2002

Tales of Clemson, 1936-1940

Arthur V. Williams, M.D.

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Tales of Clemson, 1936-1940
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Arthur V. Williams, M.D.
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Foreword

Like the rest of the country, Clemson College in the late 1930s was in the grip of one national crisis and on the fingertips of another. The Great Depression was squeezing the coffers of the college and the wallets of its cadets. Meanwhile, World War II was about to reach across the oceans to drag those same cadets into its painful embrace.

It’s no wonder, then, that Clemson students in the late ’30s were serious, career-minded young men. They knew the value of a dollar, perhaps because not many of them knew the feel of one. They knew the sacrifices their parents were making to send them to college. And without knowing exactly when, where or how, they could sense the sacrifices they themselves would soon be called upon to make to help save the world from the evil raging abroad.

Despite the turmoil of the times—or maybe as a result of it—the Clemson that I remember from my student days was “on the rise.” Academically, militarily and athletically, we were moving forward with growing momentum. Faculty members such as Ben Goodale and John Lane challenged, encouraged and mentored some of the finest and most successful students ever to roam these ruddy hills—men such as Harry Ashmore ’37, Ben Skardon ’38 and Earl Mazo ’40. The ROTC program was at its zenith. Though we cadets complained about its rigidity, we found comfort in the military way of life and the camaraderie it fostered. Athletically, coaches such as Jess Neely and Bob Jones brought enthusiasm, excitement and success to Tiger teams in sports ranging from football to boxing. We were increasingly competitive and frequently victorious, but no matter what the final score in any given contest, we were always proud to be Clemson Tigers.

The tales that Dr. Williams has included in this wonderful collection of Clemson stories bring back many fond memories for me. Every page is like an old friend greeting me at a class reunion. But there is more to this book than memories. It is also a remarkable record of what life was like at Clemson 60-plus years ago. In this day and age of “reality TV,” here we have a delightful volume of “reality text.” And as one of the “survivors” (to borrow a current TV term), I can tell you it is almost as much fun reading this text as it was living it!

– WALTER T. COX ’39
President Emeritus
Clemson University
Clemson Scenes
CHAPTER ONE:
“TO TELL THE TRUTH...”

Barracks 3, Front View

This is a story of four years prior to World War II. All of the characters, except Lucien Vane Rogers and Waters, were my classmates. The unusual circumstances in which some of the characters were involved are all true. Conversation which can not be remembered after fifty years is as close to the truth as the author recalls.

Recovery from the Great Depression of the late 1920s had begun, but we were on the way to World War II, and all of us ended up on active duty, but the story of each individual’s experience during the war would be very long. Therefore, I decided to limit the story to the four years prior to our active entry into combat. These were memorable years and, hopefully, worth the telling.

It was 1936. The country appeared gradually to be recovering from the Great Depression. There were no bank failures
after Roosevelt’s first administration. More businesses were opening and fewer closing. The pre-Depression financial boom had not returned but things were improving financially. While things seemed to be going well in this country, the politics within the entire old world were unsettled. Germany and France were not friendly, and the Spaniards were busy murdering each other. This was the year I entered college and began to be aware of the political differences on the two sides of the Atlantic.

In spite of the beginning of national recovery, finances in my family had not changed much and the source of money for college was in question. There wasn’t much question as to which college I would attend. My friends were traveling about the country looking for the college that suited their needs best: math, physics, women, athletic scholarships and the rest of the thousands of things that colleges offer. I had decided on Clemson because it was financially possible for me and my parents.

I had saved money of my own from a summer job with the Army Corps of Engineers (a job that continued through college) surveying the inland waterway from Georgetown to Charleston. Most of the miles between the two cities were marsh, mud, thick brush and snakes. An occasional alligator could be spotted. To move required wading through mud and swimming. To move in the brush required the use of a bush ax and the hope that the ax head would not strike a wasp nest or beehive. If this happened, you got to the waterway as quickly as possible. If, after hitting a wasp nest, you were able to submerge, the wasps flew away. The bees were more persistent and it required longer and more frequent trips under water to get rid of them. Only one of our group had the disaster of being swarmed by bees when his head came up. He was literally unrecognizable, as his face had become swollen as a result of the attack. But, without that job, there was no chance of college.

My parents drove me to Clemson, a 240-mile trip, in their old Pontiac. At times, during the long trip, I wished that I had stayed and gone to the College of Charleston, but I was determined to get away from Charleston during my college years. They left me in front of Third Barracks and turned around and went
home. Parents were encouraged not to stay the first day.

I was left in front of the barracks with approximately a thousand other freshmen. We were lined up and taken to a large room that had been converted temporarily into a barber shop where four barbers were busy shaving the heads of the incoming class. This didn’t upset me, knowing that brains were between the ears and not tangled in hair. So we were all equal insofar as hair was concerned. I did not notice a difference in attitude in any of my classmates. We were then escorted to our rooms, bare except for a bar on which to hang clothes and a desk, bed and chair.

My roommate was there ahead of me and eating a cracker that had apparently been stored in a suitcase.

