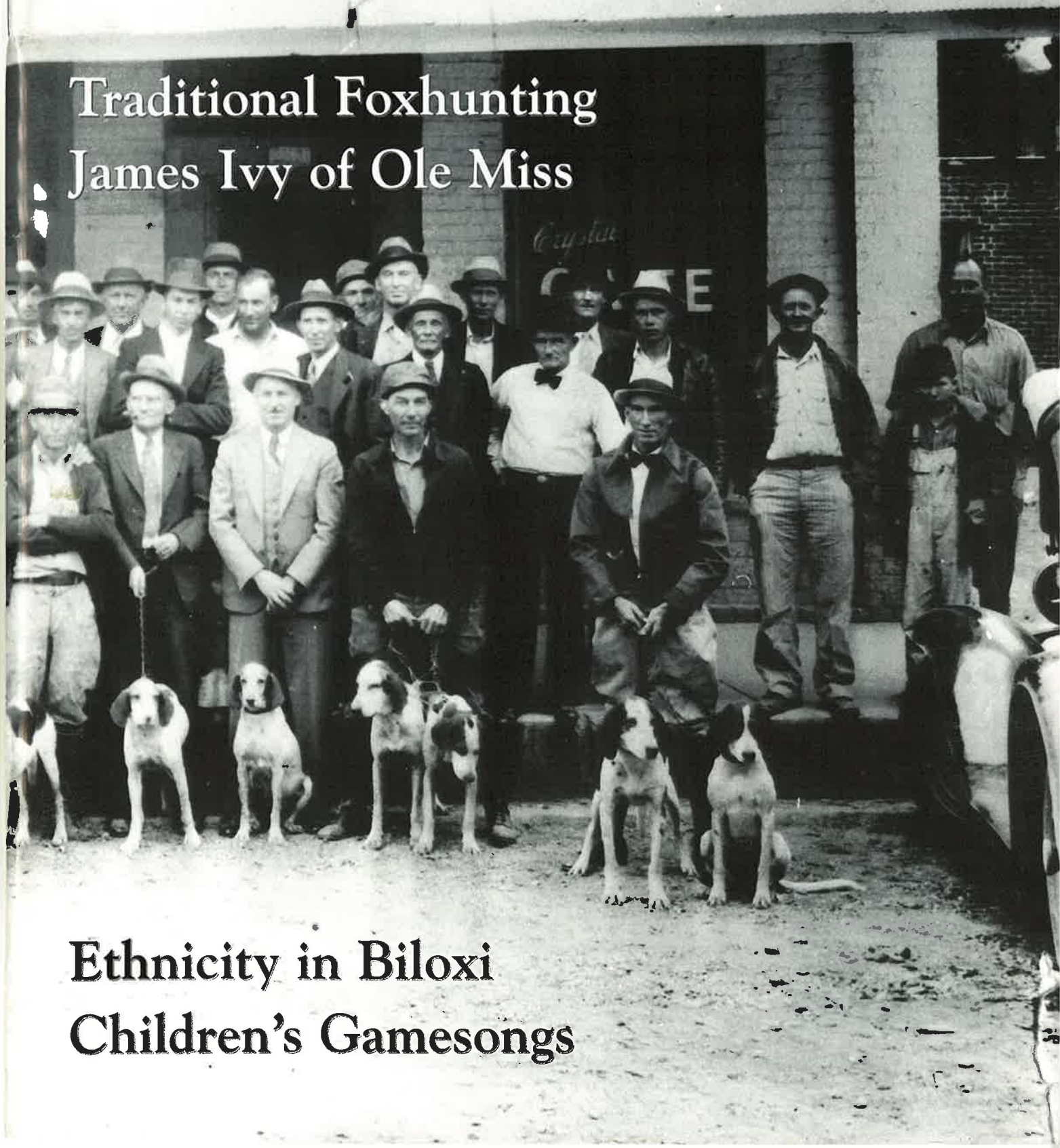
Mississippi Folklife

Volume 28, No. 1 Winter/Spring 1995

$5.00



Traditional Foxhunting
James Ivy of Ole Miss

Ethnicity in Biloxi
Children's Gamesongs

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Editor's Note

Welcome to *Mississippi Folklife*, a publication that takes the place of the *Mississippi Folklore Register* as the major forum for the discussion and presentation of ideas, research, and images of Mississippi folk culture. The name change to *Mississippi Folklife* better communicates to readers the content of our publication, and the format change more appropriately accommodates photographs and other illustrations to appeal to a broader audience. We will do much over the next several years to sharpen our focus with adjustments in content and design, and I welcome comments from readers on ways to make this publication vital and relevant to all who are interested in tradition and change in Mississippi folk culture.

The content of this issue is appropriately diverse. Aimee Schmidt, a native of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, gives us an insightful look at culture and identity in Biloxi's seafood industry in the first of a two-part series. Central to any understanding of folklife and cultural identity is an understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and occupational history. "Down Around Biloxi" offers a historical framework in which to look carefully at the diversity of occupational and cultural life within the maritime traditions of Biloxi.

Mississippi Folklife will examine shifting symbols within tradition. Anthony James's article on Blind Jim Ivy explores the symbolic role Ivy served for an all-white University of Mississippi student body and alumni. Looking at the portrayal of Ivy in University annuals and campus newspapers, James reveals a quintessential symbol of paternalism. With the death and burial of Ivy, argues James, racial propriety at Ole Miss gave way to antagonism and anger.

Perhaps no tradition in this state is more pervasive than hunting. Wiley Charles Prewitt, Jr., an experienced and avid hunter himself, explores the shift in fox hunting, discussing how changes in hunting practices reflect the change in the way people relate to the environment and the land. Looking closely at a community of fox hunters in Copiah County, Mississippi, Prewitt utilizes oral history interviews in an attempt to understand community feelings about this change. Bill Pevey, also a hunter, shares insights on the meaning of the hunt to fox hunters. Additionally, Pevey's tenacious picture research led to this issue's cover photograph.

In 1939 Abbott Ferriss accompanied folklorist Herbert Halpert on a folksong collecting tour of Mississippi. Ferriss was then working for the Federal Writer's Project. His interest in folksong has continued throughout a distinguished career as a sociologist at Emory University. Returning in recent years to several communities he visited in 1939, Ferriss attempts to measure the persistence of gamesongs among children. His article combines documentary material from 1939 with a look at song traditions among a select group of children today.

Each issue of *Mississippi Folklife* will feature a variety of reviews. We encourage submission of publications and media programs for review, and also welcome suggestions of potential reviewers. We also will run announcements, notes, and news in a section entitled "Field Notes."

I want to thank Chuck Yarborough, Managing Editor of *Mississippi Folklife*, for his good work on this issue and Orin Carpenter for layout and design. Thank you for sharing with us your thoughts and ideas on *Mississippi Folklife*.

–Tom Rankin

This volume of *Mississippi Folklife* is funded in part by
the Mississippi Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mississippi Folklife is published under the auspices of the Mississippi Folklore Society and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Subscriptions are $10.00 per year, which includes membership in the Mississippi Folklore Society. Library memberships are $10.00; life memberships are $100.00. Individual issues, when available, may be purchased at $4.00 per issue, excepting "Special Issues," which are $5.00. Subscription correspondence, requests for back issues, and other business should be directed to *Mississippi Folklife*, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677. Manuscripts, books, tapes, films, and CDs for review, and other editorial communications should be sent to Tom Rankin, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677. Manuscripts should be submitted on computer disk, preferably either in Microsoft Word or WordPerfect formats. Submissions not on disk should be double-spaced.

US ISSN 0026-6248

Field Notes

Elder Roma Wilson Receives National Heritage Fellowship

In June, 1994, Elder Roma Wilson was named to receive a National Heritage Fellowship awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts. An African American Harmonica player from Blue Springs, Mississippi, Wilson was one of eleven folk masters in traditional artforms to receive the award.

"We honor these extraordinary Americans for their lifetime work," said Arts Endowment Chairman Jane Alexander. "They are artists of traditions pure in form and rich in spirit, the wellspring of our diverse American Culture."

As is often the case with music passed on through aural tradition, an artist's creations may become more famous than the artist himself. This is certainly the case with harmonica player, singer, and composer Elder Roma Wilson, whose music is known to millions of Americans, while he remained in obscurity until being "rediscovered" in the 1980's by his former partner in song, Reverend Leon Pinson.

Roma Wilson was born in 1910 and hails originally from Tupelo, Mississippi. Folklorist Worth Long recounts Wilson's early musical life: "Elder Roma Wilson learned to play the harmonica as a boy with old, worn-out harps discarded by his older brothers. He learned to 'choke' these harps in order to get traditional sounds out of them. He was taught by both traditional secular and scared harp masters and became known throughout the state for his version of the song 'This Train.'" A young minister as well as accomplished harpist, Wilson subsequently teamed up with the young, blind, guitar-playing Reverend Pinson to travel around Mississippi and Arkansas, preaching the gospel on the "brush arbor" circuit and playing the religion-inspired music for which they both became known as masters.

In the 1940's, he parted ways with Pinson and moved to Detroit to raise his family, making his living as a street musician on Hastings Street. It was here that Joe Von Battle, owner of Joe's Record Shop covertly recorded Wilson's astonishing harp-blowing and subsequently released a 78 rpm recording of "Lily of the Valley" and "Better Get Ready," on the Gotham label. These recordings became legendary, and when they were re-released in 1983 by St. George Records, the liner notes stated: "Concerning Elder R. Wilson, nothing of a background nature is available for study. Robert [Richard] remembered recording with a preacher, but sadly nothing else....Hopefully more information will surface on this charismatic preacher who blew harp and quite possibly had the help of ascending masters, as blues legends claim that one sold one's soul to the devil to play that well." Elder Wilson replies: "That ain't true. I'm alive and well in Mississippi and still don't play no blues." Elder Wilson also taught his sons to play the harp, and in another 1940's recording at Joe's Record Shop, he and his three sons made what is now considered to be an important historic 78 rpm release of what Mike Seeger has called "the single most important selection by multi-harp players in existence."

Elder Wilson and Reverend Pinson were reunited when Wilson returned to Red Hill, Mississippi, in the 1980's. They have since performed at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, the Chicago Blues Festival, the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, the National Black Arts Festival, and other major events. In 1991, the Southern Arts Federation took them to venues throughout the South as part of the "Deep South Musical Roots" tour. Elder Wilson's performances today, usually coupled with his long-time partner Pinson, move audiences as much as they ever did, as described by David Whiteis of the *Chicago Sun-Times*: "Wilson, who alternates his harp blowing with the 'brush arbor' preaching in the traditional southern rural style, provides eloquent accompaniment and a gentle impetus for Pinson's fretwork. Together they provide a rare testimony to the power of music as a vehicle of faith."

Elder Roma Wilson, left, sitting with his friend and musical partner Reverend Leon Pinson.

George Worley Boswell, 1920-1995

George Worley Boswell, former professor of English at the University of Mississippi and a respected folklorist, died March 22, 1995 at his residence in Tupelo. Though Boswell had recently moved to Tupelo from Nashville, Tennessee, he was a long-time resident of Oxford and Professor Emeritus at the University of Mississippi. Educated at David Lipscomb University, Vanderbilt, and George Peabody College for Teachers, Boswell was a past president of the Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi Folklore Societies. He was a counselor and regent of the American Folklore Society, a member of the Modern Language Association and founded Kappa Delta Pi Honorary Society at Austin Peay. He also founded the Oxford Madrigal Society.

Charles K. Wolfe, folklorist and music historian, has recently completed editing *Folksongs From Middle Tennessee: The George Boswell Collection* which will be published by the University of Tennessee Press. Included is this volume are folksongs Boswell collected in Tennessee during 1948-1958. "As far as I'm concerned," asserts Charles Wolfe, "Boswell is the most important collector of folklore and folksong in Tennessee, especially in middle Tennessee. Long before other folklorists acknowledged the potential of collecting in urban areas and from professionals, Boswell was collecting in Nashville from doctors at Vanderbilt. He collected songs from the Tennessee River to the Cumberland Plateau. And he was the only folkorist to go out and collect from Uncle Dave Macon. He did very important work."

In 1987 William S. Hays, then Secretary-Treasurer of the Folklore Society, established the George W. Boswell Scholarship Fund. Any donations to the fund in memory of George Boswell should be sent in care of Tom Rankin at the University of Mississippi.

In the Spirit: Alabama's Sacred Music Traditions

The Alabama Center for Traditional Culture will hold "In the Spirit" May 13 - 14, 1995, at the Gadsden Ampitheatre. The ACTC received a 1995 Cultural Olympiad Regional Designation Award in the Arts from the A.C.O.G. for this exploration of Alabama's rich variety of sacred music. The projects two-day performance celebration will include gospel, Sacred Harp, hymns, bluegrass gospel, Christian Harmony, gospel quartet, and Covenanter psalm singing. A Book of essays and a CD recording will be available May 1st.

For more information call The Alabama Center for Traditional Culture, (334) 242-3601.

AFS Annual Meeting In 1995

The American Folklore Society will hold its annual meeting at the Lafayette Hilton in Lafayette, Louisiana October 12-15 1995. The special theme for the 1995 Convention is "The Creolization of Culture." The AFS February newsletter quotes the late Cajun musician and National Heritage Fellow Dewey Balfa on the concept of creolization: "I'm interested in preserving the life of the culture and not freeze-drying it for others to visit [and study] conveniently."

For more information about the conference contact Lucille Dinon Horn, AFS 1995 Annual Meeting, 4350 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 640, Arlington, VA 22203.

African-American Shape Note Project

The Mississippi Arts Commission and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture have received a grant from the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts to document the traditions of African American shape note singers in Mississippi. With this support, Project Researcher Chiquita Willis is continuing her thorough documentation of this important tradition.

For more information on the project, contact Chiquita Willis, African American Studies, University of Mississippi, 38677.

Living Blues Celebrates Twenty-Five Years

In 1995, *Living Blues* celebrates its 25th anniversary as America's most respected blues magazine. Since its founding in 1970, *Living Blues* has grown as the popularity of the music has grown. Along the way, the magazine has staked its reputation on lively, uncompromising, and in-depth coverage on the blues scene.

The March/April 1995 issue of *Living Blues* commemorates the 25th anniversary by looking forward rather than backward. The focus of this special 192-page issue is on the "next generation" of blues, with profiles of many of today's up-and-coming artists.

For more information on this issue or *Living Blues* in general, contact Jennifer Langston, Publications, Hill Hall 301, University of Mississippi, 38677.

Building Named for Vickers

East Central Community College will dedicate its new fine arts center May 6, 1995, in honor of Ovid Vickers, president of the Mississippi Folklore Society. Vickers is retiring after 40 years of teaching on the ECCC campus where he has been an influential teacher of English, Speech, and Drama. Writing in the *Clarion-Ledger*, Danny McKenzie commented on Vickers and the Center: "If ever there was a more appropriate honor than East Central Community College naming its fine art center for Ovid Vickers, it doesn't come to mind."

Manuel, the young shrimp picker, five years old, and a mountain of child-labor oyster shells behind him. He worked last year. Understands not a word of English. Dunbar, Lopez, and Dukate company. Photograph by Lewis Hine, *Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress*.

DOWN AROUND BILOXI:

Culture and Identity in the Biloxi Seafood Industry

By Aimee Schmidt

Editor's Note: This is the first of a two-part series tracing the rich cultural identity inherent in Biloxi's Seafood Industry.

When John O. Seeligman, the city engineer of Biloxi in 1900, surveyed and drew the official city map, he called Biloxi "the recognized metropolis of the Mississippi Sea Shore." The city owned about twenty-five miles of streets "all of which are shelled and well adapted for vehicles and bicycles." Biloxi boasted a lovely seashore drive "passing all the beautiful summer residents of the Southern privileged class." Furthermore, the city had "two ice houses and one cold storage house which answered all the requirements of a modern city."

Seeligman's exceedingly complimentary description was not far from the truth. As early as the 1850s Biloxi was one of the nation's premiere resorts. Grand hotels graced the waterfront, steamers from New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama made regular stops in Biloxi, and fresh seafood was always available. The cool Gulf breezes and sandy beaches lured tourists and summer residents to Biloxi, but the seafood industry was at the core of Biloxi's economic development.

Many claim that the seafood industry built Biloxi. The industry burgeoned around the turn of the century. Polish migrants from Baltimore, Slavonian immigrants, and Louisiana Cajun's provided the labor that laid the foundations for Biloxi's station as "Seafood Capital of the World." Biloxi's latest immigrants to the seafood industry, the Vietnamese, arrived during the late 1970s and early 80s and revived the languid industry by accepting jobs in the packing plants. They built their own boats, opened businesses, and have become a vibrant part of the Biloxi seafood and ethnic community.

In approaching the study of ethnicity in Biloxi or any community, one must not confuse an ethnic group with an immigrant group.[1] Certainly many of the customs and traits of an ethnic group stem from earlier immigrant traditions. However, in a new environment and over time an immigrant group adapts its customs to fit a new environment. Thus, second, third, and subsequent generations are not part of an immigrant group but are a part of an ethnic group. This is true among Biloxi Slavonians and Cajun's and is gradually proving so among the Vietnamese who conduct business in English and have adopted American customs of dress, music, and speech.

An ethnic group shares common beliefs and patterns of living—religion, customs, literature, cuisine, language.[2] Ethnic studies in the South have in large measure concentrated on the region's Anglo and African American traditions and relations, particularly in terms of the South's agricultural history. Biloxi, Mississippi, is one city that stands apart from the pattern of the Anglo/Afro cultural makeup. This Gulf-side city grew from a small fishing community and vacation spot to a multi- ethnic city built around a thriving seafood industry. Biloxi's geographic location is largely responsible for its unique culture. With its economy centered upon seafood, the port city attracted diverse peoples, thus creating an avenue of cultural interaction, which contributed to the free flowing exchange of ideas and customs.

Biloxi's seafood community forms a folk cultural group whose members share a common knowledge, belief system, experience, and set of traditions. The occupational and ethnic identities of the seafood community go hand in hand. Without the industry there may not have been the number of immigrants, and without the immigrants, the industry's development might have lagged. Ethnic ties diversify the community's members and add another dimension to their culture. The influence of the occupational and ethnic culture extends beyond immediate seafood industry participants to residents of Biloxi and the coastal community who experience this culture in different ways. Slavonians, Cajun's, and Vietnamese practice professions outside of the seafood industry. Tourists and non-industry residents watch and participate in the Blessing of the Fleet. Others identify with the culture by simply purchasing Gulf seafood or by observing the patterns of maritime work from afar. Many coast residents identify the symbols of fishing and shrimping with their home community.

In the one hundred plus years of its existence, the Biloxi seafood industry has witnessed remarkable technological advances. It has also been subjected to the depletion of resources, government regulation, and import competition. The one constant that has remained is its multi-ethnic nature. Occupational and ethnic membership link to mold an identity particular to this community.

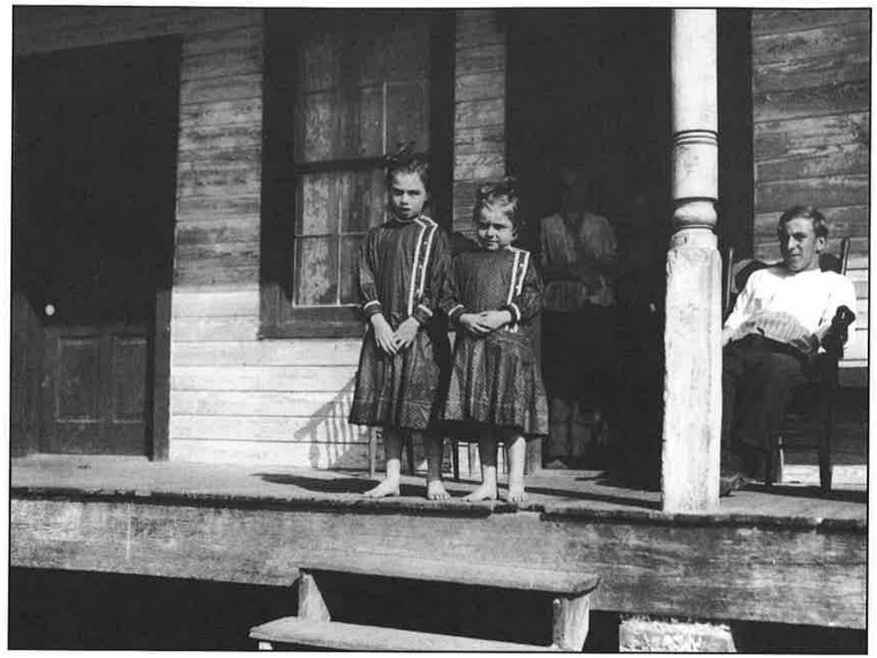
As with any folk group, the Biloxi seafood community has boundaries, those created by participants themselves and those created by others. Boundaries help define who they are and who they are not. Yet, just as culture is dynamic, so are its boundaries evershifting to accommodate or exclude new forces. These boundaries take different shapes both physical and cultural, from neighborhoods and life on the boat and in the factories, to language, ethnicity, religious traditions, and occupational knowledge.

These boundaries help the group exist within the broader community as they set people, actions, and attitudes into an identifiable context. Boundaries are defined by both ethnic and occupational lines. For example, neighborhood boundaries once identified a person's economic and social background. Point Cadet and Back Bay Biloxi are traditionally the fisherman's locale. Biloxi's ethnic organizations provided a similar defining role. When the Slavonians and Cajun's formed their respective benevolent societies, the Slavic Benevolent Association and the Fleur de Lis Society, the initial purpose was to assist newcomers in their transition to America. More importantly, these ethnic organizations fixed certain cultural boundaries and reinforced their own community values and traditions. Their clubs afforded a means of expressing their own culture within the broader city itself.

Striking a balance between ethnic and occupational ties has been fundamental to the culture of the seafood community. Membership in an ethnic group varies as the individual decides to what degree he or she will identify with the group. The more strongly a person identifies with a particular group the more it determines his concept of himself, who he interacts with, and his cultural outlook.[3] By the same token, the group determines whom it will allow to be a member. The stronger the identification the more likely that person is to create stringent boundaries and dismiss those he perceives as lacking the qualities of a true member. While many of Slavonian and Cajun background remain in Biloxi, not all those work in the seafood industry. During my research I interviewed a man who identified with his Slavonian fisherman heritage though he grew up in Uptown Biloxi and never worked on the boats. He was an active and respected member of the Slavonian Lodge, but a few of the older members joked about his claim. "He never stepped foot on a shrimp boat," they said. These men placed occupational experience on par with ethnic background as part of their standards of inclusion. Within their defining boundaries, he was not a full member of the group.

How then do members of the Biloxi Seafood community construct an identity, and how do they maintain that identity? Furthermore, how do they influence and feel the influence of the broader community? Noting the dynamic interaction and adaptation of incoming national and cultural groups in New Orleans, Louisiana, George F. Reinecke utilized the term "creolization"[4] to refer to the result of the interactive forces which led to the creation of a local ethnicity. Though on a much smaller population scale, Biloxi claims a similar his-

tory. Here the number of ethnic groups is fewer, but the basic premise the same: interaction of the ethnic groups helped create a community identity, and occupational links reinforced. The multi-ethnic nature of the seafood industry was present in its beginnings and continues today. Slavonians, Cajun's, and Vietnamese each contributed to the cultural landscape of Biloxi. Their livelihood has been their shared culture, but they also strive to maintain their separate ethnic identities. Biloxi's history illustrates a continuum of ethnic influences in one Southern port city and how those diverse elements fashioned a community identity.



Bessie, four years old, and Marietta, seven years old, both shuck oysters in Barataria Canning Company. Mother is Mrs. Ida Thompson, Baltimore. Photograph by Lewis Hine, *Prints and Photographs, Library of Congresss*.

BEGINNINGS

When French explorers landed in the eighteenth century, Indians along the Gulf Coast taught them how to tong for oysters on the offshore reefs and how to catch the many kinds of fish, especially flounder, indigenous to the Gulf Waters. Descendants of these early French settlers still live in Biloxi. The Coast abounds with family names such as Ladner, Moran, and Necaise. They were the first to learn the tools of the trade of the industry. They developed the Biloxi boat-building tradition and later passed this knowledge on to Slavonian immigrants.

The natural landscape of the Biloxi area was conducive to the growth of the seafood industry. The city sits on a peninsula between Biloxi Bay and the Mississippi Sound. The locales refer to "Back Bay" as the land on the Bay side, and the land on the eastern most point facing the Sound is Point Cadet. The barrier islands, Deer, Cat, Ship and Horn, separate the Mississippi Sound from the Gulf of Mexico. West of the islands lie the fertile shrimping and fishing grounds of the Louisiana waters and marshes. The Sound, a broad area of shallow water, is an important ecosystem that supports the food chain essential to the seafood fisheries. At one time the Sound was plentiful with shrimp, fish and oysters. Shrimpers sailed in flat-bottom boats designed for the calmer Sound waters, and oystermen on skiffs could easily reach the shallow reefs. As the number of boats increased, they taxed the supply within the Sound, thus forcing the fishermen to new waters. The Gulf, which lies just beyond the barrier islands, was an untapped source. Motorized wood and steel hull boats and mechanized equipment made it possible to harvest in the Gulf. Today most of the commercial catch comes from Gulf waters.

For much of its early existence, Biloxi was a small fishing town with a few resorts for summer visitors. Fresh seafood was available on the Coast but not inland. The 1869 opening of the railroad that linked Biloxi to inland markets, coupled with the mass production of ice and the introduction of the process of commercially canning shrimp, made it possible for the Biloxi seafood industry to expand and earn the title "Seafood Capital of the World."

The first seafood cannery on the Coast opened in 1881 in Biloxi. The combined talents and investments of several Coast businessmen laid the foundations for the seafood industry. With $8,000 and foresight for a sound business venture, Lazaro Lopez, F. William Elmer, W.K.M. DuKate, William Gorenflo and James Maycock established Lopez, Elmer and Company. The ethnic make-up of this union embodied the cultural diversity that the industry as a whole would gradually develop.

F. William Elmer of Biloxi and William Gorenflo of Bay St. Louis were the only Coast natives in the group. Lopez, a Spanish immigrant, held a successful business in Cuba before coming to the United States. Maycock, a native of Hull, England, came to Biloxi when he was thirteen. The last of the pioneers was W.K.M. DuKate of Fredericksburg, Indiana. DuKate was a key figure in the initial success of the canning industry. In the 1880s, DuKate travelled to Baltimore, Maryland, the nation's leading city in seafood packing, to study the process and familiarize himself with the equipment. This newly acquired knowledge prepared his company for immediate success.

THE PEOPLE

> Slavonians and Louisiana Acadians . . . they all got along well. Lot of French, lot of Slavonians,and some Americans. As they prospered a little more, they moved to other areas. Uptown was the place to live. We were the Point, the factory people.
>
> —Vencentia Kuljis Trehan

These early ventures paved the way for Biloxi's economic development. As the industry steadily grew, Point Cadet, then virtually uninhabited, and Back Bay underwent enormous expansion. The population grew along with new construction. Initially Biloxi's population was not large enough to support the rapid growth and demand for factory employees. Faced with a shortage in the labor force, owners began importing experienced laborers from Baltimore to fill the plants. These Polish, or "Bohemian", seasonal workers were the first large group to move into the city. Owners paid their train passage and housed them in the shotgun houses located near the factories.

The Biloxi seafood camps resembled the paternalistic mill towns that emerged in the Piedmont region of the Southeast. They were self-contained, self-sufficient communities that worked to the advantage of the owners who provided their employees with basic needs. The camps benefited the owners, providing a readily available source of workers. Cheap rent and a company store that carried basic supplies kept the workforce concentrated in the area around the factories. Perhaps the major benefit to the workers was that they could live near their family and friends. This setting reinforced their ethnic identity and enabled them to retain certain cultural traits and traditions that might otherwise have been lost. It also encouraged an exchange of cultures when Slavonians and Cajun's started to live in the camps and afterward when they built their own homes in Point Cadet and Back Bay.

The rapid growth of industry led to a rise in population. The city's population doubled in a ten-year period and reached 3,234 by 1890. By the turn of the century, Biloxi had five canneries, nine oyster dealers and five "Bohemian camps." Barataria employed five hundred people, half in the factory and half on the boats.[5] Lopez and DuKate had a fleet of sixty vessels. The camps and the fishing industry flourished.

The decline of the camps and of the paternalistic nature of the industry

The smallest shrimp picker, standing on the box is Manuel, about five years old, who worked here last year also. Dunbar, Lopez, Dukate Company. Photograph by Lewis Hine, *Print and Photographs, Library of Congress*.

occurred when the industry began to decentralize at the end of World War I. Prior to that the same men owned both the boats and the factories. Through their complete control over production and distribution, and their influence over the workforce, the factory owners held the reins on the economic growth and social and cultural development of the industry. The move toward unionization, and the increase in the workforce, especially those interested in owning a boat, challenged the paternalistic management structure. Once seasonal workers, the fisherman were now people who came to Biloxi to make the Gulf Coast city their permanent home.

The population increase was due in large part to two immigrant groups: those from the Dalmatian coast of what became Yugoslavia, and the Louisiana Cajun's. Those who came from Yugoslavia were mainly Croats, with Serbs and Slavonians making up a smaller percentage of the group.[6] Croats and Serbs are south Slavic groups that populated the Dalmation Coast along the Adriatic Sea and the inland areas of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. Though united for almost four hundred years as part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, then as one Yugoslav state following World War I, each ethnic group has a separate, distinctive history. It is difficult to determine how many of the immigrants were Croats, Serbs or Slavonian because nineteenth-century immigrants identified themselves according to the region from which they came: Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Slavonia. Also, until 1918 the United States Immigration Service did not distinguish between immigrants from the Austria-Hungarian empire.[7]

The greatest immigration occurred during the early twentieth-century and immediately after World War I. Many of the immigrants to Biloxi were rural landless peasants, sailors, political refugees, and men avoiding conscription.[8] The prospect of life on the Gulf Coast appealed to Slavonians. By the late 1700s port towns such as Dubrovnik had established ties with the Gulf and Atlantic states, and by the 1850s many Slavonians were permanent settlers in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Their immigration preceded the birth of the Biloxi seafood industry, but its emergence as a viable economic force attracted more Slavonians to the Coast. Their experience as sailors and fishermen served them well in Biloxi. Even those without experience or English skills could work in the factories and fare well. Family members immigrated one at a time and reunited in Biloxi. Over the years, some Slavonians have kept their ties to the homeland. As one second generation Biloxian said, "The Yugoslavs are 'close knit.' You look after your family no matter where they are."[9] Recently, members of the Slavonian community hosted two men injured in the war in Bosnia. They offered their homes and free medical treatment for the men during their two months of recuperation.

Slavonian immigration reached its peak prior to 1917, when the quota still allowed for large numbers. When the government cut the quota, many settled in other countries, such as Mexico. A few of those arrived there by mistake. A story told frequently on Point Cadet is that Peter Kuljis earned his nickname "South American" Pete because he landed in South America, not the American South.[10]

The migration of the Cajun's (Louisiana French) to Biloxi occurred around the same time the Slavonians arrived. Cajun's inhabited the southern region of Louisiana about 200 miles from Biloxi. Most of those who moved to Mississippi were rural folk, small farmers, and sharecroppers. The failure of the sugar cane crop in the 1920s put many Cajun's out of work and left them penniless. Biloxi resident Neville "Te-Jean" Broussard moved from Lafayette when he was four years old. As he recalls, dire economic conditions motivated his family and others like them to seek better opportunities in Biloxi: "My daddy was a sharecropper. He'd work and work and at the end of the year he never saw any progress. He had no education. He was under their control. Like the song, 'owed everything to the company store.' So we moved. Many families came over here (to Biloxi).[11]

Some of the younger workers (not all) who work in the Biloxi Canning Factory. In right hand end of photo is Lazro Beney, twelve years old, been working four years at this factory. Both he and his mother said he makes $1.75 a day when shrimp are large and plentiful. He made $57 dollars last year in 3 months. His brother Ed (not in photo) fourteen years old, makes $2.25 on good days. Another brother, Pete, (one of the smallest in photo) and ten years old makes 50 cents a day. Two other brothers work at raw oysters; one, seventeen years old, makes $4.00 a day...the mother said, "Lazro goes to school when he ain't workin'; but he's gettin' so he'd rather stay here with the boys than go to school." Photograph by Lewis Hine, *Print and Photographs, Library of Congress*.

The failure of the sugar cane crop coincided with a period of enormous growth in the Biloxi seafood industry. Factory owners went to south Louisiana cities such as New Iberia, Lafayette, and Broussard to recruit workers.[12] Large numbers of Cajun's migrated to Biloxi in search of economic opportunity. The move not only provided job opportunities, but also put them in contact with other ethnic groups. Removed from its roots and no longer insulated in isolated farm communities, the Cajun culture in Biloxi became diffuse and was transformed over the years. Thus, a Cajun culture unique to the Coast developed within the Biloxi seafood industry.

Slavonians and Cajun's entered the profession basically at the same level—as fishermen or factory workers. Although some Slavonians had maritime experience, they were unfamiliar with the environment. Each group had to adapt to a different working environment, which included working among various ethnic peoples. Even if they did not crew on the same boats, they worked for the same factories and came in daily contact on the docks, in the camps or in the neighborhoods. As many Biloxians remember, the Slavonians and Cajun's mingled freely, but in the early years tended to keep to themselves. Such measures enabled them to better preserve their customs and traditions. Families worked together on the boats and in the factories though most maintain it was for convenience sake rather than for xenophobia. Their daily lives were an affirmation of ethnic identity as well as a continuous intercultural exchange.

Part of their identity was their occupation as well. From harvesting to processing the catch involved the work of many hands, each with a particular task and each with a different working knowledge. Entire families of Slavonians and Cajun's took part in the work, often side by side. Their mutual experience as fishermen and factory workers cut across ethnic lines and bound them together in a common livelihood. Their working knowledge united them in their profession, and their occupation united them under a common way of life. Although occupational identity has the potential for overriding ties such as ethnicity, in Biloxi the occupational identity of Slavonians and Cajun's tended to reinforce their ethnic identity rather than supplant it. Furthermore, it distinguished them from other Biloxians of a different ethnic background, neighborhood, or occupation.

ON THE WATER

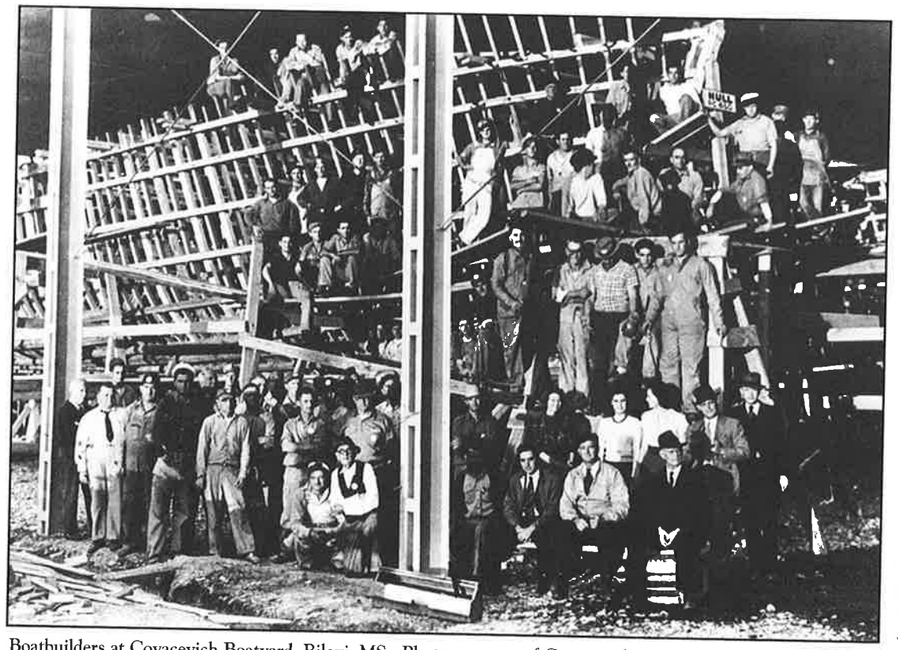
> ...It took more than just a good sailor. It took a man 'born to the tiller'.
>
> —Carl McIntire
> *The Biloxi Schooner*

The division of labor in Biloxi followed along gender lines. Historically, fishermen on the boats have almost always been men. They were hunters of the sea, and women were thought to bring bad luck if they boarded a boat. For the fisherman, fishing was far from recreation. It was their occupation, and how they viewed themselves and their surroundings was shaped by their work.

Crews on the boats remained almost exclusively male in part because of the nature of the physical labor involved. The hand-operated seines, nets, sails, and dredges meant back-breaking labor for the captain and crew. Young boys often worked in the factories with the women until they were old enough to go on the boats. They began as deckhands keeping the boat clean, culling the catch, and earning their pay by selling the fish caught in the nets. Gradually, they developed the skill and strength to do more of the work on board. The boat was both living and working quarters, and everyone had to know his job and place in order for the work to go smoothly. Time spent on board as a deckhand was a period of apprenticeship as young boys learned the skill and acquired the working knowledge from the more experienced men.

Biloxi and other Coast fishermen designed boats specifically suited to their needs and the Gulf waters. Flatbottom double-sail boats called catboats were the most common boats used in the earliest days but later proved insufficient to fill the supply demands. Schooners, because of their size and sail power, replaced catboats as the vessel of choice. When a hurricane in 1893 destroyed a large portion of the fleet, boatbuilders replaced their loses with a new type of boat known as the Biloxi schooner.[13] Similar to the Chesapeake and Baltimore schooner, the Biloxi had a broad beam for large crews, a shallow draft suited to inland bodies of water, and sail power enough to drag the oyster dredges and shrimp nets. Builders used cypress from the Louisiana swamps for the frames and planking and Mississippi long leaf yellow pine for the keel, masts and spars. They ranged in size from fifty to sixty feet. The largest ever built, the Mary Margaret (65'), could carry five hundred barrels of oysters. Schooners also served as freight boats carrying lumber, charcoal and fruit between New Orleans and Mobile. Although they were good work boats and heavy haulers, they earned the nickname "white winged queens" because of their grace and beauty under sail.

Boat building, another occupation tied to the industry, was exclusively male also. Once again, as with shrimping and oystering, young men learned boat skills, design, and building through an apprenticeship period. Boat building was a tradition in some Biloxi families as fathers taught their sons the trade. The Covacevich family founded their boat yard in Back Bay in 1896. "I built plenty of boats, God knows," said eighty-six year old Anthony "Tony Jack" Covacevich, whose father and grandfather started the business. Tony Jack's brother Neil owns Bay Marine at Point Cadet, and a deceased brother, Oral, also built boats. Tony Jack Covacevich began as a teenager building model boats improving on the designs his



Boatbuilders at Covacevich Boatyard, Biloxi, MS. Photo courtesy of Covacevich Family.

father built. His father recognized his talent and had Tony Jack design all his boats. Covacevich has launched over one hundred and fifty boats of all types from schooners to mine sweepers. He loved building wooden boats, but those days are gone, he says. The scarcity of good wood, such as cypress and juniper, makes those wooden boats that exist very precious indeed. Covacevich's last wooden boat, which he completed in 1969, survived Hurricane Camille and is still at sail in Florida.[14]

During the summer months the fishermen laid their nets to rest and allowed the shrimp crop to propagate. Some men spent the off-season working odd jobs such as house painting, but mainly they prepared for the next season. They mended nets, fixed equipment, and hauled the boats out of the water for cleaning and repair. The test of the refurbishing efforts was racing, and schooner racing developed as a recreational activity tied to Biloxi's seafood industry.

Although technically fishermen were competing for a catch as they worked, everyone was a winner who brought in a catch. Schooner racing, however, was a different story. Turning work vehicles into competitive machines, the races became as important as working itself. Proving one's mettle during the races was a crucial step in becoming a good fisherman. Rivalry was keen as the fastest boat from each cannery competed against the others. At times contests grew so heated they resulted in shouting matches, a bowsprit through a competitor's sail, and shotgun blasts fired across the bow of a rival boat. The community turned out for the events as well to cheer on family and friends or the factory boat. The fishermen who raced and the community members that watched affirmed and celebrated their unique maritime way of life.

By the mid 1930s the white wing queens had virtually disappeared. Power boats were the way of the future for the seafood industry, and fishermen displayed an ability to adapt to changing needs. Most owners simply converted their schooners to power boats by cutting off the masts and installing engines. Boat builders later designed a power boat known as the Biloxi lugger. On this boat the cabin rests astern and the foredeck is clear for unloading and culling the catch. By 1915 power boats had taken over shrimping, but schooners remained in use for oystering. However, in 1933 the Mississippi Seafood Conservation laws approved power boat dredging, and the Biloxi schooner lost its economic importance and went the way of other outdated equipment.