“I am Art Williams,” I said, holding out my hand.
“I’m Dan Moorer,” he replied, shifting the cracker from right to left hand. “I’m from St. George.”

“I’m from Charleston,” I replied. “We have the rest of the afternoon off. I’d like to go watch football practice. Would you like to walk over there?”

“No thanks,” he replied. “I’m not an athlete or interested in athletics. I think I’ll go to the library and get familiar with it.”

With that, he pulled another cracker from his suitcase without offering me one and chewed away.

He was one of those people who, because of posture and attitude, still managed to look a little disheveled when dressed in their finest military clothes. But he proved to be a good student in spite of the military environment that he felt imposed on his time.

Dan continued to chew on his crackers. He continued to eat them when I was out of the room. I was particularly annoyed when he ate an entire Thanksgiving cake that his mother sent him without offering me a sliver. But, after all, the goodies did belong to him.

While Dan scanned the library, I walked down to the practice field to see some of my high school football heroes in action.

Gene Flathman, a mediocre high school player, had turned his teenage fat into almost three hundred pounds of muscle, and he was a star of Clemson. In spite of his fame, he was cordial, and I could sit with him on the bench with the other players. Later, he transferred to Annapolis, where he became captain of that team and the strongest man ever to have played for the Navy.

I was enthralled with the kicking and passing of the freshman star, Banks McFadden, and captivated by a young coach who lined up in scrimmages and taught by example. His name was Frank
Howard and sometimes, off the field, he flaunted a Phi Beta Kappa key awarded while he was a football lineman at the University of Alabama; and of course there was Jesse Neely, head coach, a quiet gentleman on and off the field.

In contrast to the student-athletes, there was Shad Bryant, a very good halfback who amused himself on bus trips by spitting through a window at people walking alongside the road. He was very good at this, too. The student-athletes were just as tough and much more useful to the college or whatever calling they might follow after graduation.

I also realized that, isolated in the foothills, there really wasn’t anything to do for recreation but athletics, watching or playing. The rest of the afternoon my options were either following Dan to the library, going back to my room, or going for a walk.

By the time I returned to the room, Dan was back from his tour of the library. He was scanning the Greenville News. “I don’t understand what is going on in Europe. Mussolini wants to murder the Ethiopians for no practical gain to Italy. Ethiopians are being killed because they are Ethiopians. Spain is even more of a mess. Fundamentally, I guess, the cause is animosity between people who own land and millions who survive in borderline fashion with barely enough to eat. To confuse the picture even more, Russia is backing the Spanish communists, apparently to get land closer to their projected future bombing sites. Germany is fighting for no good reason except developing for future war and trying to browbeat the French. They say that they are fighting Russians in Spain. The names of the different parties and leaders would take a genius to remember.”

I replied, “No doubt the people of those countries hate each other, but that’s been going on for centuries and, in great part, is why our forebears migrated here—to get out of situations that they could not control. But they are a long way from Clemson. The population on the eastern side of the Atlantic is different from that on the west, and the best thing we can do is to leave
those guys alone. The News and Courier says that a lot of Italians are disgusted with Mussolini, so maybe he won't be around for long. But, whatever, he can't cause us much misery."

"Hope you're right," he replied, "but I am not as happy as you. If the mayor of St. George went nuts, he'd have a hard time bothering anyone but locals, but the head of a major country can generate trouble for all of us."

"More important," I said, "it's time for chow, so let's go down and eat grits and something unidentifiable."

Mess Hall

The mess hall was the domain of Captain Holcombe, who was apparently taught as a child that life couldn't go on without
grits two, or preferably three, times daily. So we had grits and
unidentifiable stews and eggs (which were said to be dried and
reconstituted), grits and cabbage, and some other unidentifiable
vegetable undoubtedly filled with calories but tasteless. St. George
food must have been on a par with Captain Holcombe’s. At least
Dan never complained, and, no matter what awful stuff was served,
he was satisfied.

Lucien Vane Rogers was at our table, a skinny five-foot
human encyclopedia who had finished first in his class in high
school and had every intention of repeating that act here.

We introduced each other. “You two from the coast?” he
inquired. “What do you think about the dam they’re going to build
that will flood old plantations but allow navigation all the way to
Columbia?”

“To tell the truth, I haven’t thought much about it, but I
am not sure that getting a lake is a fair exchange for losing all
those square miles.” Dan added, “We have plenty of water for
people, and I don’t believe that anything but a canoe will get to
Columbia. The whole damn thing is a politician’s pipe dream, but,
being politicians, they’ll win, build the Santee dam and manage to
increase their bank accounts through the contracting companies
and, perhaps, the legislature itself.”

Lucien Vane abruptly changed the subject. “Arthur, some
of the guys from Charleston tell me that you’re good at math.”

“Well, I don’t know how good I am but at least better than
in Latin, French or any other language you can name. If all grades
depended on Latin, I might still be in high school wondering if
my latest translation of Cicero deserved a pass. Why do you ask?”

“Well, I thought we might get together sometime and dis-
cuss math or anything interesting.”

I wondered what his motive really was. Nevertheless, I was
flattered that a student of his caliber apparently wanted to talk
about things academic.

Supper was over and I suggested that we walk to the ice
cream shop to get additional calories to last the night. Lucien Vane decided to come along and Dan went back to the room to read.

Lucien said, “I heard you talking about the situation in Spain and disagree with you in regard to our having no interest in interfering. You know, I was born in Spain and lived there until my stepfather, an American soldier, married my mother and moved here. I continue to correspond with relatives in Germany, and they are apprehensive regarding Germany’s attitude toward France and its clear animosity toward England. They believe that Germany is in Spain primarily as a training exercise for a coming conflict. After all, what does Germany have there in regard to land or money? Not a damn thing that anyone has declared. I’m not sure what we can do, but France and England can’t take a beating while we sit here with our hands folded and just talk to reporters about how unfortunate things are. We’re doing that now, while the small war is killing Spanish hundreds.”

I said, “I believe that the two sides of the ocean are politically separate and that France and England are big boys who can take care of themselves, even though a major conflict comes. After all, Spain is a small country with a mess in internal politics complicated by outside meddling with none of the outside nations having anything substantial to gain. And we are thousands of miles away, protected from trouble by a big ocean.”

He replied, “If something happened, it would be hell to get from here to there.”

I heard a call. “Williams! How was your supper?” The caller was Dr. Bill Lippincott, a professor of chemistry whom I had met prior to registration outside Third Barracks, which he had been monitoring.

“Maybe they should change chefs,” I replied.

“Well, if you were an athlete you could eat with them. Their food is a step ahead of yours.”

We continued back to the barracks, where we were required to be at “Long Roll” at 8 o’clock, when the students stood at attention alongside their rooms for roll call. After all, it was an all-male school where a cadet might risk disciplinary action to see a
female. Following confirmation that we were where we belonged, after roll call, the upperclassmen stood at their doors with a paddle and as the freshmen ran down the hall, they had their behinds swatted. The most vicious was a sophomore named Waters. I was surprised to see him come into our room a few minutes later.

"Williams," he began.

"Yes, sir!" I promptly responded.

"I hear you are Jewish. There's nothing wrong with that. Back home some of my best friends are Jews. But, if I find out that you are one of those smart-alecky sons of a bitch who try to show the rest of us up, you'll have a blacker and bluer behind than you have now. I saw you with Lucien Vane at supper. What were you doing, asking him to help you with your work?"

"No, I didn't ask for help. I can take care of myself academically, and if things get tough, I work harder. I do not impose on my friends."

"Boy, you trying to contradict me?"

"No, just trying to tell you what happened."

"Moorer, you were there. Is he telling the truth or, like most of them, lying?"

"He's telling the truth. I haven't had your experience in general. There aren't many in St. George where I grew up."

"What kind of place wouldn't have those bloodsuckers? You must come from a bunch of poor ignoramuses without much to suck from."

"Well, we weren't much except a community who raised a little corn, had a few cows and did not dislike anyone in town except for a good reason. How you worshipped God was never a reason."

"You must come from the poorest town in the country, or you're lying or both. But don't worry. I'm not all bad. Next time you get paddled, I'll just get your butts black and blue. You won't bleed any. You have a nice night, now." He then left the room abruptly.

"Now what in hell was that about!" I exclaimed.

"I don't know," said the always analytical Dan, "but it appears to me that he's a guy who has taken a beating in the past,
and he’s making an attempt to be superior to people who can’t fight back. If he hasn’t been a winner anywhere else, he won’t be one here. I wouldn’t worry about him. I’ll bet he’s gone before the rest of his class.”

“Wish I could be as philosophical as you, Dan. I think he’s sadistic and if he’s going to leave, I hope it’s soon.”
kept thinking about the brief conversation with Dr. Lippincott and his jocular remark that athletes ate well. My only experience in athletics was at the Charleston YMCA where I played basketball, ran track and boxed. The thought of basketball against Flathman and his fellow giants gave me the cold chills. While all the mile runners (my best event) were trying to get to the 4-minute mile, I was more of a 5-minute-mile man who could occasionally break by 4:50. The best miler at Clemson cold do a 4:18. So, it seemed that my only hope was to make the boxing team. I had sparred with Louis Lempesis in the Charleston High
Tales of Clemson

gym. He was the best local boxer and had done well in the Golden Gloves in New York. I didn’t do badly but was outclassed. My strong points were strong shoulders and a very hard head, so Louis’s punches to the head were no problem. The short, strong boys were not able to push me around. Clemson was quite different. This training was exhausting. It began each afternoon with a run of several miles with a 5-pound weight in each hand. Then, after calisthenics, we boxed a man of lower weight, one of the same weight, and one heavier. Fortunately, the heavier boxers were nice guys. For instance, I boxed our heavyweight, Warren Wilson, who could have destroyed me with a punch but didn’t. He was 80 pounds heavier.