Despite technological advances, work life essentially did not change. Whether aboard the schooners or the Biloxi luger, work was still physically demanding, and the philosophy remained the same: Work on a Sunday, work on a holiday, work when the weather was good, and work even when the weather was not so good. Work was non-stop, said retired fisherman Louis Trebotich: "It was around the clock. The boats was always busy. If they wasn't shrimping, they was drudging."[15]

Almost every moment on board entailed some sort of work: mending or setting nets, clearing the deck or culling the catch. Crew members constantly practiced and honed their skills. As if to reaffirm this image of "all work and no play," fishermen say they had little time for pleasure or social activity on board. Card playing, storytelling, the occasional guitar playing and singing filled in the few spare moments. Those who smoked stocked up on cigarettes and maybe a little wine for meals before leaving shore.

Biloxi fisherman emphasize they had no time on board to be lazy or rest, however, meal times provided a short respite from work. The Biloxi Schooners had only a charcoal stove with room for one pot. The cook, an appointed crew member, prepared everything in that one pot, slumgullion style (one ingredient over another in the same pot). Of course, the typical menu included seafood. Shrimp or oyster spaghetti, gumbo, jambalaya, courtboullion, and the Yugoslav bachelor (dried fish) were common meals. The Biloxi bakeries made a special bread for

"...Maybe that Queen will one day be me."

The first weekend in May, Biloxi shrimpers gather their boats outside the small craft harbor for their annual Blessing of the Fleet. St. Michael Catholic Church on Biloxi's Point Cadet oversees the weekend event which includes the Biloxi Shrimp Festival and Heritage Celebration, and the Shrimp Queen contest. The Blessing of the Fleet celebration began in 1929, and the Shrimp Queen contest originated in 1948. Six years later a Shrimp King was chosen to reign alongside the Shrimp Queen, and a royal couple emerged to reign over the weekend festivities.

Chosen among shrimpers who are active in the business, the Biloxi Shrimp King is usually an older man with years of experience on the water. Young women in high school with family connections to the seafood industry compete for the Queen's crown. While the winner receives a college scholarship awarded by a local bank, contestants say the true reward is the title itself, the honor of being named Shrimp Queen.

The judging is based on two categories: an interview with the individual contestants and an evening stage appearance. However, because of its link to the seafood industry, the Shrimp Queen contest is more complex than a beauty pageant. Only a select number of women (those who are descendants of shrimpers) can even enter the competition. The judges are instructed to choose a well-rounded candidate with the "natural beauty of physical well-being, courtesy, poise, and grooming." The instructions to the judges further state that the Shrimp Queen must be a woman who "...is aware of the community and her role in it, perceptive and receptive of the feelings of others, aware of her heritage and the people she represents."

On her application each contestant explains her affiliation with the industry and writes why she desires to be Shrimp Queen. A common theme emerges in the various essays. Each of the young women feels a strong bond between their families and the seafood industry. Biloxi, once penned the Seafood Capitol of the World, is their city. Their ancestors helped create and sustain one of the Coast's oldest and largest industries. They recognize both the economic and cultural value of the seafood industry to the city. For them, to win the title of Shrimp Queen is an opportunity to serve their community and to honor and bring recognition to their heritage.

The following is a sample of applications from the 1990 and 1993 Biloxi Shrimp Queen contests. The terminology and tone they invoke are representative of many of the Shrimp Queen applications.

–Photo courtesy, Jennifer Sekul.

Patricia Anne Gary

"I feel that since the seafood industry has for three generations been the livelihood of my family and the sense of pride I have for the hard work and determination of all seafood families in our area I would be honored and thrilled to be chosen to serve as Shrimp Festival Queen. The title is not only an honor for the lucky girl who is selected but for her family and their way of life. We must always remember how vital the seafood industry is to this community not only economically but as a very valuable part of the tourism industry. People come from all around the United States to visit her and I want them to see the pride of the people here, pride in their community, hardworking and dedicated to improving and helping our area to prosper. If chosen I would take every opportunity to promote not only seafood but our entire community."

Sharon Lyn Batia

"As a descendant of fishermen in the seafood industry, it would be a great honor to be Shrimp Festival Queen. Seafood to me means "tradition." It has always been a means of support as well as a frequent meal on our table. Now that my father and grandfather have both passed away, I would like to carry on that tradition as Biloxi's 1990 Shrimp Festival Queen."

Gretchen Marie Waaga

"I am Gretchen Waaga and to be chosen the 1990 Shrimp Queen would be a great honor to myself as well as to my family.

My family has been involved in the Seafood Industry for many years and to represent my heritage would be a great achievement in my life."

Brandy Michele Lesso

"I would like to reign as 1993 Shrimp Queen because I have been raised on the water all my life. My father, grandfather, and uncles are all fisherman. I would make a good shrimp queen because of my practice around the fishing industry. My family has struggled all its life in the industry and I would just like to make them as proud of me as I am of them."

Andrea Touart

"The seafood industry and Shrimp Festival has been a part of my life and my heritage, a part that makes me very proud. As Shrimp Queen, I will carry on the traditions of this great festival and also fulfill a dream I've had as a little girl of being the Shrimp Queen."

Cherie Lynn Kostmayer

"I am Cherie Kostmayer, and I feel that I am qualified to be Shrimp Queen. I come from a long line of shrimpers, and have gone out with a few, and done and seen what a hard life it is. At each blessing, I say maybe that queen will one day be me."

the fishermen called "boat bread" which sold for a nickel a loaf. Boat bread or hard tack accompanied every meal. While the meal was sure to tempt the palate, the choice of beverages usually did not vary: coffee, Barq's rootbeer (originated and brewed in Biloxi), or claret wine (sweet wine) with a little water in it, "so it don't make you droopy."[16]

Time and time again one hears of the culinary talents of the Biloxi fishermen who learned their craft on a boat. Even today at the Slavonian Lodge, the Fleur de Lis Club, or at home the men will take charge of the kitchen. Steve Trebotich was the cook on board a boat for eleven years, and still cooks today. When I interviewed him and his brother, Steve was busy preparing gumbo. Louis testifies that Steve was the best cook on the water. Steve said he had no choice in the matter, but now he enjoys sharing his skill.

IN THE FACTORY

> Just everybody had to work to make a living because then you got paid very little for what you done. And the first job I had was in the shell mills, grinding up shells and that was $.04 an hour.
>
> —Clarence Disilvey

While shrimping and oystering were exclusively male tasks, the factory work was predominantly the female domain. Some men did work in the factories and most children, including boys, began their career in the factories where they cut their teeth on the skills and work ethic necessary to make it in the industry. Documentary photographer Lewis Hine photographed young factory workers in Biloxi in the 1880s and exposed the harsh conditions under which they worked. As the boys grew older most took jobs on the boats while the women stayed in the factories.

Since the factories lacked nurseries, women brought their small children to work with them. They constructed play pens or put the children on the floor next to them where they learned how to do their mothers' work.[17] Although people often tend to glorify the "good ole' days," when Biloxians speak of the early days in the seafood industry, they temper remarks on the abundance of the supply with memories of long hours, little pay, and child labor. Mary Kuljis, who spent over fifty of her eighty-six years in the seafood factories, recalled her work:

> The first job I had was in the factory, in the cannery where they had oysters and shrimp...They had so many shrimp and so many oysters they couldn't take care of them. Sometime they had to throw them away because there wasn't enough workers to do the job. So they brought children, twelve, thirteen years old to work.[18]

Children age fourteen could receive a work card which allowed them to work legally in the factory, but most had a factory job at an even younger age. When inspectors came to check work cards, the underage children would hide lest they get caught and removed from the factory. They balanced their work with their education. Before attending school each morning, the children went to work in the factories. They returned once classes ended and put in two or three more hours at the picking tables or oyster carts earning $.50 or $1.00 a day.

Sea Coast, Kaluz's, Gulf Central, Dunbar and Dukate, and other factories lined the Point and Back Bay. Closeby lived the women who kept the factories running. They usually worked at one factory, season after season. The factory owners wanted the fastest pickers and shuckers so they took care of their employees, and employees in turn felt loyalty to the factory. However, if the management mistreated them, they could go down the street to another cannery. An experienced factory employee could always find a job. One former employee said that the women chose the factory according to which boats brought in the catch. They knew which boats brought in the biggest oysters, which made their job of shucking easier, then went to the factory where those boats offloaded.

The work day in the canneries began early. Each factory had a whistle with its own distinctive sound, which signalled the arrival of the catch and summoned people to work. Andrew Melancon recalls going to the factory at two o'clock in the morning to insure he had a place to work. The blow of the whistle signalled an end to rest and the start of another busy day, as Melancon recalls:

> I was still working when I met my wife. I would go with her till about twelve or one o'clock, then go home. I'd keep one eye open at a time as I walked home 'cause I didn't have a car or a bike. I'd have to walk from uptown to the Point. I'd sleep one eye at a time while going home, and when I go home I'd hurry up and get to bed. And listen and hope to heck that my whistle wouldn't blow...If it blowed I'd jump up and get down there and get started. It was one heck of a life.[19]

Although different from boat work, the work in the factories was equally as rigorous and demanding. Factory conditions did not make for easy work. The factories were always cold, especially in the winter during oyster season. Women wore heavy stockings and wrapped their legs in newspaper to keep warm. Their hands grew cold after working with the icy shrimp, hour after hour. One woman recalled how her mother would bring bowls of hot water from home for her children to warm their hands. Tables lined the factory floors during shrimp season, and women stood on either side of the tables to "headless" and pick the shrimp. They dropped the hulls to the floor and swept up later. Although it might appear as though they worked as a team around a picking table or oyster cart, each worker was paid according to the amount of shrimp she picked and thus rewarded for her individual speed. The work was demanding and the hours were long, as several Biloxians attest. Andrew Melancon remembers:

> When I was part of the processing crew, I'd go in at 2:00 A.M. Might be six in the evening before I got off. I was making $.35 an hour. Top pay. I was making more than my uncle who was head teller at a bank. But he was putting in forty hours, and I was putting in a hundred and forty hours. That's the difference. But we needed the money, and I didn't mind.[20]

From the picking shed, the shrimp went to the packing room for the cooking and canning process. Once sealed, the cans were pressure cooked in a large iron drum to kill any remaining bacteria. Employees removed any "swell heads" (cans of bad shrimp that caused the can to swell) at this stage. From there, the women took the cans, labeled them by hand before boxing them and shipping them to the warehouse. Today the labeling, canning, and, to some degree, picking are mechanized processes.

During the oyster season, the work environment was much the same. Oyster shucking was piece work also. Women equipped with an oyster knife, a glove, and finger stars (small pieces of cloth to cover the thumb and forefinger of the hand holding the knife) stood eight to a cart, four on each side, shucking oysters and placing them in a cup. An oyster cup attached to the side of the cart and held about a gallon of oysters. A series of railroad tracks ran from the loading docks inside and throughout the factory. The men unloaded the oysters into the carts. Four or five carts at a time rolled into the steamboxes to steam open the oysters. From the steamroom, a line of about nine carts travelled on one of the tracks running to the shucking room. The eight women that worked at a cart usually worked together all the time. In a sense then, they were a team. They tended to be friends or relatives, sometimes all Slavonians or all Cajun's.

Factory work was similar to the apprenticeship period on the boats. Young girls learned by watching and imitating the more experienced women. Eventually it became second nature. To pass the time the women conversed or sang as they worked. If they were all Slavonian or Cajun they might speak in their native tongue. A sense of community existed both in and outside of the workplace. They combined socializing with their work, not that they took their jobs any less seriously than the men, but the work environment allowed for more social insertion.

During the first half of the 20th century the Biloxi seafood industry and seafood community were steadily evolving. Development in technology and changes in the ethnic milieu created a dynamic industrial and cultural community that continues today. Biloxi schooners gave way to luggers only to be rediscovered in later year and re-instituted as community cultural symbols and tourist attractions. Slavonians and Cajun's created ethnic organizations to maintain their identity. In the 1970s Vietnamese refugees became the latest ethnic group involved in the Gulf Coast seafood industry, and they, too, would form a their own community and maintain group identity through family, religious, and cultural traditions. This diversity and development that marked the Biloxi seafood industry in the late 1800s would continue, then, and take on new manifestations in the latter part of the 1900s.

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3. Jordan, 51.

4."Creolization" as defined by Reinecke is the synthesis of the various cultures in the unique New Orleans melting pot as they interacted one by one with the original French, Franco-American or Afro-French population. George F. Reinecke, "The National and Cultural Groups of New Orleans," in *Louisiana Folklife* ed., Nicholas Spitzer, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Folklife Program/ Division of the Arts, 1985).

5.Biloxi, Mississippi City Directory 1905.

6.Rather than distinguish between the different ethnic groups, Biloxians use the terms interchangeably. Most of them are Croatians, but they most frequently us the "Slavonian" or "Slavs" as blanket terms. This probably occurred because the name of their social club is the Slavic Benevolent Association, or the Slavonian Lodge as it is known. In this paper I use the term "Slavonian" in the same manner Biloxians do. Again, however, the majority of them are of Croatian descent.

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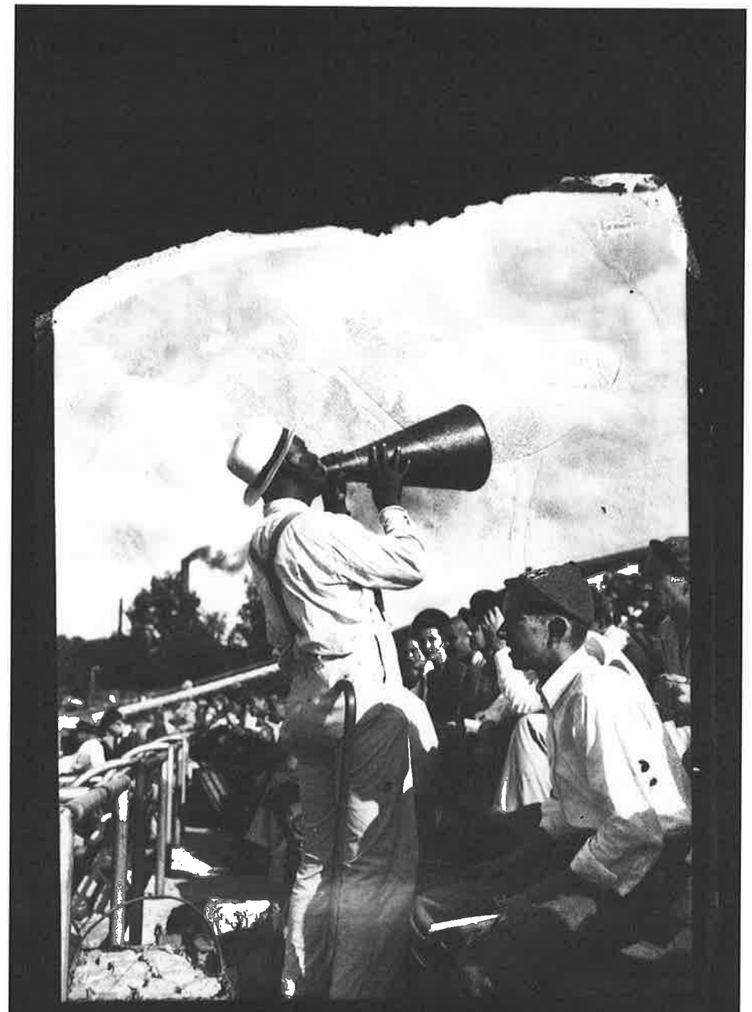
Paternalism's Demise

Blind Jim Ivy and Ole Miss, 1896-1955

By Anthony James



Blind Jim at an Ole Miss football game. Photograph from Cofield Collection, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi.

On October 20, 1955, Mississippians read in their morning newspapers that "Blind" Jim Ivy, a longtime campus feature at the University of Mississippi and "a permanent fixture in the minds of Ole Miss people for nearly 60 years," died the previous evening.[1] Blind Jim's death disheartened faithful students, alumni, and friends who prepared to gather in Oxford on Saturday for the Homecoming football game between Ole Miss and Arkansas.

Prior to Blind Jim's unexpected death Rebel fans planned to solicit a special Homecoming donation for his medical expenses. Despite sorrowful news, the fundraising drive continued, with alumni, students, and friends contributing towards burial expenses, the purchase of a tombstone, and unpaid hospital bills. A week following Blind Jim's death the Financial Secretary at the University of Mississippi, W.C. "Chuck" Trotter, reported over eleven hundred dollars in contributions.[2]

In addition to the university's efforts, the *Jackson Daily News* and Jackson, Mississippi, television station WJTV initiated a memorial fund in Blind Jim's honor. The memorial fund, unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, proposed a monument to Blind Jim on the Ole Miss campus and an "Ivey [sic] scholarship" to be granted to Mississippi blacks attending state-supported black institutions. A *Jackson Daily News* writer urged other newspapers in the state to join them in publicizing the memorial by stating, "the [fund in] memory of Blind Jim will serve to improve the lot of members of his race who are unable, due to financial problems, to continue their education."[3]

Along with contributions and memorial funds, news writers, editorial writers, and students responded to the death with an outpouring of sentiment. "Death struck swiftly, and the hearts of the students and alumni alike were

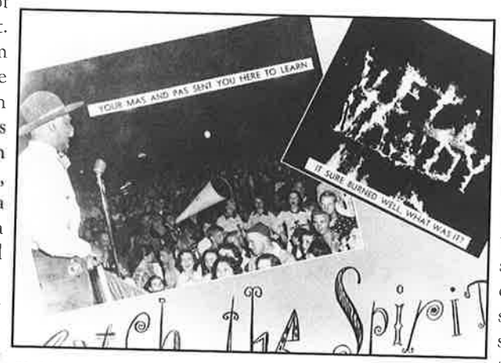
Ole Miss, 1944

filled with grief amid the joy of Homecoming," wrote one editorialist. Jim Child, an Ole Miss student from Jackson, Mississippi, commented, "the passing of Blind Jim is as if one link in the great chain of heritage of Ole Miss has been lost." George McNeill, an Ole Miss student from Laurel, Mississippi, stated, "Blind Jim was a symbol of all that makes Ole Miss a great school. It will be difficult to find anyone to take his place."

The contributions, proposed memorials, and comments of these white Mississippians reflected deep loss and the beginning of social schism. The Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision signaled the beginning of massive resistance in Mississippi. Many community leaders voiced discontent to this decision by joining White Citizens Councils. In August of 1955 white racists in Mississippi murdered the young black, Emmett Till, for "whistling" at a white woman.[5] The concern expressed towards Blind Jim coupled with increasing hostility in the wake of the Brown decision reflected a duality of racial responses by white Mississippians. Who was Blind Jim? Why did he evoke such warmhearted feelings? How did he become, as George McNeill stated, a "symbol" of Ole Miss?

Photographic portrayals of Blind Jim from the University of Mississippi yearbook, *Ole Miss*, combined with newspaper and magazine articles, help explain Blind Jim's relationship to an all-white Ole Miss community. The roles of Blind Jim as Rebel fan, candy vendor, and counselor created an illusion of racial intimacy for the university community. This intimacy between Blind Jim and alumni and students was based on a pattern of Old South paternalism. While Blind Jim acceded to the paternalism extended by Ole Miss and clearly benefitted from the care and concern it brought him, the university community used this relationship to bolster its idea of the "southern way of life" and defend its segregated practices.

Jim Ivy first appeared on campus in 1896, "wandering" into the baseball stadium during an Ole Miss game with the University of Texas. Unfortunately, the home squad trailed far behind the Texans. After hearing the lopsided score from several students, Blind Jim began enthusiastically cheering for Ole Miss in his "booming" voice. Ole Miss responded by winning the game handily and credited its comeback to their new found supporter.[6]



Ole Miss, 1954

Installed as athletic talisman, Blind Jim faithfully attended most all athletic events at Ole Miss, especially football games. Although sparse photographic evidence exists to demonstrate Blind Jim's physical presence at football games, various articles recall his attendance and devotion. Blind Jim himself commented, "I've been to more Ole Miss games than anybody else, and I've never seen the Rebels lose yet."[7] Statements making light of his blindness while noting his team loyalty were part of the reason Blind Jim became such an endearing figure. A Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* article noted, "he was at every football, baseball, [and] basketball game played on the campus and went to countless road games played by the Rebels."[8] The student newspaper reported Blind Jim even painted his home on the outskirts of Oxford red and blue to demonstrate school spirit.[9]

Blind Jim not only attended numerous athletic events, but also participated heavily in pre-game festivities, especially the pep-rally. From 1943 to 1954 *Ole Miss*, the university's yearbook, included nine photographs of pep-rallies showing Blind Jim. These photographs depicted Blind Jim at pep-rallies in Fulton Chapel, the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, and at various outside locations.