Bob Jones, the boxing coach, paired me with Teddy Boselli for the first match with someone my weight. I could have sworn at times that he had an extra pair of hands because the number of punches received must have been twice the number delivered. But, all in all, it was a respectable demonstration of my mediocre ability.

My next trial horse was Milton Berry. He was not a swarmer and continual puncher like Boselli, but his strategy was to move the opponent around with his left arm and shoulders until he could get a solid shot to the opponent’s head. His strategy was effective because he could hit much harder than the average boxer in his weight class. So boxing with Berry wasn’t bad until his right hand pounded me, usually in the temple. As a matter of fact, I thought that I could out-point Berry if he didn’t knock me down. That’s why my hard head became so important.

Boxing him nearly every workout for two years, I was never knocked down. Neither Berry nor Boselli had lost a college fight, so I was considered by Bob Jones as an everyday sparring partner and occasional bantamweight in an intercollegiate match. Most important, I was made part of the team and was able to eat with the athletes in their own dining room. Goal accomplished! Well, almost. The coach considered me a bantamweight, about 120 pounds, and my normal weight was 130, so I had to limit my steak and, through the training routine, keep 120 pounds my target. But at meals I knew the cream of the athletes and considered myself
to be one of them.

I now could turn most of my attention toward the academic program.

My favorite student was Ben Yarborough, who lived down the hall. He was from a small town north of Columbia. I asked Ben how things were going in math. “Well, down home we deal with mules and cattle and such, and sometimes you have to work like hell to make them behave. But I’ll treat math like an ornery mule until I can do what I want with it. Now things are discouraging.” Ben had a life-and-death struggle with calculus during the early months of his freshman year, but by the end of the semester he had caught up with the Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville students and was ahead of most of them.

Amongst the reading I did after turning my thoughts toward academics were newspapers, and some of the printed words alarmed me.

Al Smith announced that Roosevelt’s “New Deal” needed fundamental changes. A politician’s anti-Roosevelt tirade was common, but other newspaper items were not. Smith, nearing the end of his life, denied that security was the essence of freedom. According to that logic, there was no difference between a dangerous animal and one whose teeth had been pulled. His greatest contribution to American politics early in his career was documenting the fact that he, being Catholic, was considered for significant national appointments in spite of his religion.

And then there was an article alleging that Jews backed Bolsheviks and that those who came to live in Germany introduced pestilence into spiritual life.

I talked to Dan about some of the anti-Semitic articles. “Well,” he replied, “all that really doesn’t bother me. Some Germans are strongly anti-Semitic, but all that we know they have done is write letters to newspapers. I wouldn’t get too upset if I were you. As a matter of fact, I was more interested in the court fight that declared that Sally Rand could dance with nothing on,
protected only by a balloon filled with helium, and that only the weather bureau could use the balloon to estimate wind velocity.”

“You are estimating the news in a happier light than I am,” I replied, “but Mussolini is mouthing off about other countries demonstrating hatred toward Italy and about the fact that he’ll go to war if they continue. Something bad seems to be brewing in Europe, and, although I once thought that countries on the two sides of the Atlantic were politically separate, I hope now that we won’t become involved, should a war come in Europe.”

Lucien Vane came ambling toward us.

“Lucien,” I admonished him, “how come you’re not in the library or in your room studying? You might miss some good stuff just wandering around without a book in your hand.”

“I’ve been memorizing things for the quiz tomorrow but I thought I’d take time out and shoot the bull with you guys.”

“Lucien, you won’t learn much from us. We were talking about the mess in Italy and Germany, about which we know almost nothing but think it is important.”

“That’s interesting,” he replied. “I have a cousin in the German army and have been corresponding with him. He’s pissed off with the Jews because they’re accumulating too much German money honestly and otherwise. No offense to you, Art, because that doesn’t seem to be true here.”

“Look, you pissant,” I answered, “the Jews in Germany and everywhere else are different because you bastards make them different. Everybody needs to hate something, and you’ve picked on the Jews. We hate South Carolina or anybody when we play them. We hate enthusiastically but temporarily.”

He replied, “Well, you may be partly right. Anyhow, let’s change the subject. I was listening to Ella Fitzgerald on the Carnegie library record player. When she sings ‘Miss Otis Regrets’ and improvises with Dizzy Gillespie, she really turns me on.”

By this time I was getting madder regarding his anti-Semitic remarks and interjected, “God damn it! Why in hell don’t you go to your room and read or masturbate or do whatever amuses you and leave us the hell alone.”

He left, not flustered by my tirade.
Dan and I finished our ice cream and returned to our room. There, we were greeted with a message from Dr. Lippincott to have lunch with him the next day.

Dr. Bill Lippincott taught qualitative and quantitative analysis. He had close rapport with his students and taught best about living happily and fruitfully and this in spite of the fact that he was single (and always had been). He enjoyed the company of groups of men, was seldom seen with just one man, and had never been known to date women, although he had a home in the mountains where he had complete privacy and could have done what he wanted.

His invitation was not unusual. He preferred not eating alone while discussing whatever most interested the visitors.

Dan and I were a little nervous about meeting the professor, but he quickly put us at ease with, “Hi, Art and Dan. How’s the college treating you thus far? I know you haven’t had a lot of time to meditate on your personal reactions, but what can the faculty do to make things more bearable?

“Nothing I can think of,” I replied, “but the faculty, not just the professors in chemistry, try to teach more than we can easily absorb.”

“Well, Art, that’s what we’re paid to do. But learning, in the long run, is a happy experience that, hopefully, will last a lifetime.”

“My chief gripe,” Dan added, “is the pseudo-military system. I’ve seen no reason why first-year students should be second-class citizens. Moreover, some of the military is time-consuming and leaves us less time for the subjects that interest us.”

About that time we heard a racket from the adjoining room that sounded like “crash, bang, crash, bang” and went on for at least five minutes before I remarked about
“Dr. Lippincott, what’s that noise?”

“I can’t tell you the name of the perpetrator, because that’s his room and what he does there is his own business, but the truth is that he is too bashful to exercise in public, so instead of jogging, he jumps repeatedly from the bed to the floor and back. In addition, he does the usual exercises. This is an old hotel, and, hopefully, the floor will stand the hammering. Sometimes I think that the smarter a person is, the more peculiar things he can devise.

“To answer your question in regard to the military, Dan, I agree with you as do most of the faculty. The only exceptions I know are the people who teach military science. We’re trying to get rid of it, but it is hard to convince the administration that they’re not helping to make real men of you. We point to the 99% of colleges who do without the students marching around with empty guns, but they turn a deaf ear.

“In the meantime, don’t let the bastards get you down. There always will be a military science or something else you despise as part of your life. Don’t make whatever it is you despise the cause of hatred or depression. Do your thing as best you can and deal with problems as best you can when they appear, as they will. If your primary undertaking doesn’t satisfy you, then change it. This can be very difficult, but you realize more and more as life goes on that it is brief, so do your damndest to enjoy the time you’re here.”

“Professor, I understand what you are telling us, but it seems to me that there are more people with nutty ideas around than I used to think possible.”

“Well, Dan, the problem is that everyone is a little different and his normal might seem abnormal to you. But he learned through multiple sources, as you did, and considers whatever you think peculiar to be perfectly acceptable by his standards. Who is to judge who is right? I enjoy the features of his personality that I think acceptable and try and forget the rest. All of us are a little nutty, but the world would not be possible for us to survive if everyone hated or resented the off-beat features of a personality.
“Well, lunch is served. Let’s change the conversation to food.”

He had brought in or made a lunch that was even better than that served on the athlete’s table, by far, and we talked pleasantly about very little.

In the meantime, the racket next door stopped and, as predicted, again the floor had survived.

We shortly gave our thanks and walked back to our barracks.

The students from the smaller schools caught up with us academically by our second year, and the competition was intense. Ben Yarborough, much to his surprise and ours, did well. He had kicked the mule hard enough so that he could manage it just as he had told us.

My problem began with quantitative analysis. Dr. Lippincott picked out a goat in each class to whom he gave particular hell if he fumbled on an oral question or made a laboratory error. The goat was always an athlete, usually a boxer, presumably because he could tolerate the stress of his classroom harassment. By virtue of being a third-string boxer and the only formal athlete in the classroom, I became Dr. Lippincott’s goat of the year. As time went on, I found that there might be advantages to being a goat. On written quizzes, Dr. Lippincott would ask, “Art, what do you think you made on the quiz?” I would think for a while and answer as honestly as I could “80.” “No,” he would say, “you got a ‘79.’ You owe me an ice cream cone.” So I would go to the dairy building and buy the ice cream of his choice. By the next quiz, I responded with “90.” He laughed and said, “No, you’re not that good—‘89.’” So
off I would trot again to the dairy building for an ice cream cone. The rest of the year was the same, and I passed quantitative analysis with a respectable grade. This was in spite of my ham hands, which were damn near useless using the quantitative scales that could weigh a fingerprint. I would have graded myself “A” for effort and “D” for results.

When report cards came in, I found that my grade was determined entirely by examinations and that the ice cream was wasted as a grade-getter.

The great benefit of being the goat was that, from time to time, he was invited to spend weekends at the doctor’s house on the side of a mountain in North Carolina near Highlands. It was a rustic wooden house, all three stories clinging to the mountainside, or apparently so. From the bedroom assigned to me, there was a view through the trees of a blue lake down below. The bottom floor contained a living room and large fireplace designed to cook steaks and a small kitchen.

The lake was lovely but, since we were invited only during the cold months, the water was too cold for swimming. The first time I went down to it one October, I stuck my right index finger into it, and it almost froze solid on the spot. From then on, I walked along the lakeside carefully protecting other parts of my anatomy.
Bill was alone in the house when I came back and said, “Art, remember the ice cream deals. Never trust someone who promises something that seems to be too good to be true. And we know each other well enough for you to call me Bill.”

For all of my life, avoiding ice cream deals has saved me grief.