The pep-rallies in Fulton Chapel followed a proscribed pattern. Band members and cheerleaders congregated on the stage to lead students in song and yells. University officials and guests, including Blind Jim, sat towards the middle of the stage. Ole Miss administrators did not cordon off a special section on stage for Blind Jim, but instead allowed him to sit amid the white men. Though we are unsure of Blind Jim's spoken words, photographs confirm he served as a focal symbol of school spirit for the student body, participating in the pep-rally programs, leading yells with the Ole Miss cheerleaders, and leading cheers of "Hotty Toddy." His "booming" voice, first heard at the 1896 baseball game, became a trademark to university students. One newspaper article suggests he fashioned an original cheer: "Ramma Tamma, Yellow Hammer, Down with Alabama."[10]

Ole Miss, 1954

Despite the fact that Ole Miss played several of its home games in Memphis, Blind Jim trekked the distance. Pre-game pep-rallies in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel found Blind Jim amid the hoopla. Although photographs from the Peabody never showed Blind Jim speaking, they do document his presence and participation. Other photographs reveal Blind Jim's presence at outside pep-rallies where he often had a conspicuous role.

Photographs from university annuals illustrate how thoroughly Ole Miss incorporated Blind Jim into the athletic life of the university. His move from mere spectator at a baseball game in 1896 to sitting on the sidelines at football games, speaking before the student body during pep-rallies in Fulton Chapel, and attracting widespread attention in pre-game gatherings at the Peabody Hotel, represented a remarkable relationship over time and a high level of racial tolerance by white students, administrators and staff. Paternalism, however, soured this acceptance.

Paternalism emerged prior to the Civil War in the "organic society" idealized by southern slaveholders. In the organic society the plantation operated as an organism. Every person held a special function insuring society's stability. Stepping out of one's societal position disrupted the "organism," rendering it ineffective or unproductive. White masters guided the organic society by exerting power over their slaves. A humanistic view of slaves as childlike, submissive, dependent, and humorous tempered and redirected this power. Eugene Genovese wrote, "southern paternalism...had little to do with Ole Massa's ostensible benevolence, kindness, and good cheer. It grew out of the necessity to discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation."[11]

Paternalism entered the University of Mississippi at its opening in 1848 as dozens of planter's sons embarked on educational journeys.[12] The university's persistent use of paternalism continued as its relationship with Blind Jim developed. Jim Ivy's blindness compounded this paternalism. Ivy's early life record detailed the loss of his eyesight. Born in Alabama in 1870, to a former slave, Matilda Ivy, Jim travelled to Mississippi after 1890 in search of work. After odd jobs on river steamers and picking cotton in the Delta, Ivy found a job painting the Tallahatchie Bridge. One day while painting, coal tar paint entered Ivy's eyes. Despite the application of his own home remedies, and prayers of numerous friends, he remained blind. "There are times when friends just can't help," Ivy later remarked.[13]

Ivy's blindness required dependence upon others, thus appealing to the paternalistic tendencies of Ole Miss. Another faithful campus "negro's" frailty further encouraged Blind Jim's ascendancy as a notable campus figure. The 1913 *Ole Miss* acknowledged the loyalty and faithfulness of "Uncle Bob." A caption below his photograph noted his "true and tried service for thirty years." Petitioning for a gentle death "Uncle Bob's" eulogy read, "God make the final wrenching loose of the leaf from the bough gentle and without pain, and find the good old darky a place of rest after long, long toil." Expecting that "[Uncle Bob's] place [would] be vacant when the first bell [rang] next year," Blind Jim assumed, or Ole Miss grafted him into, the role of "faithful" black campus figure.[14]

Naming Jim Ivy "Blind Jim" first evidenced the university's paternalism. In the antebellum South, white masters often renamed blacks, thus severing their identity with Africa and their notion of self. This renaming often resulted in ancient or outlandish appellations, such as Cicero, Lemon Peel, and Bituminous.[15] In the post-Civil War South whites no longer controlled the naming process, yet still exerted dominance by calling blacks generic names; boy, uncle, or Tom, and by leaving off proper titles and last names. Jim Ivy retained his given name, however whites at Ole Miss shortened it to simply Jim. The attachment of "Blind" to Ivy's first name reinforced the idea of dependency by heightening and openly acknowledging his handicap. The protracted use of "Blind Jim" undergirded the racist beliefs and practices of white Mississippians. When Ole Miss students, alumni, and friends called his name, they at once made him both a child and handicapped, and ultimately helpless.

Secondly, Ole Miss's paternalism toward Blind Jim appeared in speeches and printed materials. Former Chancellor Alfred Hume spoke before the Faculty Club in 1948, describing the "trying" days of Reconstruction at Ole Miss. Noting that the Chancellor in 1870 stated "he and his colleagues would resign before they would matriculate any negro students," Hume also added, "those who understand Southern people will not be surprised when told that this is the same institution that befriends the Negro, 'Blind Jim,' and welcomes him as part of

Ole Miss, 1947

its life. The boy's of Ole Miss would fight for him," Hume stated.[16] A 1934 article by W. M. Reed stated, "Ole Miss boys and officials are mighty kind to Blind Jim. They pass things on to him and he is happy in his service to the institution - ah- Ole Miss."[17] This comment suggests a relationship in which "Blind Jim" and the university offered equal services and shared appropriate rewards. This mutuality, however, did not exist. The service Blind Jim rendered to Ole Miss far exceeded the rewards he garnered.

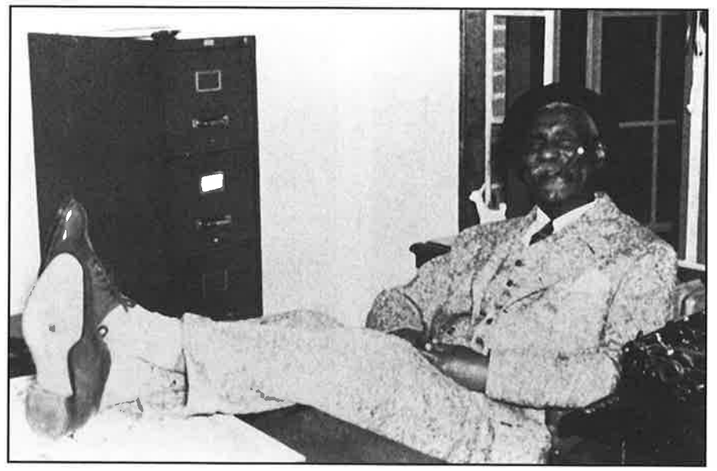
Thirdly, Ole Miss engaged in paternalistic actions towards Blind Jim. One example of this paternalistic spirit surfaced in the fall of 1936. After learning that Blind Jim faced foreclosure proceedings if he did not meet payment on an outstanding loan, the editor of the *Mississippian* organized a collection campaign. An article cultivating sympathetic donors stated, "the old negro bought a lot with the borrowed collateral and erected a shack thereon. It is a place he calls, 'home,' in a one-room shanty." Blind Jim's financial woes reinforced the notion of his dependence upon whites. To save Ivy's "shanty" the *Mississippian* appealed to students, "it is up to the Ole Miss students body to prevent this tragedy from occurring. Blind Jim has been a vital part of this institution for many years, and his troubles are the troubles of every Ole Miss student. It is up to the students to see that he retains his home." A similar plea for Blind Jim appeared in the Memphis *Commercial-Appeal* several weeks later.[18]

Ole Miss students and alumni responded appropriately. O.B. Boone, Jr. mailed one dollar to Blind Jim and wrote in an enclosed letter, "I am very proud to give this to you...and [hope] you will receive enough to live comfortably the rest of the days you shall live."[19] Students, alumni, and friends contributed $425.00 to aid Blind Jim. One New York alumnus donated a large portion of this sum. Donations from dorms, ranging from one dollar to four dollars, and contributions in the amount of $3.05 from the black cafeteria staff also added to the total. In late November the *Mississippian* announced that Blind Jim's financial woes had subsided. An editorial from the *Jackson Daily News* reprinted in the *Mississippian* commented,

> Listen, all ye white folks who dwell above the Mason and Dixon line:
>
> Down here we love our negroes and our negroes love us.
>
> We are willing and ready to go to the limit for them and they are ready and willing to do the same thing for us.
>
> The home of "Blind Jim" will be his so long as he lives. That also goes for his blind wife.
>
> Yankee's can't understand that. No use for any Yankee trying to understand.[20]

This defense of segregation in the mid-1930's continued well into the 1950's. The South indeed possessed a special way of dealing with a select group of its blacks—paternalism. While Blind Jim enmeshed himself within this system, to gain innumerable privileges and benefits, he also reinforced white Mississippi's paternalism.[21]

Blind Jim challenged Ole Miss' paternalism when he forged a business for himself on campus as food vendor to students and staff. Starting small, Ivy first roasted peanuts, which he bagged and placed in his large straw basket. He then sold the peanuts at the athletic events he attended, and around campus.[22] By 1938 Blind Jim expanded beyond the peanut market by offering Mounds and other candies for sale. Photographs depicting Blind Jim as "businessman" were made between 1926-1938 and suggested that Blind Jim worked for his keep while able. Several photographs included his basket containing the food goods, most likely peanuts. Obviously, joking about the size and capacity of both Blind Jim and his business venture, the 1931 *Ole Miss* "played" along at the paternalistic game they had devised identifying Blind Jim with the title "Big Businessman."



Ole Miss, 1940

While Blind Jim moved his enterprise to the university cafeteria in his later years, he first operated either on the Lyceum steps or within its halls. Photographs depict Ivy reclining with his wares on the Lyceum steps. Ivy's business, like any, experienced ups and downs. World War II proved a difficult period. Rationing and shortages limited Blind Jim's candy and peanut supply, reducing his profit potential. One student named Blind Jim one of the "many big businessmen feeling the pinch of the war." Rather than lose his business (or profit), Blind Jim welcomed donations during this period, thus effectively reinforcing the "dependent, financially unstable image" first glaringly apparent during the house foreclosure proceedings of the 1936-1937 school term.[23] Despite blindness, students respected Blind Jim enough they never short-changed or took advantage of him.[24]

Ivy's presence on the Lyceum steps offered a powerful and conflicting image. One, it represented a cooperation with power, the Lyceum holding

Ole Miss, 1942

the offices of the administrative staff of the university. Secondly, his business dealings on the Lyceum steps suggested a tacit approval by the administration of some forms of black entrepreneurship, albeit ones that held no particular threat to the local white economy. Viewed in the Old South context, Blind Jim assumed a much darker role by operating from the Lyceum steps. The Lyceum itself replicated the image of the plantation big-house, and the figure of Blind Jim on the front steps neatly fit the image of the appreciating and loyal slaves. Blind Jim provided Ole Miss with its own living and breathing lackey, instead of the ceramic and ill-painted new-south versions. Blind Jim's presence at the Lyceum, perhaps chosen for its centrality on campus, offered too great an opportunity to fulfill the stereotypes and images of the Old South.

Finally, Ivy held the role of counselor. Blind Jim served unofficially as the "Dean of Freshmen" at Ole Miss. Blind Jim proclaimed himself as Dean of Freshmen soon after his arrival and adoption by the school. "I'se the Dean," said Blind Jim, "and about the first thing I'se going to do is make a speech to the freshmen Thursday night. I'se going to tell them just exactly what's expected of them and what's not expected of them, so they won't get into any trouble."[25] One tradition of Oxford merchants included sponsoring a party to welcome incoming students at the beginning of each school year. At the 6th annual "Welcome Rebel" party in 1954, Blind Jim addressed the throngs of gathered students.[26]

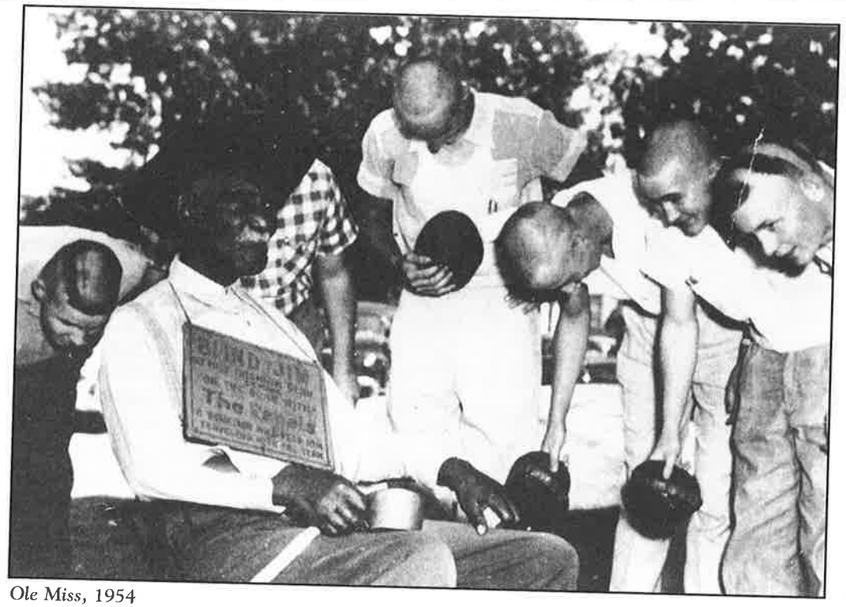
Blind Jim's role as intermediary for the white freshman into their new environment of college, offers a comparison with Uncle Remus. Every white southern child, pre-1955 and probably after, either heard about or saw on the screen the kind, gentle, old black man who picked up the young master's son and, while holding him on his knee, told him animal tales with a moral message of survival. Blind Jim played an Uncle Remus role at Ole Miss. Descriptions of his physical image portrayed the gentleness and wisdom of age. "Blind Jim's tall, erect figure became a human landmark on campus," remarked one student. "His hair and mustache finally turned snow white as he became enfeebled with age."[27] A resolution adopted by the Alumni Association at Ivy's death noted his "cheerfulness, good-humor and dignity."[28]

In this "Uncle Remus" role Blind Jim instructed the Freshman class on how to fit in and survive at Ole Miss:

> *"Homogeneous is what your class is," Blind Jim was telling Freshman Walters shortly after matriculation. The first year man, grasping the straight end of Blind Jim's walking stick as he led him across a campus driveway, was impressed by the deference to his class..."Yessir, freshmen are homogeneous. A certain nigger I know is heterogeneous and I'll leave him out this time but maybe some remarks on another occasion. But your class, homogeneous every year, has got a lot to work for, you know, for the boys here before you set some mighty big examples. And time, no matter what some fo'ks try to say, are just plumb different from 20 years ago, and you got to act different." Jim's deep, gentle voice was soothing to the lowly freshman who was wondering if he were about to be told that those who had gone on before had accomplished everything and left nothing for him to do..."It's just been 34 years since I entered the University," Jim stated precisely. "Three years later I became 'famous' when the Elmer boys and Mr. Kimmons got me elected dean of the homogeneous freshmen and I- ah, - have continued to serve in that- ah- capacity ever since without disturbance from any administration. I have been- ah- ah- embarrassed a few times with salary cuts, as the faculty would say, but of course peanut vending is not so lucrative- ah- lucrative at the best."*

Blind Jim continued to talk with the young freshman, informing him of the athletic and academic history of the institution and of some faculty members who he may see on campus.[29]

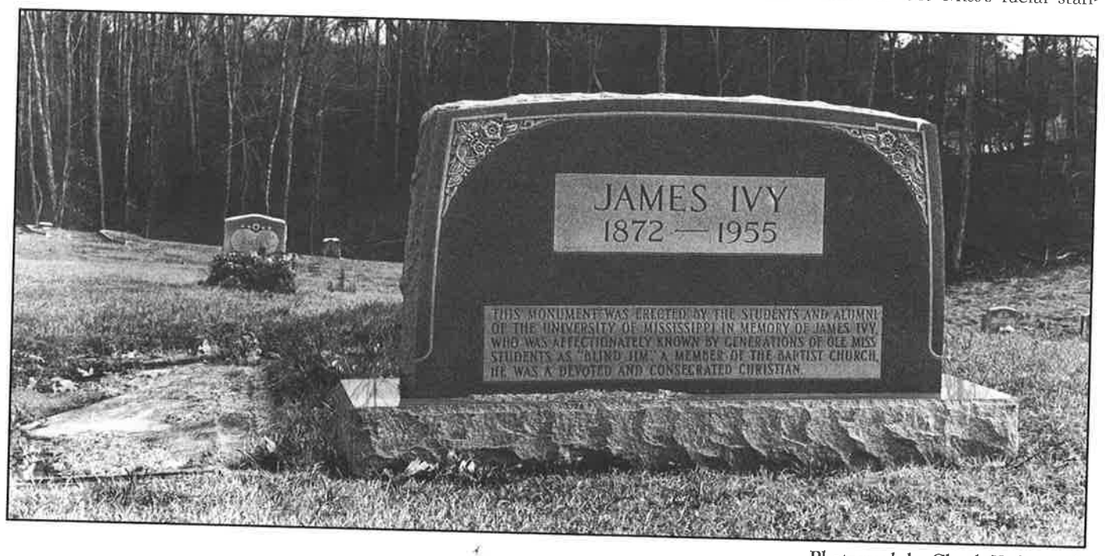
Blind Jim and the freshman class enjoyed a reciprocal relationship. Blind Jim relied upon the freshmen for monetary help or donations of various items. To one student Blind Jim commented, "when you write to your uncle in the shoe business, would you mind telling him -ah - that B'ind Jim wears a number 'ten'."[30] During the wartime shortages, Blind Jim depended upon the "freshmens" to help "keep the boat afloat until after the war."[31] Another freshman wrote home that "Blind Jim is very eager to remind all the freshmen that he needs a new overcoat for the winter."[32]



Ole Miss, 1954

Photographs of Blind Jim also reinforced this Uncle Remus image, of a kindly black man who guided, protected, entertained, and educated the white child, or in this case, the Ole Miss freshman. Some photographs showed Blind Jim as leader of the freshman students, perhaps to a pep-rally or freshman function. The pajama attire incorporated some of the milder effects of freshman hazing. While bowing to Blind Jim in a 1955 photograph, young freshmen also bowed to the cherished ideal of paternalism, embodied in Blind Jim. Understood in this manner, they are not worshipping a black man, but instead worshipping the creations of white society and ultimately the dominance of white over black.

Ultimately, Blind Jim served as a symbol of racial oppression. For white Mississippians, Blind Jim symbolized the "good Negro"; subordinate, cheerful, and dependent. During this time period white Mississippians, like other southerners, responded to racial events with mixed emotions. For most white southerners the only black models available for approval included the "good Negro" and the "black brute," or as Joel Williamson would identify these white southerners conceptualizing this idea, the "conservatives" and the "radicals."[33] During Blind Jim's tenure at Ole Miss he enjoyed the praise of the "conservative" southern mind. However, while the same mind may adore Blind Jim, the "radical" portion of that mind criticized the trial of the whites involved in the murder of Emmett Till, and later fought vigorously to keep Ole Miss segregated. Blind Jim served, for white southerners, as a convenient token. As long as they petted him, stroked him, and treated him in an affectionate manner, criticisms of the South's or Ole Miss's racial standards, segregation, or the hurling epithet of "racism" could be deflected.



Photograph by Chuck Yarborough

In mid-September of 1955, Blind Jim accompanied several Ole Miss students to Atlanta to attend the Ole Miss-Georgia football game. Segregation forced the white students to find a place for Blind Jim to sleep at the Negro YMCA. Ivy reassured the young men that they need not return the next day to pick him up, that he would find a ride to the game from someone. "On the way back [to Oxford] we asked [Blind Jim] what he thought of our football team. Then we learned that he had not been to the game. No one would take him. He gave no outward appearance that he was upset, but still we wondered if he did not feel disappointed," commented one of the students.[34]

The Atlanta incident showed the "silence" imposed by self-incriminating standards of racial conduct. Perhaps if Blind Jim had been allowed to stay with the white students he would not have been left behind for the game. To criticize segregation, however, required self-criticism and a self-examination that would have yielded incongruity and further psychological conflict. The death of Blind Jim in 1955, just one year after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, released Ole Miss from the responsibilities of paternalism. When Ole Miss buried Blind Jim, it also buried racial propriety and thus allowed racial antagonism, frustration, and fury to move to center stage.