The weekend guests began to arrive. Bill enjoyed the company of anyone who was bright. In a drawer in his dining room was a box full of wooden clothes pins with the names of anyone who might be invited burned into one side. These were used as napkin rings so that everyone felt that he was someone special. Sitting at the table might be Mr. Woodruff, head of national Coca-Cola, various professors like Footsie Hunter, and six or seven mountain people who were relatively uneducated except in how to make a living and survive in the mountains, usually separated by miles from their nearest neighbor.


Somehow these diverse people made a lively conversational group. Mr. Woodruff asked Mr. Hollifield, “How is the pig business this year?”

“Well, I ain’t no business man, and the money I make depends on the market when they’re ready to sell, but so far as the pigs are concerned, they’re the best I ever had.”

“I’d sure like to see them,” said Mr. Woodruff.

“Well, you’re welcome anytime you can find time.”

Footsie remarked, “I enjoy talking about farm animals, but I’m more concerned about the mess that is developing in Europe.”

Mr. McGinty, another guest who ran a small farm, said: “I was in Normandy before the war and in Europe a couple of years after that. The German soldiers were mean, more than they had to be, and believed that they should own the world. Now, after playing nice for thirty years, they’re beginning to act like Germans. It would surprise me if, after practicing in Spain, they didn’t go to war with France, England, and any other country worth a damn. But, we’ll see.”

Footsie answered, “I hope you’re wrong, but suspect you’re right.”

Professor Carodemus changed the subject. “I see they’re building a parking lot for students. Times must be getting better with the number of student cars increasing.”

The conversation went on, and, in the meantime, they devoured the enormous steaks bought from Helen’s Sunflower Inn and cooked on the fireplace.

After dinner, the company gradually left, and, by dark, just the two of us were left. I went up to my third-floor room, covered myself with a down comforter that must have been a foot thick, read for a while, smelling smoke from downstairs and from chimneys down at the lake, and fell asleep.

One of Bill’s great friends was Helen of the notorious Sunflower Inn, where you could eat, drink and satisfy any other need you might have.

“Where you been, you horny old goat?” Helen greeted us when we had bought the steaks.

“Same old thing. Trying to make little boys like this one
(pointing at me with a straight arm and forefinger) into something resembling a man. It’s a tough job.”

“I got some girls around who might help.”

“No, the boy’s parents might have my tail thrown out of school if I let them mess with your girls while he was with me in Highlands. I have enough troubles. What about the usual steaks. I’m having company again tomorrow, so what about eight big steaks?”

“If that’s all you need, Bill, you’ve come to the right place. Just gimme a minute and you’ll have the best meat since God made bulls. Hey, I didn’t tell you that I was getting married, did I? Remember that old goat who lives up toward Mt. Mitchell—that old goat who comes in here for apple cider that just men like him can drink and walk away? Well, he allowed that he’d like to move here with me. He’s made a pile sellin’ that rot-gut he makes, and he ain’t so bad lookin’, and I ain’t getting no younger, so I told him damn right. We decided to get hooked up next Sat’day at my place. If you ain’t there, you’re gonna have a knot on your head the size of a bull’s balls.”

“Helen, I’m delighted,” Bill replied. “Just don’t make me the flower boy.”

“Drunk as my friends might get, ain’t none of them gonna mistake your ugly self for a flower boy or girl. See you Sat’day, professor, and there’s your steaks. Have a good time with them friends of yourn. When most people has a party, they invite folks most like each other. Damn if you don’t do the opposite and git people less like each other than anybody I ever seen, except I ain’t seen no black boys yet. But it’s your house, so enjoy yourself, and don’t let the law get you.”

“I’ll tell you, Art, that girl throws a mean party, and it will be a wilder wedding. I wouldn’t get within a mile of the place without a bullet-proof vest on, and would be reluctant to go even with that. But Helen’s a friend, and I suppose I should stick my head in for a second and hope I can stick it back out again.”

“Bill, she talks back-woodsy, but she looks like a nice lady.”
“Art, she has a lot of good qualities, but you’ll find out that a lot of pretty ladies aren’t worth a damn. So don’t let a couple of handsome breasts get you into trouble. They’re the leading cause of grief in men.”

We were getting ready for another Sunday dinner. It was my job to build the fire, and there was always a pile of pine logs just outside the kitchen cut just the right size for the fireplace and a pile of kindling alongside that and wood matches on the mantel, so that chore was easy.

When the fire was blazing, the company started to arrive. Bill enjoyed company and the damndest people collected at his house on Sundays for steak and talk. Bill’s hospitality made these diverse people a lively conversational group. The first to arrive was Jed Hollifield. He was tall, slim with a gift for humor but not fashion. He wore an old sweater, no tie, a once-white shirt that looked like it hadn’t been washed for a couple of weeks, shoes that had never been shined and pants never pressed. Mr. Woodruff followed, a typical well-dressed businessman. He began, “Hi, Mr. Hollifield, looks like you got us a great pile of pine for the fireplace.”

“Yup,” Jed replied. “It was dry so I could get into the woods without mud sucking my shoes off. How’s things in Atlanta? Your people convincing everybody that Coca-Cola is good for their sex lives?”