ENDNOTES

1. "Blind Jim Buried in Oxford Sunday," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* 30 October 1955, p. 12.

2. "Blind Jim Is In the Hospital," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* 21 October, 1955, p. 17; "Blind Jim Fund Mounts--Service Slated Sunday," *Jackson Daily News* 25 October 1955, p.13.

3. Phil Stroupe, "Drive launched to Honor Memory of 'Blind Jim' Ivy by Providing College Scholarships for Negroes," *Jackson Daily News* 28 October 1955, p. 1; "For Blind Jim," *Jackson Daily News* 28 October 1955, p. 1.

4. "Jim Gave All His Affection," Mississippian date unknown; Wallace Sherwood, "Sherwood Forest," *Mississippian* date unknown. Other stories of Blind Jim's death can be found in "Blind Jim, Ole Miss' Greatest Fan Is Dead," *Jackson Daily* News 22 October 1955, p.14; "'Blind Jim' Ivy Dies At Chicago Hospital; Was Ole Miss `Dean'," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* 22 October 1955, p.1; Bonita Appleton, "Sudden passing of Blind Jim Dampens Homecoming Excitement,"*Mississippian* date unknown.

5. Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 48-49. Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizen's Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969).

6. "Ole Miss Flags Fly at Half Mast Blind Jim is Dead," *Commerical Appeal* 22 October 1955, p. 27; "Blind Jim Not Forgotten," *Mississipian* 2 October 1964, p.2.

7. "Ole Miss Flags Fly," *Commercial Appeal* 22 October 1955, p. 27.

8. "'Blind Jim' Ivy Dies at Chicago Hospital; Was Ole Miss `Dean'," Clarion-Ledger 22 October 1955, p. 1; References to his presence at athletic events appeared in most every article written about Blind Jim.

9. Bernard Massey, Jr. "Blind Jim Make Trek to Atlanta for First Football Game," *Mississippian* 23 September 1955, p. 2.

10. Edwin Smith, "Blind Jim Symbolizes Ole Miss 'Spirit," *Daily Mississippian* 13 October 1978; "Blind Jim, Ole Miss' Greatest Fan, Is Dead," *Jackson Daily News* 22 October 1955, p.14.

11. Joel Williamson, *A Rage For Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation*_(New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 15-29; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976), p.5.

12. David Sansing, *The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1990).

13. Smith, "Blind Jim Symbolizes Ole Miss Spirit," *Daily Mississippian* 13 October 1978; "Blind Jim Feels Squeeze of Wartime Restrictions," *Ole Miss Alumni News* 10 (October 1942): 4; *History of Second Baptist Church*, Oxford, Mississippi, 23 September 1984, p.2; "Blind Jim Not Forgotten," *Daily Mississippian* 2 October 1964, p.2. This last article notes that Blind Jim became blind while working on a courthouse. This story records that while dinning wood into creosote, Jim got creosote into his eyes. This is the only story giving this account. Other stories which mention his blindness state that it occurred while he worked on the Tallahatchie Bridge.

14. *Ole Miss* 1913, p.117.

15. Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Fall of an American Jester* (new York: oxford University Press, 1986), pp.25-33.

16. Alfred Hume, "Ole Miss Unique in Many Ways," *Ole Miss Alumni Review* 2 (April 1948): 12-14.

17.W.M. Reed, "As Blind Jim Sees It," *Ole Miss Alumni Review* 2 (March 1934): 5-6.

18 ."Help Blind Jim," *Mississippian* 26 September 1936, p.3;"Campus Negroes," *Commercial Appeal* 14 October 1936, p.6; "Mortgage is Due; Blind Jim Broke," *Mississippian* 17 October 1936, p.6.

19. O.B. Boone, Jr. "To Blind Jim," *Mississippian* 17 October 1936, p.3.

20 "In Re: Blind Jim," *Ole Miss Alumni News* 6 (December-January 1937- 1938): 5; *Ole Miss Alumni News* 5 (December-January 1936-1937): 6; "Alumni, Students Contributing to Save Jim's Home," *Mississippian* 24 October 1936, p.1; "...The Case of Blind Jim," *Mississippian* 21 November 1936, p.3.

21. T.J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985): 573. Lears explains the Gramscian perspective stating that if subordinate groups have created their own symbolic universes and incorporated an "apparent" objective reality, they "subordinate groups may participate in maintaining a symbolic universe, even if it serves to legitimate their domination."

22. "Dean of Freshmen has Cheered Rebels through Fifty-Seven Years," *Oxford Eagle* 16 September 1954, p.18; "Blind Jim, Dean of Ole Miss Freshmen," *Ole Miss Alumni News* (Fall 1953): 12; Hume, 12-14.

23."Blind Jim Feels Squeeze of

Wartime Restrictions," *Ole Miss Alumni News* 10 (October 1942): 4.

24. "Blind Jim Symbolizes Ole Miss Spirit," *Daily Mississippian* 13 October 1978.

25. "'Blind Jim' Dean of Ole Miss Freshmen," *Ole Miss Alumni Review* (Fall 1953): 12.

26. "Doctor Has Suggested that 'Blind Jim' Stay Out of Large Crowds At Ball Games, " *Oxford Eagle* 19 August 1954, p.5; "Ole Miss Students Get Royal reception At Oxford's Traditional Welcome Rebel Party," *Ole Miss Alumni News* 7 (September 1954): 15.

27. "Blind Jim Is Buried But the Good He Did Will Continue For Ole Miss," *Jackson Daily News* 31 October 1955, p.8.

28. Resolution in honor of Blind Jim. Minutes of the Ole Miss Alumni Association 1953-1955, folder 7, University Archives, Mississippi Collection.

29. W.M. Reed, pp.5-6.

30. Reed, p.6.

31. "Blind Jim Feels Squeeze of Wartime Restrictions," page unknown.

32. "Henry Writes Home," *Ole Miss* 1924, p.218.

33. Williamson, pp.70-116. I avoided the use of Williamson's label of "liberal," because I did not see that characteristic evidenced in white Mississippian's relationships with Blind Jim.

34. Massey, p.2.

Historical Sign

(Marking for Passerby
an Abandoned Plantation House
in the Mississippi Delta)

1.

Once overworked by black men,
this plantation is no longer
overseen by white men, it is
overlooked by everyone:

drivers, when they venture
from the interstate, race
by this plantation house
on their way to Stuckey's—

distracted by their
stomachs, they seldom
notice the fading highway
historical sign...

2.

Whatever the State may say,
these columns are not Greek,
these are the flagpoles
of a forgotten nation—

one that surrendered
its offensive flag
to save its estates
from reconstruction...

3.

They loved their institution,
those who owned this place,
while those who worked here
hurt too much to hate it,

so this plantation survived
the changing of the laws
without changing, the house
and huts whitewashed

to mask the War's wounds.
But one man couldn't keep it
up—he lost his crop to weevils,
then the sun deserted him;

his pride mixed with whiskey,
he charged down the road
past enemy shadows, to the river,
where he slept, waiting for the day.

When first light flooded the fields,
his wife woke up alone—her husband, her
Bible, gone; she prayed, then saw a sign
God was on the land: his overturned boat...

4.

The sign does not say so but
this plantation, once overworked
by blacks and overseen by whites,
still is understood by no one...

–Ted Olson

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 23rd Annual Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference "Faulkner and the Natural World"

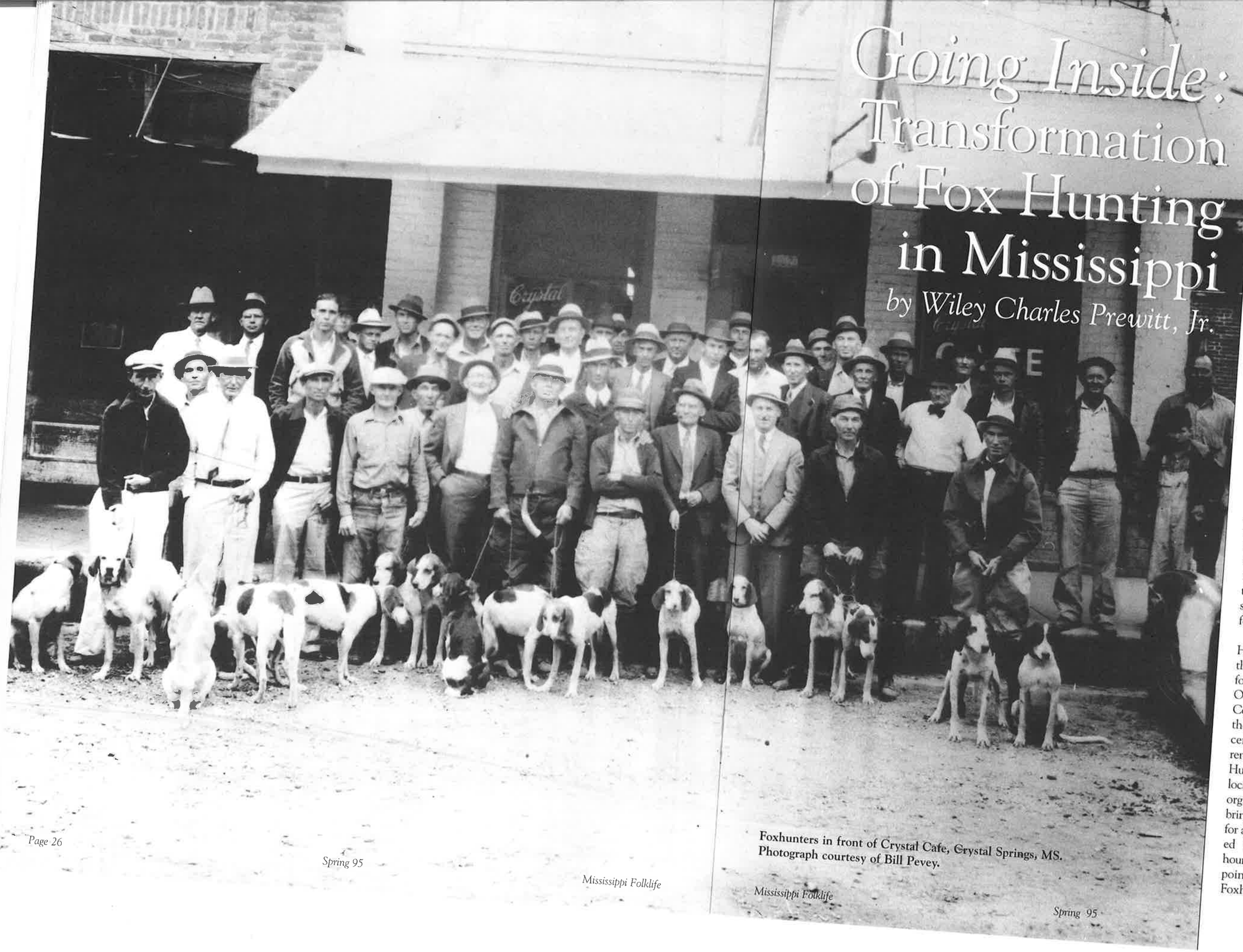
The University of Mississippi • July 28-August 2, 1996

The Department of English is issuing a call for papers for possible presentation at the Faulkner and Yoknaptawpha Conference to be held on the Oxford campus of the University of Mississippi July 28-August 2, 1996. Papers on any aspect of the theme "Faulkner and the Natural World" are eligible. As literary criticism continues to explore the myriad factors that contribute to the making and meaning of literary texts, attention has begun to shift from ideological and social arenas to the more concrete domain of nature itself—the natural world, the body, the cosmos: that world which constitutes the entire physical environment of the writer and the fundamental imagery of the created fiction. We welcome papers that approach the fiction in terms of such issues as:

- The impact of the physical world on character action and behavior
- Nature as setting, character, muse, master, moral arena
- The body as text
- The natural history of Yoknapatawpha County
- The body as intersection of the natural world and the cultural
- Race, class, and gender in the natural world
- Faulkner as ecologist
- Understanding Yoknapatawpha in terms of biology, geology, zoology, astronomy
- The limits the natural world imposes on the power of representation and culture
- The power of the literal over the figurative

Authors whose papers are selected for presentation at the conference will receive (1) a waiver of the conference registration fee, (2) lodging at the University Alumni House from Sunday, July 28, through Friday, August 2, and (3) reimbursement of travel expenses within the continental United States ($.30 a mile by automobile or tourist-class air fare). Papers presented at the conference will be published by the University Press of Mississippi.

The 14th edition of the University of Chicago *Manual of Style* should be used as a guide in preparing manuscripts (3,000 to 6,000 words). Three copies of manuscripts must be submitted by January 15, 1996. Notification of selection will be made by March 1, 1996. Manuscripts and inquiries about papers should be addressed to Ann J. Abadie, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677. Telephone: 601-232-5993.



Going Inside: Transformation of Fox Hunting in Mississippi

by Wiley Charles Prewitt, Jr.

Foxhunters in front of Crystal Cafe, Crystal Springs, MS.
Photograph courtesy of Bill Pevey.

Game and hounds are the invention of gods, of Apollo and Artemis. They bestowed it on Chevron and honored him therewith for his righteousness. And he, receiving it, rejoiced in the gift, and used it.

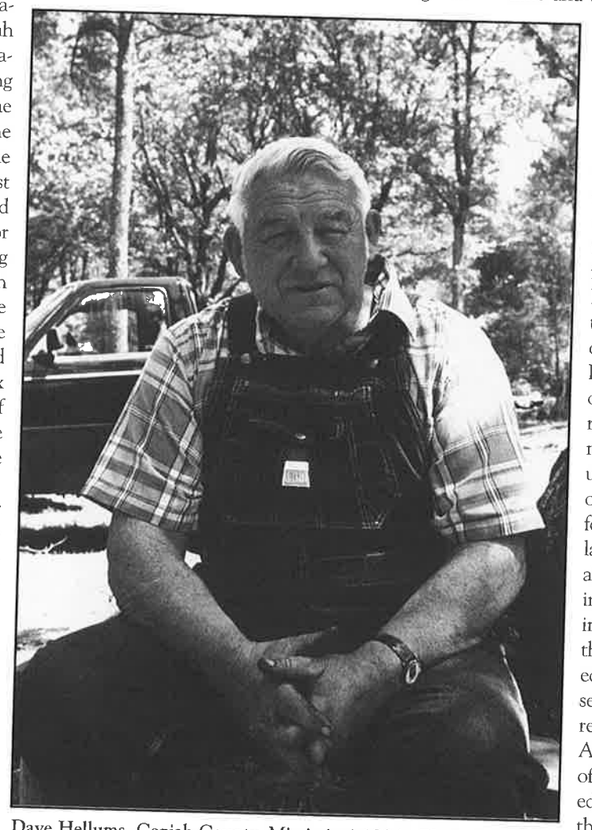
— Xenophon, *On Hunting*.[1]

For many people, fox hunting conjures up images of red clad gentry riding to hounds, yet most Mississippi fox hunting was part of an informal rural tradition in which local hunters gathered at a good geographical vantage point to simply listen to their hounds run a fox. In south Mississippi a group of fox hunters cling to their avocation despite reversals in wildlife populations, altered interpretations of property rights and changing rural lifeways. This article traces traditional fox hunting in Mississippi from its origin as a communal rural past-time pursued in the open countryside and describes how its devotees adapted it to large fenced areas known as fox pens. Interviews with the participants allow the hunters themselves to describe the forces that influenced fox hunting and their reactions to them. The interviews offer insight into the changing natural and cultural environment of the state and suggest reasons for the resiliency of fox hunting as a rural activity.

The Fred Pevey Memorial Fox Hunters Association evolved out of this tradition and is typical of many fox hunting groups around the state. Organized first as the Copiah County Fox Hunters Association in the first decades of the twentieth century, by 1936 the group was renamed the Alton N. Parker Fox Hunters Association in honor of a local aviator and fox hunter. The organization served as means of bringing local fox hunters together for a field trial where judges evaluated the performance of members' hounds according to the rules and point system of the National Foxhunters Assocation. Copiah

County native and World War I veteran Fred Pevey devoted much of his life to fox hunting and was instrumental in the organization of field trials in the Copiah County area. He traveled to many of the major fox hound field trials during the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties and had participated in judging several major field trials. His influence helped establish a strong interest in organized hunting in the Copiah County area. Also, his association with some of the leading fox hound breeders of the time helped bring in some of the first pedigreed hounds in the area. By the seventies, most local hunters acknowledged Fred Pevey as a major mentor for Copiah County fox hunting and field trialing and though the exact date is obscure, the association has borne his name since the mid seventies. Field trials formalized a type of fox hunting common in much of the south and constituted quite a different experience from the traditional informal hunt.[2]

Lauren Matthews, an older member of the Fred Pevey Association, explained traditional fox hunting as a communal activity enjoyed by friends and neighbors who met in the evenings with their dogs. He remembered, ". . . we'd turn loose and get out there on a hill and build us a fire, and nine times out of ten, we'd never leave just right there and run till daylight the next morning." Dave Hellums, an older fox hunter and noted fox hound breeder recalled, "Many times, I'd load up four or five dogs and go hunting and turn them out and sit there and listen to them all night." The more or less circular path run by a pursued red fox enabled hunters to stay in one place while following the chase or "race" by the sounds of the dogs. Hunters familiar with the individual voices of their own hounds and those of their companions' dogs could tell where the hounds were in relation to the fox, knowing which hound led the pack, how close they were to the fox and (the dread of all fox hunters) whether a hound "quit" or gave up the race. The practice of fox hunting was purely a sporting ritual enjoyed by those who, while often not wealthy, at least possessed the time and resources to make capture of edible game unimportant. In fact, while the hounds probably felt differently, the object of the hunters was never to catch the fox but only to listen to their dogs run



Dave Hellums, Copiah County, Mississippi 1994. Photograph by Wiley Prewitt.

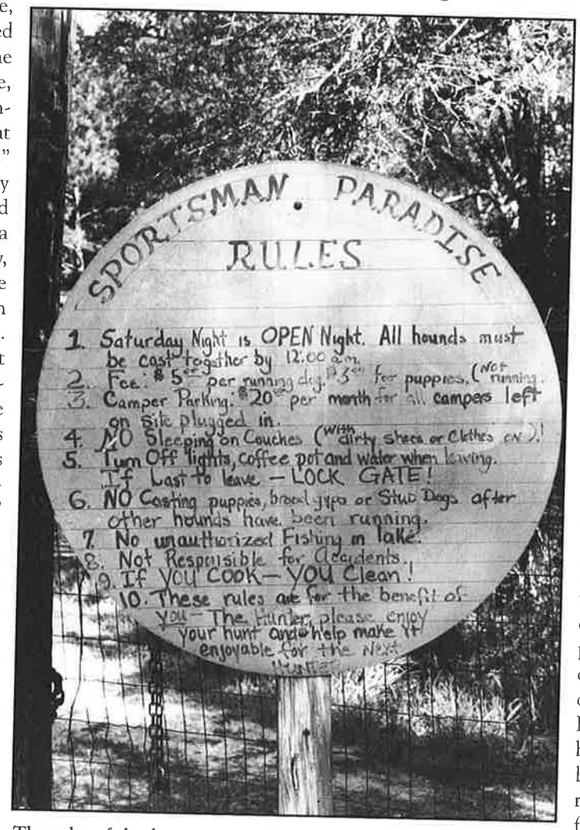
it. Hounds could only occasionally catch a healthy fox on his home territory, as the fox usually retreated to one of his holes when it tired. This bloodless objective marks an important distinction between fox hunting and most other types of hunting in which some type of game is expected at the end of a fruitful hunt.[3]

These evening rituals of fox hunting thrived in an earlier Mississippi because of a definable set of circumstances. Fox hunting rose to prominence as big game species declined in the face of widespread settlement in the late nineteenth century. Deer, bears, panthers and turkeys all adapted poorly to intensive clearcutting and farming. As large game disappeared, red and grey foxes filled an important niche in the environment of the pre–mechanized cotton culture. They adapted perfectly to the farmland of the time and red fox especially provided an excellent game animal for hounds. With the absence of deer in settled areas of Mississippi from the turn of the century to the fifties and sixties, hunters were reasonably sure that when they released their dogs, the track they struck would be that of a fox. In addition, fox hunters faced little opposition from landowners. Until the seventies, posted land was unheard of in most fox hunting areas. Landowners generally looked on hunting as a communal right within the rural community and they allowed and usually welcomed fox hunters on their land. Gatherings of fox hunters usually included landowners with their hounds although landownership was in no way required. Fox hunting groups reflected those in the local community interested in fox hunting and possessed of enough time and resources to pursue it. Although the cost of upkeep of hounds that pursued no edible game usually excluded the very poor, fox hunters represented a broad spectrum of the middle and upper classes.[4]

Because red foxes are creatures of well–settled farming areas and large areas are required to run them, few types of hunting better illustrate the once cohesive rural community than fox hunting. David Hellums offered an example, "Well when we hunted outside, you just throw 'em in the truck and go over to a certain spot, 'cause back in them days most people didn't care if you were running on their property. Be glad, most of the time they was glad for you to come over and chase a fox. It may be catchin' his chickens, or

doin' something, you know. And they'd want you to come over and run 'em and maybe catch one every once in a while. And it was a pleasure to, you know, to go out and run 'em. You just go out and find you a good place, and back up side of the road and dump 'em out through the woods or out across a pasture, you know. And pretty soon, the race is on and chances are, the farmer or whoever owned the place would probably come around and talk to you a while, you know, while they were runnin'. But you don't have that any more. That's all gone." Folks in the rural community generally knew each other and understood fox hunting as a part of rural life. Billy Pevey, the son of Fred Pevey, came back into fox hunting after an absence of some thirty years. He notes some of the distinct changes in the rural community around Crystal Springs since the times he hunted with his father. "Back then, if your dogs ran on your neighbors' property, they didn't say anything," Pevey remembered. "They didn't care. Your neighbors were close friends. Even the ones that lived five or six miles away, you went to church with them. They didn't care if your dogs ran on their place. So you didn't have to worry about this kind of stuff as far as people shooting your dogs or running over them with a car... We didn't have any deer, so the dogs didn't run off. They didn't know what a deer was, so they didn't have them to chase." By the fifties and sixties, deer returned to many parts of Mississippi through Game and Fish Commission restocking programs. In addition, a significant outmigration of rural folk was occurring which enhanced the prospects of deer survival and deteriorated the rural community in which the fox hunting population thrived. The rise in deer populations and the changes in the composition and character of rural communities demanded sometimes painful adaptations by fox hunters.[5]

The specific time varied with each locality in Mississippi but sometime in the 1970s fox hunting in the open countryside became almost impossible. The fox hounds often disappeared while chasing deer, succumbed to cars while crossing highways, or followed their game onto lands posted against trespass where their masters could not retrieve them. Large numbers of fox hunters left the sport, some took up deer hunting or raccoon hunting, but others attempted a solution through the development of large fenced enclosures where they might run their hounds without fear of deer, cars, or irate property owners. Fenced enclosures or "fox pens" sprung up all over the South in response to the problems of hunting "outside". Leon Canoy, a Fred Pevey Association fox hunter and successful hound breeder, described the sometimes desperate situations that drove fox hunters "inside." "The pens, for now days, was the greatest thing that happened to fox hunters," Canoy explaines. "It wasn't by choice. It was just that something had to be done, you know. And that's why fox pens was built. But it had gotten to the point you couldn't hardly run outside with any pleasure. Either somebody was threatening to shoot you or your dogs 'cause they was goin' across an acre of land or something, you know. Or either he's on a highway or somebody leased up a deer club for deer, and they didn't want your dogs on there... A lot of people in town moved out and bought nine acre lots or two acre lots, and they [these lots] became their 'Ponderosa.' And if anything walked across their place they wanted to kill it or call the law. And it put a damper on a lot of things because folks would shoot at you. They'd come out on the road and cuss you out. So the pen really was our salvation." Salvation consists of large areas from 100 to well over 1,000 acres enclosed by a woven wire fence at least eight feet high. Pen owners purchase foxes and more often coyotes (or trap their own) to stock the enclosures. Hunters are charged a fee to hunt, usually around five dollars for each hound they release in the pen. Automatic feed dispensers provide food for the foxes and coyotes in the pens which are usually equipped with resting areas inaccessible to the dogs where tiring animals may escape the hounds for a time.[6]



The rules of the fox pen at the Sportsman Paradise, Lloyd Star, MS, 1994. Photograph by Wiley Prewitt.

The enclosures provide an experience much removed from a traditional hunt and most fox hunters, if given a choice, would prefer to hunt on the "outside". Speaking of the pens, one hunter said "... it's nothing perfect...its the best we got though...if I had the choice, I'd run outside, you know. If it wasn't any problem, I'd run outside, to where you could run just fox." Another hunter felt that the pens still offered "friendship and camaraderie, but it's not

the same thing as being outside, being free if you were, if it was like that...You just don't have that anymore. You're confined to a pen." Descriptions like "free" and "confined" capture part of the transition in Mississippi fox hunting. On the outside, only the game and the hounds determined the boundary of the chase. The fox hunt was one of the communal uses of the land that the traditional rural community recognized and participated in. Running the hounds characterized a cohesive rural community because by necessity the hounds used land without respect to boundary lines. As the exodus to urban areas and the diminishing reliance on farming made the rural community less stable, boundary lines and acreage in the country came to mean privacy and privilege in a way that eroded communal property rights. The pre–eminence of private property rights over perceptions of communal rights to hunting land drew a response in kind from fox hunters with the establishment of the pens. That is, the solution to the enforced boundaries of landowners was the creation of the fox hunters' own private areas. Still, fox hunters perceive the pen as a last resort. "It's got its good and bad points in a fox pen," one hunter contends, "but it's all we got, you know. And it's either this, or our sport's gone, you know. And we don't want it to go."[7]

While allowing fox hunters to continue their avocation, the artificial boundaries of the fox pen influenced the hunters' perceptions of the chase and the traits of their hounds. The fences of the pens give it the character of an arena for the chased game and hounds, and in some ways increase the opportunity for an objective competition or field trial to take place as a part of a fox hunt. Traditional fox hunts usually took place out of the sight of the hunters themselves. Hunters followed the race primarily by listening to the hounds. A field trial on the outside demanded a substantial effort on the part of judges to follow the hounds and make visual evaluation of their progress. In fox pens, the game and hounds tend to follow trails where judges may catch a glimpse of the pack during the race, making it easier to tell which hound is in the lead. Field trials inside fox pens involve several judges who position themselves around the pen and keep track of the leading dogs by the large numbers painted on the hounds. The judges usually take the numbers of the first six or seven hounds that pass by them behind the fox or coyote and the hounds are later given numerical scores according to where they were in the pack, that is, their "speed and drive". Ideally the hounds are given "hunting" and "trailing" scores in addition to the "speed and drive" scores but the abundance of game inside most pens eliminated the need for a hound to seek out the fox or coyote. The major requirement of a hound in a fox pen is the stamina necessary to propel itself through several hours of near consistent running. The hound that stays well to the front of the pack for several hours giving the judges numerous opportunities to record its number will accumulate enough points to place well in the field trial. The abundance of game along with the confinement of the fox pen make hunting skills less important for the hound while placing a premium on running ability and allowing hunters the opportunity to objectively quantify their dogs' performance. One hunter concluded, "In a pen there is no hunting and trailing because they've got the game, the pen is full of game...all the dog's got to do is keep travelling until he runs up on that game. There he is, so its all speed and drive.... So, endurance is the main ingredient today that you want to breed into your hounds. Cause if he scores a thousand points, and he quits an hour or five minutes or two minutes before the hunt's called off, he loses every bit of it."[8]

Sportsman Paradise, Lloyd Star, MS, 1994. Photo by Wiley Prewitt.

The point system of the field trial and the competition it signifies became more important as running moved inside fox pens. The quantification of the performances of dogs took the place of some of the freedom that hunters experienced on the outside. Fox hunting associations held more field trials than ever through the aid of the pens. Hunters' esteem the winning hounds of field trials held inside pens more than the winners of those still conducted on the outside. Today, as in Fred Pevey's day, the major American fox hound field trials, known to hunters as the "National" and the "U.S.O." are held on the outside. However, it is the hounds that win trials on the inside who possess the genes most coveted by the breeders today and who therefore perpetuate their characteristics in the fox hound population. Hound breeders probably find the characteristic of stamina a more objective and more attainable goal than the rather nebulous notion of hunting ability. Fox hunters accept the more formalized competition among hunters and the increased specialization of hounds as simply part of the advent of the fox pens without which their sport might end.[9]

Hunters generally embrace the pens and emphasize the positive aspects of fox hunting opportunities today, some of which remain the same that hunters have enjoyed for generations. Traditionally,

FRATERNITY OF THE FOXHOUND

by Bill Pevey

Standing at the cashier's window in the Copiah Bank in Crystal Springs one Friday afternoon I noticed the antique, glass-top display case in the corner. The Bank was celebrating its 100th anniversary and was displaying an assortment of memorabilia. After completing my transaction, I stepped over to take a look at the display. I was immediately struck by a photograph. The old brown tone picture showed a group of about 40 men with most on the front row holding dogs on leashes. Two old cars flank the group on the left and right. The front row of men stood in a gravel street. The remainder of the men in the picture were standing on the sidewalk, elevated some 12 inches above those on the front.

The photograph was taken in Crystal Springs, the Crystal Cafe prominent in the background. Seeing the name of the cafe on the window brought back vague memories of visiting there as a child with my father.

Standing second from the right end in the photograph is a man who appears to be about forty years old. He is wearing a canvas hunting cap and a lightweight jacket zipped halfway, pants, and leather boots that reach almost to his knees. He holds two dogs on a leash. While I had never seen this picture before I recognize it as my father, Fred Pevey, taken some ten years before I was born.

Others on the front row are also familiar. My Uncle Dick, who instilled in me the love of hunting and fishing and a respect for nature, stands down from my dad. Many times I have waited anxiously for the sound of Uncle Dick's old red Ford pickup in the gravel, dreaming of the long stringer of bream we would eventually have at the end of the day. To his left stands his brother and peering over that brother's shoulder is my grandfather.

I was pretty sure that all these men were fox hunters since my father had been an avid fox hunter all of his life. What then was the occasion of this photograph?

Over the three year period it took me to get a copy of the photograph, I learned some important information about these hunters. My aunt Irene passed away in 1990 at the age of 92, and in some of the things she had accumulated over the years were the minutes of the Copiah County Fox Hunters Association for the years 1936 to 1938. She had been the secretary of the association.


Second fox hunter from right is Fred Pevey, father of Bill Pevey. Photograph courtesy of Bill Pevey.

During a meeting in 1936 a motion had been made that the name of the group be changed to the Alton N. Parker Hunt. The motion was seconded, voted on, and passed. Parker was a local citizen and had grown up in Crystal Springs. He had been a Naval Aviator and was part of Admiral Richard Byrd's expedition to the South Pole. In fact, he was the first man to set foot on Little America.

Along with that information I had also acquired many old family photographs. Among these was a time-worn brown envelope with "Hamilton's Studio" written on the front. Hamilton's was the local photographic studio for many years. Inside the envelope were two 8" x 10" negatives. One of these showed a man wearing a navy uniform and the other pictured a trophy. On the back of the envelope, written in long hand, was Alton Parker's name.

Looking back at the old photograph taken in front of the Crystal Cafe, I see what is now another familiar face. Dressed in a suit and tie, Alton Parker, is the man standing next to my father. Forty years later the name of the association would be changed to the Fred Pevey Fox Hunters Association.

While interviewing various people in an attempt to identify individuals in the photograph, I heard many wonderful stories. Most were about hunting in general and fox hunting in particular, while some were concerned with individual hunters, favorite dogs, and special hunts that men remembered in great detail although they took place as long as fifty years ago. But all the men share a common outlook.

Fox hunting stories from these men declare an obvious love of the sport. In addition, their stories and approach to hunting clearly reflect an admiration and respect for the game that they pursue. The fox was a revered part of the equation. No one purposely killed or endangered the fox.

Their activity was not then and is not now a sport of willful destruction. To the contrary, fox hunting is a sport that revolves around the fraternity of breeding, raising, and running good hounds, doing everything possible to take care of and nourish the very game that is hunted with such zest.

most hunters raised their own fox hounds and this practice is still important to many people. The challenge of mating the hounds that will result in a combination of the best characteristics of the sire and the dam is one of the most powerful attractions of fox hunting. Bill Pevey recalled that the successful outcome of a match, known to hunters as "making a good cross," was a major factor in his father's love of fox hunting. The search for a good cross is very much a part of fox hunting today. Much of the talk at fox pens revolves around hunters negotiating crosses among their own hounds or discussing the desirable traits of hounds among those at stud with professional breeders. With stud fees of around $100 to $150 and puppy prices from $75 to $125, serious hunters can obtain part of the more popular bloodlines for relatively reasonable amounts. Even though successful breeders do a brisk business in stud services and puppies, raising hounds usually constitutes only a hobby or a part–time job and simply allows them more involvement with fox hunting.[10]

One of the most common reasons that fox hunters offer for continuing the chase is the camaraderie they enjoy at the pen hunts and field trials. Hunters describe a fellowship absent of distinctions between the wealthy and the poor and claim that while hunting, the common bond of the fox hunt supersedes one's social status. Lauren Matthews and others maintain lifelong friendships as part of their devotion to fox hunting: "It is...like a family reunion for me. I know just about everybody that comes to these field trials." The fox pens make possible the "get togethers" of the fox hunting community and their popularization has brought many old houndmen back into the sport and recruited a number of young people. Hunters generally perceive the interest in their sport as growing or at least stable after a long period of decline. Some see fox hunting as becoming more of a family recreation because of the camping facilities at many pens which encourage weekend stays by fairly large groups. Hunting associations often put special emphasis on children's involvement through youth hound shows and scheduling hunts and field trials to coincide with school holidays. The emphasis that hunters place on fellowship and the broadening spectrum of those who participate in events at fox pens suggest that the fox hunting community has supplanted some of the functions of the rural community for many fox hunters. The hunts in the pens maintain a network of relationships among fox hunters that in the past proved vital to hunting on the outside. Clearly the years changed fox hunting and no doubt Lauren Matthews correctly surmised, "...that old kind of hunting like we had back then, that's just like yesterday, that's gone, it ain't coming back." More than anything else, his relationships with other hunters kept Matthews and others like him involved in fox hunting and ultimately led them through the adaptations to the pen.[11]

Perhaps the sense of fellowship is the only part of fox hunting to pass through the last fifty years unscathed. Fred Pevey and his contemporaries would understand little of deer troubles and "no trespassing" signs and they might have balked at casting their hounds inside a pen, as many who witnessed the transition surely did. But without a doubt they would recognize the camaraderie that accompanied the houndmen into the pen.

Fox hunters assembled in front of Copiah County Courthouse, Hazelhurst, MS. Photograph courtesy of Bill Pevey.

ENDNOTES

1. Xenophon, *Scripta Minora*, translated by E. C. Marchant, London, William Heinemann, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons (MCMXXV), 367; although Marchant suspects that the introduction to *Cynegeticus* (*On Hunting*) is a much later addition to the body of the work, Xenophon would probably have been pleased at the sentiment conveyed by the first lines, xlii, xliii.

2. Stuart Marks, *Southern Hunting in Black and White: Nature History and Ritual in a Carolina Community* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991) 92-125, Marks explains some of the different types of fox hunting from a social and culture perspective. *By Laws, Running Rules and Regulations*, National Fox Hunters Association (Lexington, KY: The Chase Publishing Co., 1993) Tape logs of interviews are on file in the Documentary Projects Archive, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, The transcripts of Laurin Matthews and other informants interviewed in 1994 for this study will be referred to by name, accession number, and page number, Laurin Matthews, MS-WP-001, 11, 12, 18, 19. Bill Pevey, MS-WP-005, 11, 12.

3. Laurin Matthews, MS-WP-001, 3 (quote), 25. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, 4 (quote), 13, 30.

4. Stuart Marks, 92-125, Marks notes some of the requirements of a good fox hunting area in his study of Scotland County, North Carolina. Wiley Prewitt, "The Best of All Breathing: Hunting and Environmental Change in Mississippi, 1900-1980" (unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Mississippi, 1991), 51-160.

5. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, 13. Billy Pevey, MS-WP-005, 8. 9. Wiley Prewitt, 51-160.

6. Leon Canoy, MS-WP-003, 14, 3. Billy Pevey, MS-WP-005, 9. 10. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, 35.

7. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, "its nothing perfect..." 29, "Its got its good and bad points..." 20. Billy Pevey, MS-WP-005, "friendship and camaraderie..." 9.

8. Leon Canoy, MS-WP-003, "In a pen...", 16, 17.

9. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, 21, 22. Stuart Marks, 92-125, Marks investigated some of the competitiveness among hunters and how they felt about their fox hunting although his work involved those who field trialed and hunted on the outside. Mary Hufford, *Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens* (Philedelphia: Universityof Pennsylvania Press, 1992). Hufford also deals with the ways fox hunters perceive their sport but she too studied hunters who continued to run their hounds on the outside.

10. Billy Pevey, MS-WP-005, 4, 5, 16.

11. David Hellums, MS-WP-002, 20, 21, 26, 37, 38. Lauren Matthews, MS-WP- 001, 8, 5.

Hamp was my mule

Old and worn in the beaming summer's sun
with splitting hooves and tempered will.
Brown and shiny your furry coat
from the tip of our tail to your
pointed black rimmed ears.

Your master's commands are short and
simple, you follow them on cue without
fuss or wimple,
GHEE to the right and
HAWW to the left,
WHOA is the command you crave and lust.

For so many seasons you've leaned against
the tightening tug of the plow,
take your deserved rest my beast of burden.
Life for you was not on the silver screen
making jack asses of humans in khakis green.
For it was in the fields on forty acres of land
that you pull a plow for a strong black man.
You snaked felled trees from deep in the woods
to open green areas for cutting and cording.
Surely if there were ever a jack of all trades
you were it my old mule Hamp.

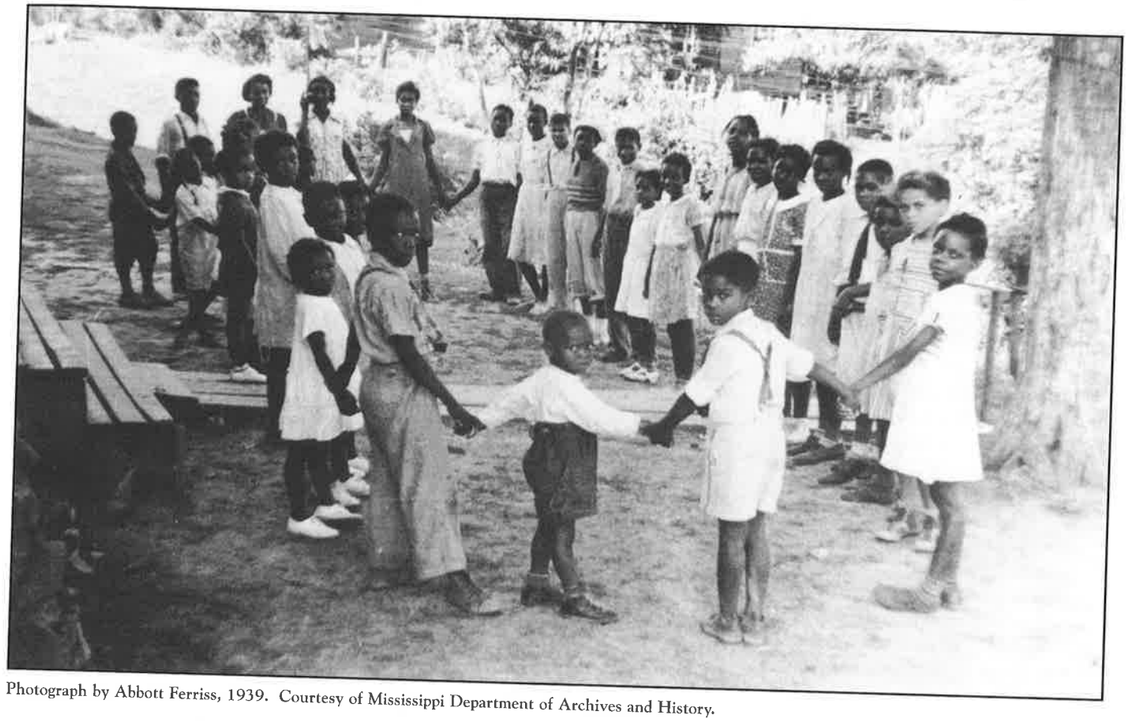
Two decades later and I still recall
how you made me run afraid even to fall,
having kindled your anger against my
childish prank, I ran and hid under
a crate of planks.