“We haven’t gone that far yet because, I guess, we haven’t had to. We’re doing very well. How’s those pigs I saw last time I was down in the hollow?”

“They’re the hungriest critters I ever seen and won’t be long before they’re the best hams in the mountains.”

“It’s a shame that playful little things like that have to become hams.”

“Well, if we don’t eat hams, we’re going to eat something else before the worms eat us. That’s the way the Lord planned things. All critters live offen other critters. If it wasn’t
that way, there wouldn’t be much alive. And, if you look at it, it makes the world keep on forever so far as life is concerned unless we kill too many animals including each other. I’m just helping the Almighty keep us going. The Lord sent manna, and I ain’t looking for it to come again soon.”

Mr. Woodruff chimed in, “Amen.” He continued in a lighter vein, “Why don’t us guys just eat corn flakes and Coca-Cola. Then you wouldn’t have to plan how to take care of animals and let them take care of themselves.”

“Oh, for God’s sake,” said Bill. “Isn’t there something you can gab about except the welfare of pigs and drinking Coke? “Maybe we could talk about giving Helen a wedding present. Anyhow, Art, it’s time to get the fire started.”

Footsie Hunter threw in his comments. “Maybe politics is as amusing as anything to talk about with FDR messing with this gal in Georgia and Eleanor doing good for anybody without a dollar to his name, and here we are talking about pigs and Cokes. Incidentally, you hear ’bout the fire near Helen’s? It was allegedly started by a bottle full of kerosene. At last it wasn’t in the dense woods, and Helen’s friends put it out at the cost of a few burned jackets and a lot of dirt. And old Luke’s wife was messing around and got bird-shot in some embarrassing places. That’s the making of a Sunday afternoon’s conversation, not some damn pigs.”

“For God’s sake, Arthur, would you please get the fire started, or I’ll recite poems in Latin and put a stop to this foolishness. I don’t know why you come to Highlands. None of you bother to look out the window and see the lake and the reflections of hills and trees. That’s why I come here because it is the loveliest place in God’s whole world and Helen gets the best steaks in the state and, I must admit, I cook ’em better than anyone else I know or heard of.”

While the meal was cooking, the conversation varied from how FDR was going to ruin the country to the best rifle for deer hunting, to the place for blacks in society, to the importance of the difference in taste between colas so that everyone had a piece of the conversational action.
Afterward, with everyone stuffed, the talk slowly trailed off. I cleaned the table and the kitchen and the company filed out, still talking.

I happily made way to my third-floor bedroom and crawled in under a down comforter about six inches thick and awakened in the morning ready to go back to our Clemson room where I was more comfortable with Dan and Ben than with the potpourri of people in Highlands.
When I was in my early teens, I blew the bugle for Boy Scout Troop 21 which represented the Jewish Community Center. It was my ambition to play the trumpet. After consultation with Earl Mazo, a talented violinist, I visited the studio of Mr. Wichman, Charleston’s music leader, teacher of all instruments and leader of all bands, and watched Earl with his violin lesson supervised by Mr. Wichman. The music sounded fine to me but not to Mr. Wichman, who whacked Earl on the side of his head with a violin bow. I assumed a note had been missed. Apparently accustomed to this sort of treatment, Earl kept on playing. I looked on with amazement and apprehension and decided on the spot that I would confine my musical efforts to the bugle.

Earl continued playing the violin at Clemson. There was a band, of course, but no orchestra so that he could not continue the violin in a formal way. At the end of each hall of the barracks there was a tile shower and the usual accoutrements for the use of students on the hall. It seemed that the acoustics in this tiled area made it the most pleasant place to play his instrument. So, just
before long roll, we were often treated to Bach, the violin’s tones reverberating between the toilets, urinals, and showers.

“Mazo, what the hell are you doing making all that racket while we’re trying to study?” yelled Waters.

“I thought that I was playing music with my violin.”

“Well, stop all that racket before long roll.”

During this tirade Lucien Vane looked on with interest or, perhaps, something more intense. He said nothing, but it seemed obvious that not only had the violin not disturbed him, but that he was upset with Waters’ irrational aggressive response to an attempt to break the monotony of barracks routine.

Life, then, went on as usual with roll call, none missing, then retreat to one’s dormitory room to study for the next day’s classes and talk to one’s roommate who had run out of conversation after the first week or two, except that particular night. Dan grumbled, “That son of a bitch! He does his best to act like a big shot and usually gets away with it, but that won’t last forever. Some-
body is going to kick his butt and that will be the end of his pseudo-
dictatorship. Wish I was big enough to be that guy, but if I con-
front him, it would only be something else he could brag about. Wish Earl could do it, but he is too intellectual and too peaceful
and, in addition, would probably get his violin smashed. So I’ll try
and jam some more math into my frustrated brain tonight and
hope that someone will call his bluff tomorrow.”

In addition to low-country cadets from Charleston, there
was a crowd of students mostly from John’s Island. All belonged
to a fraternity called Beta Sigma Chi (Brothers of the Sea Coast).
The islanders had strong low-country accents. When I first heard
it, and understood it with some trouble, it sounded like Gullah.
Then I recognized that they were speaking English with Gullah
accents.