Remember when Daddy would take you to town,
to till some gardener's unbroken ground?
They would all be amazed with your ease in work,
not jerking or balking and kicking the dirt.
Then as always at the end of the day you'd
hop the truck and we'd drive away.
People sho loved to see you do that...Me Too.

—*Benny R. Walls*

The Persistence of Children's Gamesongs in North Mississippi

by Abbott L. Ferriss



Photograph by Abbott Ferriss, 1939. Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Herbert Halpert of the Library of Congress conducted a folk-song tour of Mississippi in 1939 , recording all types of folk music throughout the State. These recordings are preserved in The Archive of Folk Culture of the Library of Congress. In 1990, with a reproduction on tape of the children's gamesongs, I extracted and studied gamesongs reflecting the antics of Brer Rabbit from the collection (Ferriss, 1990). In that study, I was led to assume that the rabbit songs must be unique to African-American children, because the Halpert collection and other collections contained no rabbit songs collected from white informants. Furthermore, a review of the literature of children's gamesongs led me to believe that the rabbit songs of Mississippi African-Americans were unique to them.

The rabbit songs of Mississippi African-Americans collected in 1939 present a number of interesting and unique characteristics. The rabbit gamesongs in the Halpert collection characterize the rabbit as pilfering from the garden and escaping over the hill, but not as a trickster, as represented in rabbit tales reported by Joel Chandler Harris. The songs accompanied games or dances which required jumping, hopping, chasing and other movement by the singers, creating active play for children, typically reported as 8 to 12 years of age when they learned the song. The rabbit songs also may be interpreted as vital indicators of aspirations and thoughts of the singers or comments on life. In addition, they reflected the children's awareness of the cotton culture of the day. For example, "And if I live to see next fall, I ain't gonna pick no cotton a-tall." Finally, verses about the rabbit in the 139 Mississippi African-American rabbit songs are adaptations from other songs such as 'possum songs. The adaptations show that children borrow rhyme and meter of a song employing a cognitive content that may be illogical or impossible in reality. In short, the rhyme and metre are compelling to the children, regardless of the illogicality of the content of the songs.

These considerations led to questions which I attempted to answer in constructing this article. Do the rabbit gamesongs of the Mississippi children of 1939 continue to prevail in the culture of the 12-year-old, or have they been lost? Are the rabbit gamesongs unique to African-American Mississippi children, as I assumed them to be in the 1939 collection? How do the rabbit gamesongs

stand in popularity in relation to other Mississippi folk gamesongs or in relation to songs transmitted on television?

With these considerations in mind, I prepared a questionnaire for administration in the sixth grade classroom at the locations where the original recording of the rabbit songs had been made. The questionnaire included the titles of seven rabbit songs of the Halpert collection. For comparison, nine other Mississippi children's gamesongs from the 1939 Halpert collection were also included, as well as five additional titles of songs from the Sesame Street television program. I placed the titles in the questionnaire systematically, with a title from Sesame Street being followed by a rabbit song title, followed by the title of one of the other folk gamesongs, etc. I thought the alternating pattern would help sustain each child's interest, if none or few of the folksongs were recognized. The response categories for each title were: (1) I don't know the song; (2) I have heard it but can't sing it; and (3) I can sing it. If the student indicated (2) or (3), the song was considered "recognized".

While questionnaires are used infrequently in folklore and folksongs research, they are not unknown (See Appendix Note). Questionnaires have been used to survey populations in order to learn the frequency of practice of an activity, and to determine preferences, especially in order to compare gender preferences (Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg, 1961). In the present study, I am interested not in preference among activities, nor frequency of participating, but rather in employing the questionnaire to establish the probability that a child in grade 6 at selected locations in Mississippi recognized the rabbit songs or could sing them. I also am interested in comparing the rates of recognition between white and African-American children. My review of the literature found no previous study that employed this approach to establish the prevalence of children's gamesongs in a defined population, although so extensive is the literature of folklore that one is foolhardy to claim that something never has been done (For example, see bibliographies of childlore: Grider, 1980 and Halpert, 1982).

To begin the study, I obtained a list of Mississippi school districts and the superintendents of schools from the State Superintendent of Education. Since the 1939 gamesong recordings were made at Greenville, Vicksburg, Tupelo, Amory, Brandon, and Byhalia, I forwarded a letter to the appropriate district superintendents explaining the study and requesting cooperation in administering the questionnaire to their sixth grade students. After six weeks and no response, I called each district superintendent's office and then requested the name of the music teacher or teachers of the sixth grade. In a telephone conversation with each teacher (in one case an assistant superintendent), I explained the purpose of the study and obtained consent and cooperation. The teachers readily agreed to cooperate, but one district superintendent denied permission to administer the questionnaire. Subsequently, a supply of questionnaires was mailed to the music teachers with a return, stamped envelope. Five schools at four of the locations provided questionnaire responses. The teachers returned the questionnaires with white and African-American respondents identified: children were not requested to supply this identification. The teacher at one school agreed to cooperate but did not return the questionnaires. The teacher at another school could not be contacted and the effort was abandoned. While there is not restriction on identifying the responses with the school, in the interest of maintaining anonymity, schools in this report are identified by letter. A total of 263 white and 99 African-American sixth graders responded to the questionnaire.

Gamesong Singers in Brandon, Mississippi, 1939. Photograph by Abbott Ferriss, courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Mrs. Eva Grace Boone and Singers, Rankin County, MS, 1939. Photograph by Abbott Ferriss, Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

In answer to the major question of the study, "Do Mississippi children still know the rabbit songs?," I found that about one in seven sixth grade students from the five sample schools recognized each rabbit song (the probability was .138). By comparison, slightly less that one in four of the students questioned recognized each of the other folk gamesongs (the probability was .277), while the chance that a student recognized a TV song was about four in ten. In addition, the rabbit gamesongs were recognized by white children only slightly less than by African-American children. The latter children recognized the other gamesong titles in about the same probability as the white children (there being no statistical difference between recognition rates).

No rabbit song stands out, each being recognized within a fairly narrow range (.07 to .18). Among the other folk gamesongs, however, two stood out prominently: "We're Goin' Round the Mountain" and "Little Sally Walker". The recognition rates for the "other folksongs" were higher than the rabbit songs, ranging from .088 to .641. The

Table 1: Probability that Sixth Grade Children at Five Mississippi Locations Recognize TV Songs, Rabbit Gamesongs, and Other Folk Gamesongs, for White and African-American Children, 1990.

	White	African-American	Total
Television			
1. The Alphabet Song	.912	.859	.898
4. The People in Your Neighborhood	.399	.374	.392
9. Bein' Green	.148	.101	.135
14. "C" Is For Cookie	.285	.242	.274
21. Everybody Likes Ice Cream	.376	.323	.362
*Television Songs, average (weighted) probability	.417	.388	.408
Folk Game Songs About the Rabbit			
2. Here, Rang, Here	.053	.101	.066
6. Rabbit, Rabbit	.137	.141	.138
8. Oh John, the Rabbit	.144	.159	.146
11. Ole Uncle Rabbit (Got a Mighty Habit)	.179	.182	.180
15. Lucy Rabbit (In My Garden)	.110	.111	.110
18. Mister Rabbit (What Make Yo' Ears So Thin?)	.110	.141	.119
20. Jump Po' Rabbit (in the Pea-o Vine)	.129	.162	.138
*Rabbit Gamesongs, average (weighted) probability	.124	.167	.138
Other Folk Gamesongs			
3. Little Sally Walker Sittin' in the Saucer	.483	.657	.530
5. Call Him Rachael, Call Him	.095	.071	.088
7. Miss Sue, Miss Sue	.281	.303	.287
10. I'm Wandering O're the River	.175	.131	.163
12. Call That 'Possum	.099	.121	.105
13. We're Goin' Round the Mountain	.654	.606	.641
16. Green Gravel, Green Gravel	.110	.091	.105
17. The Bear That Went Over the Mountain	.285	.273	.282
19. Walkiin' On the Green Grass	.164	.212	.177
*Other Folk Gamesongs, average (weighted) probability	.268	.295	.277

TV songs, on the other hand, were the most popular, ranging from .135 to .898. Almost all children were familiar with "The Alphabet Song".

It is quite evident from these data that traditional folksongs persist among the sixth grader, and that the rabbit gamesongs now are not uniquely African-American, irrespective of the 1939 situation, but it also is evident that the TV, as a medium of transmission, commands the young people's attention.

The recognition probabilities by research site for white and African-American children are shown in Table 2. An analysis of the frequencies upon which these probabilities were computed shows a significant difference between white and African-American in expected values (Chi Square=47.78, df=14, P=0.0001), when site E is excluded (where no African-American children were enrolled). Thus, the differences in recognition of white and African- American students by site are substantial. Disaggregation of the Chi Square values shows that 70% of it can be attributed to recognition of the rabbit songs. In addition, one site, C, accounted for 22% of the value of Chi Square. However, when the t-test is applied to differences between white and African- American probabilities by type of song and site, no significant differences appear.

The data show that both white and African-American children are familiar with the rabbit songs, but that the African-American rate of recognition is slightly higher for the rabbit songs and for the other folk songs, than rates for white children. The rate of recognition of the TV songs by the white child is slightly greater than that of the African-American child. However, none of these differences are overwhelming.

The greatest differences in recognition were found at Sample Site C, where the white and African-American children recognized the Sesame Street songs about equally, but the African-Americans recognized the rabbit and other folksongs with greater frequency. This is a rural school with 13 percent African-American children in the sixth grade class of 111.

When the response, "I can sing it", is considered, African-American children show higher rates than white fellow students in the sixth grade for each type of song. Recognition rates for songs they can sing by type of songs are shown below:

Table 2: Probability of Song Title Recognition by a Sixth Grade Pupil, by Five Sample Sites for Three Types of Songs, Mississippi, 1990

Total Sample

	White	African- American	Total
TV	.417	.388	.408
Rabbit	.124	.167	.138
Other	.268	.295	.277
N =	263	99	

Sample Site A

	White	African-American
TV	.356	.353
Rabbit	.053	.088
Other	.200	.235
N =	59	34

Sample Site B

	White	African-American
TV	.465	.387
Rabbit	.096	.138
Other	.287	.248
N =	43	30

Sample Site C

	White	African-American
TV	.478	.410
Rabbit	.184	.367
Other	.266	.421
N =	97	14

Sample Site D

	White	African-American
TV	.370	.400
Rabbit	.163	.075
Other	.317	.275
N =	7	21

Sample Site E

	White
TV	.379
Rabbit	.078
Other	.172
N =	57

Note: Employing the frequencies of recognitions, Sample Site C shows a X^2 with significance P=.006. However, testing p_1 vs. p_2 for each song category in the above, the t-test for Site C is not significant, nor are tests for other sites.

Type of Song	White	African-American
TV	.228	.256
Rabbit	.028	.053
*O.F.	.084	.152

*(*Other Folksongs*)

The Chi Square for the frequencies upon which the above is based is significant, P=.031, the greatest contribution coming form "other folksong" differences.

The number of the 21 songs recognized by individual children varies from zero to 21, with the mode being 3 and the mean being 5.4 songs. The number of songs recognized approximates the Pearsonian Type III distribution. African-American children recognized 5.32 songs on average, while the average white child recognized 5.51 songs, a very slight difference. Children at Sample Site C recognized considerably more than the total sample: 6.9 songs per child, reflecting the more rural background of the families. Perhaps the chief significance of this graph is that, in approximating the normal curve, it demonstrates that the questionnaire instrument gives a fair representation of the children's experiences, which one might assume to be normally distributed.

The fifty years since the folksongs were recorded witnessed extensive changes in agriculture, industry, education, and in material culture of the countries. The African-American population declined overall for the State from nearly 50 per cent to about 35 per cent of the total. Density of population increased greatly in two counties where urbanization occurred and remained about the same in two other countries. The educational level of the population improved vastly. School systems that were racially separate became integrated. African-Americans gained civil rights and political influence. The size of the employed population greatly increased in the four locations, owing partly to the increase in female employment. Agricultural employment declined while manufacturing and service work increased. The pitiful housing conditions of the 1940s became much improved, with electricity shining where once oil lamps burned. Agriculture changed extensively in the half century. The tractor and other gasoline-drive machines supplanted the horse and the mule. Simultaneously, cotton farming declined in some areas with soybeans, rice and livestock replacing it (U.S Bureau of the Census, 1988; 1947; 1983; 1987).

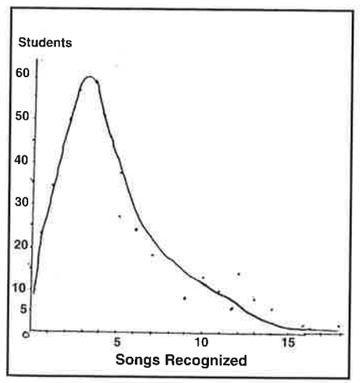


Figure 1-Students by number of songs recognized, N= 367, Sixth Grade, Selected Mississippi Schools, 1990.

Several theoretical propositions may be advanced for the loss/change or persistence of children's gamesongs in the wake of the above socio-cultural transformations.

Influences Toward Loss or Change

1. Folk gamesongs normally have no institutional base. That is, they are not part of a ceremony; nor are they sacred; nor are they taught to children at school. They do not have organized support nor reinforcement to insure their preservation. A study by Lynne G. Zucker shows, by experiment, a strong relationship between degree of institutionalization and cultural persistence (Zucker, 1977; Hudson, 1962).

2. As a form of entertainment, gamesongs are highly subject to exchange with other entertainments: one activity or song may be easily substituted for another. Why a gamesong would hold a child's attention probably rests in some qualitative aspect of the gamesong, its function of fulfilling a need, its functional significance in the child's environment. The larger the number of available substitutes, the more probable a gamesong will be supplanted; conversely, the fewer alternative substitutes, the more likely a gamesong will persist. Considering the many forms of entertainment that claim a child's attention—TV, movies, organized games, etc.—the probability that a folk song or gamesong will be learned and will persist in the culture of the child today seems slight.

3. Gamesongs express qualities compatible and congenial with the cultural setting. If the culture changes, the gamesong may lose it functional significance and hence become irrelevant or meaningless. It may persist if it adapts to the new culture traits. If it does not adapt, other culture forms, other songs, may take its place. With urbanization, a decrease in agriculture, a change from cotton to soybeans and livestock—changes that characterize our subjects' environment—one might expect the rabbit gamesongs to lose their significance and hence be lost. If the songs persist, however, the cultural content of the rabbit gamesongs either has adapted to the changing culture or else has gained some other significance in the lives of children (Lomax, 1968, esp. ch. 13).

4. Socio-cultural change is more likely to take place "in periods of crisis and stress" than in more normal periods (Berelson and Seiner, 1966: 616). The 1940's saw World War II, the 1950's saw the beginning of school integration. Under these conditions, changes in children's activities have taken place.

Influences Toward Persistence

1. Gamesongs are played in primary group settings. They establish satisfying group relations among the players giving joy through song and rhythmic activity. These rewards are likely to be sought again and again, thus perpetuating the pattern. The developmental aspects of play have been reviewed by Patrick Biesty (1985).

2. Gamesongs give pleasure and express and reinforce attitudes and values in emotionally-charge situations. These attitudes and values are less susceptible to change, hence one would expect the gamesongs to persist. Allan Dundes has written, "...folklore is a primary vehicle for the communication and continuation of attitudes and values" (1978: 174).

3. Material elements of culture change more readily than non-material culture. Folk gamesongs are non-material elements, and hence would be more likely to persist.

4. Gamesongs involve symbolic

Shipp family singers, Byhalia, MS, 1939. Photograph by Abbott Ferriss, courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

socio-cultural elements. Symbols persist more readily than non-symbolic elements of society. Thus, they have greater power of persistence (Berelson and Steiner, 1966: 615-616).

Rabbit gamesongs of Mississippi children, identified originally in 1939, prevail in the culture of the 12 year old, as shown by their recognition at four location. Whether the rabbit gamesongs were uniquely African-American songs in 1939 or not, the songs represent a common tradition now. Today the rabbit gamesongs are not as prevalent as other folksongs, and the traditional folksongs are greatly overshadowed by songs learned form television.

While verifying the remarkable tenacity of traditional folk music in the culture of the child, the data also demonstrate the pervasive influence of television. It transmissions quickly are incorporated into the culture of the child, and those interested in the preservation of oral tradition in the form of gamesongs of children should consider using television as a media of transmission. It should be reinforced by simultaneously introducing the gamesong into social groups: the family, the neighborhood play groups, perhaps some aspects of the school program. Education television or videos offer an opportunity for this, especially if the gamesong is reenacted in the schoolroom or family setting. Hearing "Here, Rang, Here" on television, singing it together in classroom or family, and making a game of it in the play yard would facilitate its establishment as a recreational pattern.

Acknowledgement

The following music teachers administered the questionnaire to sixth grade Mississippi children: Ms. Joey Polk, Mrs. Joy Carter and Mrs. Evelyn Tanner; Mr. Hollis Marsh, City School Superintendent, arranged for the administration at one school. Without their cooperation the study would not have been possible. My thanks. For typing the manuscript, I am indebted to Maggie Stephens, Cathy David, Lisa Carter and the staff of the Emory University Department of Sociology.

Appendix Note

The term "questionnaire" is used here to refer to a paper-and-pencil form consisting of "items" (e.g. gamesong titles) to which the respondents or subjects (e.g., sixth grade students) are asked to respond in one of three ways (Miller, 1991: 140-144). This differs from its usage in the collection of folklore information in A Handbook of Irish Folklore. For example, "the Banshee Questionnaire" consists of a list of questions to prompt a collector of folklore as to behaviors, practices, sayings, etc., of interest. Questions are leads for the field investigator to follow (Almqvist, 1974-1976; The Irish Folklore Commission, 1961).

Questionnaires that are used in collecting folklore collections prompt collectors of folklore and folksongs in identifying the phenomena of interest. Perhaps the most extensive such lists, or "prompters", were developed in Sweden in 1934 by Prof. Herman Geijer, Dr. Aako Campbell, and Dr. Sven Liljeblad, and adapted by Sean O'Suilleabhain to apply to Irish folklore (O'Suilleabhain, 1970). List of first lines, titles, or key verses are used in fieldwork to prompt respondents, "finding lists" (personal communication from Herbert Halpert, 5/24/93). They may be refashioned into questionnaires to be administered to groups, school children, etc., in order to identify informants, as in the present study. Crosswell (1898-99) used a questionnaire in Worchester, Mass., in 1896 in order to identify children's preferences for various amusements, including children's games, according to B. Sutton-Smith (1961: 258-262). Zach McGhee (1900) asked some South Carolina children to identify five game preference from a list of 129 items. Lewis M. Terman (1926), a psychologist interested in differences in recreational activity preferences of boys and girls, asked children in the San Francisco area to check a list of 90 games and activities indicating those they had played, liked to do, could do well, or liked very well. Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1960) administered a checklist to children in 17 townships in northern Ohio, like Terman, to distinguish gender differences in preference for games and activities (Sutton-Smith, 1961). They also were interested in change in preferences over time, comparing survey results from 1896, 1898, 1921 and 1959. None of the preceding were uniquely interested n children's gamesongs. These studies were focused upon the popularity of activities and in preference for them. Other studies using this same approach have been published (Foster, 1930; Lehmann and Witty, 1927).

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*This is a revision of a paper presented at the April, 1992, meeting of the Mississippi Folklore Society, at Jackson.

REVIEWS

The Catfish Book

By Linda Crawford
University Press of Mississippi, 1991.

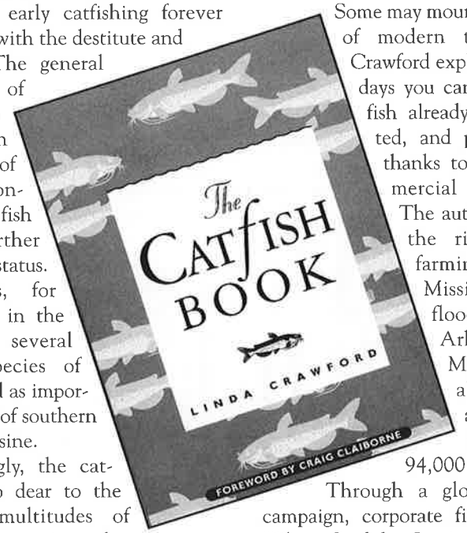
In *The Catfish Book*, Linda Crawford expounds a wealth of history and lore about an often misunderstood creature that is perhaps the most southern of fish. Crawford prefaces an eclectic collection of recipes with a concise and often playful introduction to the place of catfish in southern culture, the natural history of the various catfish species, the intricacies of its pursuit while in its wild state, and its contemporary role in modern aquaculture.

Recognizing the negative image that has oftentimes plagued catfish and those who pursue them, the author explains how those misguided folks who associate fishing with shiftlessness in general saw catfishing as the very epitome of wasted time among the lower class. Most anyone could catch a catfish with a simple and unattended hook and line. In the minds of some, the rudimentary tackle and idle time characteristic of early catfishing forever associated it with the destitute and the lazy. The general availability of the catfish in the South lent an air of the commonplace to the fish that further degraded its status. Nevertheless, for most people in the South, the several populous species of catfish served as important symbols of southern sport and cuisine.

Interestingly, the catfish types so dear to the hearts of multitudes of southerners comprise only a fraction of the diversity among catfish species. From the monstrous 600 pound Eurasian wels to the 800 volt electric catfish of Africa, Crawford describes some of the more obscure relatives of our native Ictaluridae. The author also speaks to the dimensions and habits of such down home varieties as bullhead, channel cats, white cats, blue cats, and flathead, species that most southern anglers encounter sooner or later.

After understanding the broad variety of catfish species the reader learns of the subtle nuances of catfishing or "catting". The author dispels notions of ease and relaxation as the ends of catting and reveals a desperate sport where the whiskered prey is pursued by any technology at hand and sometimes with the hands alone. Though some may use only a handline, others employ the latest in graphite fishing rod technology and go to great lengths in the selection and presentation of the bait. Nets, traps, snaglines, gigs, and juglines find their uses as do the bare hands of those hardy spirits who handgrab catfish from their beds in submerged logs and holes.

After the hooking, snagging, gigging, or grabbing, one mush skin the catfish, and Crawford takes the reader through several methods. There may be a few more ways of skinning a cat than are contained in this book, but everyone should find at least one here that suits them.



Some may mourn the intrusion of modern technology as Crawford explains that these days you can get your catfish already skinned, gutted, and plastic-wrapped thanks to modern commercial aquaculture. The author documents the rise of catfish farming in the Mississippi river floodplain of Arkansas and Mississippi from almost 6,000 acres of ponds in 1976 to over 94,000 acres today. Through a glossy marketing campaign, corporate fish mongers of "The Catfish Institute" educated upscale consumers about the table qualities and dietary values of the once lowly catfish until sophisticated—and-sometimes Yankee customers now demand catfish fillets in swank eateries across the country.

Although Crawford devotes several pages to the art and craft of frying catfish, most of the book's recipes reflect the influences of The Catfish Institute and its quest to put catfish on the tables of modern suburbia. Drawn from award winners in the "National Farm-Raised Catfish Cooking Contest" the plans range from an enticing ceviche and a promising "Pecan Catfish" to a gut-wrenching "Catfish Party Mousse" that includes a can of cream of mushroom soup and two envelopes of unflavored gelatin.

While the author intends this work as a lighthearted and entertaining look at a southern symbol, her readers will enjoy a wide range of information in a compact and easy to read volume. Crawford brings us a useful introduction to the ancient southern obsession with catfishing and that modern advent of farm-raised catfish.

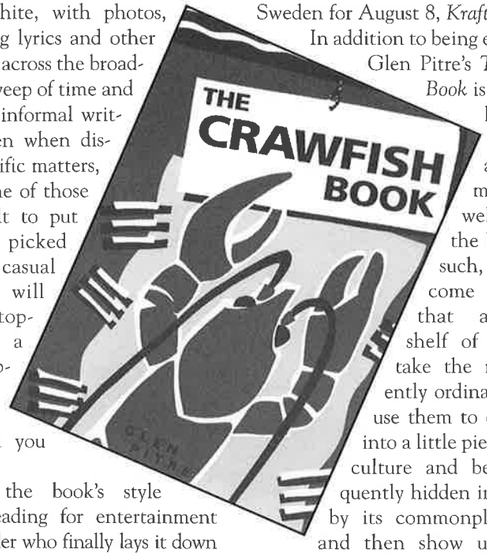
Wiley Prewitt
–The University of Mississippi

The Crawfish Book

By Glen Pitre
University of Mississippi Press, 1993.

Glen Pitre may have given us the perfect book on *Procambarus clarkii* (the red swamp crawfish of the Mississippi River Valley), along with its many and world-wide cousins. At times professional and scientific, while in other places almost poetic, *The Crawfish Book* is simultaneously informative and entertaining, well-documented and mythic, ethnographic and celebratory, sacred and profane. Pitre treats the "bug" as what it is, a thoroughly humble and proletarian crustacean that is also an overarching and crucially important cultural symbol in many parts of the world, and whose primary function in human society, both physically and spiritually, is to reward, in almost Zen-like fashion, a great deal of the most common of labor with the briefest moment of culinary revelation.

In Glen Pitre's eyes, the lyrics of *The Crawdad Song*, the stories of childhoods spent along a slow moving stream, the pages of recipes, and the listings of crawfish festivals are just as important as the scholarly and cross-cultural study of the 28,000 year old relationship between crayfish and humans, the zoological examination of the approximately 17 documented species around the world, and the commercial exploitation that has existed for centuries. Generously illustrated in black and white, with photos, drawings, song lyrics and other graphics from across the broadest possible sweep of time and space, Pitre's informal writing style, even when discussing scientific matters, makes this one of those books difficult to put down, once picked up. A casual thumbing will have you stopping to read a picture's caption, and that will rapidly serve to pull you in.



Although the book's style encourages reading for entertainment value, the reader who finally lays it down will be amazed by what has been learned. Among other topics, Pitre discusses anatomical and behavioral differences between species of crawfish (did you know that, while the Australian Yabby burrows, the European noble does not?) and provides a cross-cultural study (from the Louisiana bayous to Sweden to Japan) of the crawfish's place in mythology (why *does* the crayfish appear on the moon card of the Tarot?). *The Crawfish Book* also includes an ethnography of American mudbug culture and commerce, ranging from a family outing as prelude to a feast, to Mom and Pop-styled roadside entrepreneurs, to multi-national consortiums. Helpfully, there is a "How To..." chapter that covers everything from catchin', keepin', cookin' and eatin' 'em to the intricacies of commercial bug ranching, processing and marketing.

If it has to do with ditch bugs, you can bet Glen Pitre at least alludes to it; you probably didn't know that Sweden has a national holiday built on Crayfish. (Having long ago exhausted indigenous supplies, the Swedes purchase enormous amounts of Louisiana bugs, but they must be only the very largest, missing not an eye or a leg let alone a claw. They are then individually inspected and sorted three times, rinsed and purged, cooked whole, carefully arranged in trays, covered in dill sauce, flash frozen, placed in enormous shipping units and transported to Sweden for August 8, *Kraft-premiar*.)

In addition to being entertaining, Glen Pitre's *The Crawfish Book* is also scrupulously researched and documented, and well written in the bargain. As such, it is a welcome addition to that all-too-small shelf of books that take the most apparently ordinary of topics, use them to open a door into a little piece of human culture and behavior frequently hidden in plain sight by its commonplace nature, and then show us just how much of ourselves we pour into these little pieces of culture and how much they can tell us about ourselves.

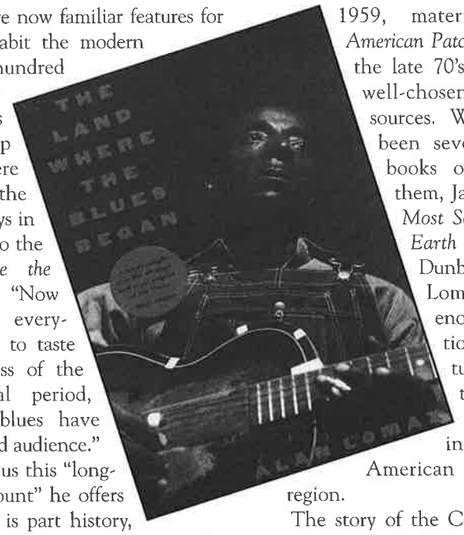
Peter R. Aschoff
–The University of Mississippi

The Land Where the Blues Began

By Alan Lomax
Pantheon, 1993.

Alan Lomax begins his compelling and poetic account of Afro-American music, the Mississippi Delta, and his "song hunting" in the Mississippi back country with a bold, broad, and powerful observation that only he would offer. In an attempt to acknowledge the power of blues music and also to explain the contemporary fascination and meaning of the blues, he writes: "Although this has been called the age of anxiety, it might better be termed the century of the blues." Explaining the blues as both a "state of being as well as a state of singing," Lomax contends—and rightly, I believe— that the blues grew from feel-

ings of "anomie and alienation, of orphaning and rootlessness," brought about in large measure by the economic and social conditions of black life in the Mississippi Delta and throughout the South. These feelings, says Lomax, part and parcel of African-American life in the Delta, are now familiar features for all who inhabit the modern age. "A hundred years ago only blacks in the Deep South were seized by the blues," he says in the preface to the *Land Where the Blues Began*. "Now that people everywhere begin to taste the bitterness of the postindustrial period, the Delta blues have found a world audience."



In giving us this "long-delayed account" he offers a story that is part history, part ethnography, part autobiography, and part a rage to explain. Figuring into the over-all story of the Mississippi Delta, its history and song, is Alan Lomax's quest to document the expressive performance culture of African-American life. While Lomax is by no means the central character, he has many roles and ample lines in the drama. Because of his clear importance in the documentation of Mississippi Delta music I find it valuable to see his place within the fieldwork, to understand his story as well as the singer's story, and to hear about the tensions, obstacles, serendipitous encounters, and successful recording ventures. We get plenty of that, from an account of nearly landing in the Memphis, Tennessee jail under charges of associating with Blacks on Beale Street in 1942, to his role in bringing Muddy Waters to Washington to provide "culturally relevant entertainment for the encampment" at the Poor People's March on Washington in 1968.

The book's title, Land Where the Blues Began, suggests nicely that this is a book about a place—a land—as much as it is than any particular kind of music. And that is a major strength of the work. Lomax offers us a wonderful composite view of the Mississippi Delta, using field collected material from the Fisk University Cohoama County survey, recordings and impressions from his field work in 1959, material from the *American Patchwork* project of the late 70's, and a host of well-chosen secondary sources. While there have been several fine Delta books of late (among them, James Cobb's *The Most Southern Place on Earth* and Tony Dunbar's *Delta Time)*, Lomax makes an enormous contributions to the literature on the Delta through this eloquent window into African-American culture in the region.

The story of the Cohoama County survey fieldwork fills most of the first four chapters. Lewis Jones, a Fisk University sociologist, was Lomax's "guide and mentor" on the project. Jones, who Lomax terms an "unflappable bronzed Dante," provided a bridge between the white field collector and black singers. This collecting trip included Lomax's visit with Robert Johnson's mother in Tunica; numerous recordings and accounts of religious music; a wonderful chapter—"The Ugliest and the Fastest Man"—on tall tale and narrative traditions of Cohoama County; sound ethnographic material on roustabouts and the role of black labor ont he Mississippi River; and the influence of the rails on song and culture, to mention a few.

Lomax presents many of his early conversations with black singers, laborers, and community members as verbatim transcriptions of recordings. Some of these narrative accounts ring true to the ear and may well come from early field recordings; others sound like they may have been reconstructed from fieldnotes and memory. The reader—at least this reader—longs to know which come from recordings and which don't. Or if they all are verbatim transcripts, all the better. Endnotes help identify the source of many quotes and facts, but others are not noted, leaving us to wonder just where we can go for more of this compelling material.

Perhaps my favorite chapter in the book is "The Levee," a chapter that strives to invoke the cultural context of the levee camps, their meaning within the occupational culture of the region, and the importance of song and folk narrative in our understanding of the levee building. Anyone who has spent time in the Mississippi Delta knows the symbolic and functional importance of the levees. Lomax says it succinctly" "...I see the levee as the most distinctive spiritual and cultural feature of the Delta landscape." Included in his discussion of the levee is a chance encounter with the "last of the Irish hoppers who raised levees along the river." Lomax picked up the Irish "black-hat man" hitchhiking along Highway 61, drove his a short distance, letting him off near Lula, Mississippi. His recounting of the Irishman's lore is a true gem of what we get when we, too, ride along with Alan Lomax. Or George Adam's tale, told in 1942, which is enough to curl the most obstinent of hairs.

A constant theme throughout *The Land Where The Blues Began* is the importance of recognizing the African antecedents to African-American music, dance and cultural behavior. Perhaps a little too often, but always for very sound reasons, Lomax draws parallels between Delta expressive culture and West Indian or West African musical expression, often using cantometric comparisons. One very sound example of these cross-cultural comparisons are those made during discussions of eroticism in the blues, in dance, and in African tradition.

The overall strength of this book rests with the descriptions and interpretations of the context of the blues. The last four chapters—"The Hills", "Bluesmen", "Big Bill of the Blues", and "Blues in the Mississippi Night"—focus more sharply on blues music, from the hill country traditions of Panola County to Muddy Waters, Big Bill Broonzy, and a host of others. Again, we are always with Alan Lomax when we are with the musicians, forever reminded of who has taken us there and how we came. This literary method finds success, allowing lomax to present musician and music along with his more didactic presentations of culture and performance. For example, in recounting his first interview and recording session with Muddy Waters he remembers: "The session has become a sort of holy occasion in the minds of blues lovers, so much written-about and discussed that young blues scholars seem to know more about what went on than I do."

In his preface he remembers the moments when he would take the large discs from a box and make a recording of someone in their home. It was a "magical moment," he says. "Never before had the black people," he writes, "kept almost incommunicado in the Deep South, had a chance to tell their story in their own way. For me the black discs spinning the Mississippi night, spitting the chip centripetally toward the center of the table, also heralded a new age of writing human history." As younger blues scholars and others read Land Where the Blues Began, many will contend they can offer modifications to this history or to particular stories or simply adjust factual information, suggesting perhaps that they know more than Alan Lomax. However, the epic that is this book demonstrates clearly that few know as much if part of knowing is experiencing; few have been at the well-spring of black creativity and folk expression and can give us such a view of the African-American Delta as Lomax. Alan Lomax takes us on a journey, a trip planned and controlled by his eyes and ears, narrated by his words. At the end we have seen not only the blues, but more importantly the fullness and sadness and humor and rage of African-American culture in the land where the blues began.

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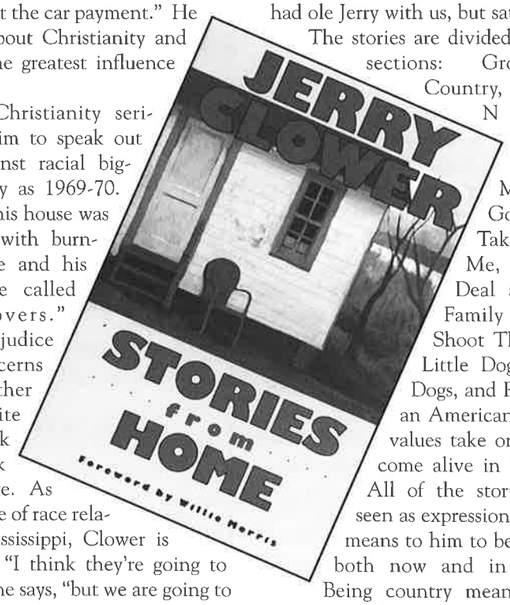
*This review appeared in a slightly different form in *Living Blues* magazine

Stories From Home

By Jerry Clower
Foreword by Willie Morris; interview with Jerry Clower by JoAnne Prichard
University Press of Mississippi, 1992.

To say that Jerry Clower is a serious comedian may at first sound like an oxymoron, but it is a truth that this book makes again and again. Willie Morris makes it in his forward when he places Clower in the tradition of Mark Twain and other great American humorists who "have been serious people, their hearts as rueful as they are merry." The 50-page "Conversation" between Clower and JoAnne Prichard makes the point as well: Clower is serious about "telling stories funny," based on things that happen to "real people" because "the funniest things in the world actually happened." He is serious about being a family entertainer, and what he likes most about his work is connecting with audiences of families who for an hour or so will laugh with him and " forget the interest rates" and "forget about the car payment." He is serious about Christianity and sees it as the greatest influence in his life.



Taking Christianity seriously led him to speak out openly against racial bigotry as early as 1969-70. As a result his house was threatened with burning, and he and his family were called "nigger-lovers." Racial prejudice still concerns him, whether it's white against black or black against white. As for the future of race relations in Mississippi, Clower is optimistic. "I think they're going to get better," he says, "but we are going to have to quit seeing who can pop off to the press to criticize the other one the most." And he is quick to defend Mississippi loyally against charges that it is a racist state.

Of all the values, he is perhaps most serious about loyalty because "if you're not loyal, you're not *nothing*." He learned this from his mother, he says, who was left by his father as a teenaged mother during the Depression but who refused to give up her two boys and picked cotton to scrape by. Consequently, loyalty has become a way of life to him: "I was loyal to the navy. I was loyal to Mississippi Chemical [where he worked as a fertilizer salesman for many years]. I'm loyal to my wife [to whom he has been married for forty-six years]. I'm loyal to my children and to my grandchildren. And it just works. It's just common sense."

For such a serious man, his stories sure are funny. They are not as funny to read as when he tells them, of course, but are funny enough. I was reading the book on vacation with a group of friends, and it kept disappearing only to reappear in the hands of one or the other of them. One was a person who does a lot of public speaking and saw the book as a good source of material. We would read our favorites aloud to each other—not as good as if we had had ole Jerry with us, but satisfying.

The stories are divided into eight sections: Growing Up Country, A Family Named Ledbetter, Me and Marcel, God's Gonna Take Care of Me, Mama's Deal and Other Family Matters, Shoot This Thing!, Little Dogs and Big Dogs, and Proud to Be an American. Clower's values take on flesh and come alive in the stories. All of the stories can be seen as expressions of what it means to him to be "country," both now and in the past. Being country meant grinding poverty, hard work in the fields, self-reliance, home, church, and on the social side "peanut boilings, candy pullings, log rollings, rat killings, and coon hunts." It meant a close-knit community with family and with neighbors like Marcel and the whole

Ledbetter clan. It meant dogs: "I'm not so sure that none of us have ever been loved by an earthly creature until we have been loved by a dog." It meant loyalty to state and nation.

Being country now to Clower means much the same thing, without the poverty. Hard work performing on the road has replaced work in the fields; the stories are often about funny things that happen in that context. But home, family, church, friends, and dogs are still essential elements of the story-telling. And in 1988 he and his wife Homerline moved back to East Fork community in Amite County, Mississippi, where he grew up. He said in the interview that what he thinks would make his grandfather most proud if he could know is that he has " a happy home and that I live where my roots are, that I still get excited when a neighbor brings me a mess of peas, and that I still love to go down and look at the baptizing hole where it all started." And Clower continues, "He would like knowing that I haven't left my own Kind." In other words, in spite of enormous fame and fortune, Jerry Clower is still country.

This adherence to the traditions of his past and his ability to pass them on in story make us value him as a genuine folk performer. He is what he appears to be. His stories are woven from actual event and from the Southern oral tradition. Those of us who grew up in the South in a household of storytellers will recognize some of them as our "stories from home" too. More than telling the stories, though, he has lived them. It is his sincerity, perhaps, that makes him so appealing, not only to his own folk group but to a much wider audience. And then, of course, his stories embody those time-honored elements that always make us smile — the "country" dialect, the tall tale, the triumph of the underdog, the shrewd trickster, the optimism, the sparks that fly when two cultures collide — Jerry at the fancy resort hotel, for instance, or the New York TV production crew on a coon hunt.

One of the stories in the two-cultures-colliding genre makes me wish I had been there. This is the one called "Mama's Deal" where "Jerry meets a "woman libber," and they have what seems to me to be a grave misunderstanding. Jerry offers her his chair, and she takes offense; then Jerry counters with a story about the life of leisure his wife now leads and how she doesn't need liberating.

To the woman, I would say that being liberated doesn't preclude good manners and to lighten up. To Jerry I would say that this story makes Miss Homerline sound like she never hit a lick at a snake, and if I was her I wouldn't like it. Jerry Clower's a smart man. He knows good and well what the women's issues are. Whoo boy. Don't tell me!

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Mississippi Folklife is funded in part by the Mississippi Arts Commssion and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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