One of the Johns Islanders was Ike Grimball, a lanky, bright
student with a yen for doing in Clemson the same things that
amused him on the island. He was a hunter, a boatsman, enjoying
everything in the outside world.
One twilight he came into our room with a pair of forked spears in his hands.
“What in God’s name are they?”
“Man,” he replied, “you never gigged frogs? You city boys don’t know what’s good. Come on, lemme show you. They’re in the college pond. You’ll see.”
Ike handed me a gig, and with very little hesitation I followed him. Couldn’t be much wrong with killing a frog.
He loped off behind the chemistry building, down a dirt road I’d never noticed before, at the end of which was a lake, the college water supply.
He had an eagle’s eye and quickly speared a frog. Floating on the surface was a metal can. Ike had one foot on the can and one on land when he speared his second frog. An alarm sounded!
“Do, Jesus!” Ike exclaimed. “I stepped on the low water alarm. Let’s get up a tree. They sure gonna catch us on the road.”
Fortunately, there was a large oak nearby and we climbed behind a high limb hoping that whoever investigated wouldn’t spot us. Sure enough, a man walked from around the lake, looked casually around and went back to wherever he had come from. Obviously, students had swiped frogs before, and losing a couple more didn’t bother him. Frogs were not considered a university asset.
We waited a reasonable length of time, quietly climbed down to earth and jogged back toward the campus.
“Now, let’s eat ‘em.”
“Where you gonna cook a frog? I don’t think that even you would eat one raw.”
“Lemme show you.” It was just after supper, and the back door of the kitchen was open. Ike had obviously done this before. He quickly found a small frying pan, and within a few minutes he had two fried frogs, which we took back to my room and ate. That was the first and last frog I ever had anything to do with.
We got back in time for long roll. I wondered what would have happened if the supervisor of the water supply had bothered to look up in the oak tree.
Several days later, I talked to Bill about the escapade. He laughed. “There are big crimes and little ones and gigging a frog is
about as little as they get. But how you had the stomach to eat one of those hopping little things, I don’t know. Fried, sautéed, baked, or broiled, I think that they are in a class with things you done ate, not something you’re gonna eat.

“Incidentally, even if you had been caught, the worst punishment you would have gotten would have been a talk by a faculty member. Killing a frog, even if he is in the college water supply, doesn’t rate even a brief jail sentence, but just a chewing out which might be worse.

“Incidentally, I’m having more guests this weekend. When you help with the steaks, don’t even think about frogs. If I even imagine one of those things being around, I’ll taste frog-flavored steak.”

The next morning, I bumped into Lucien Vane, who wanted to know what had happened to his mail that day.

I was known as the campus mailman. I’d take bags of mail from a second barracks room left by a minion of Mrs. Goodman, the Clemson postmistress. I would then take the bags to the second barracks balcony, read the addressee’s name and throw out the letter or package when I saw a raised hand. Crude as it was, the method worked and paid enough so that I could indulge in a weekly 15-cent milkshake at McCollum’s.

Answering Lucien’s complaint, I told him, “I’m no Ty Cobb, but I throw things toward a raised hand, and, remarkably, I haven’t had complaints about lost letters or packages. Today, you just didn’t get any. I certainly would have recognized your name if I’d tossed out a letter addressed to you. Today, no mail came through me.”

“I write lots of letters to other countries,” he said, “and I wonder if the replies ever get out. I know that there was an enormous explosion in Cuba and that, obviously, it had something to do with Batista. The story of the explosion was in the paper, but I don’t know whether it was intended for Batista or people who didn’t like him.”

“I can’t help you. Clemson beat P.C.; the Citadel won; and
Sylvia Sydney and Spencer Tracy are playing in a movie in Anderson, but that’s not the kind of news you’re interested in.”

“As a matter of fact, it isn’t. My problem is I see trouble and stupidity all over the world. Roosevelt has said that to balance the budget would be a crime against the people. The News and Courier editorialized that then there must have been a crime to have balanced our personal or business budgets, a non-answer to a statement that reflects what goes on in the world. And that’s better than what I hear from the rest of my correspondents. France hates Germany; the Poles are trying to decide if it is possible to defend against the Germans; the English are trying to be peace-keepers; and the Russians want the whole thing. Doesn’t that bother you?”

“I’m interested in Lou Gehrig’s completing 800 games at first base and Hubbell out-pitching Van Lingle Mungo. To say that I’m interested only in things I can do something about, that wouldn’t be true. There’s nothing I can do about the athletes but cheer them on, and that doesn’t accomplish much. What happens in the rest of the world is inevitable. If things get worse we’ll be in the army.

“Have you talked to the people who were at Ft. McClellan last summer? They were on the firing range with World War I rifles and mortars that were nearly as apt to blow you up as the target. There were no tanks at all. There might have been planes somewhere, but nobody saw one. I’m surprised the pols haven’t issued slingshots. Ft. McClellan gave six weeks of 1918 training. It would take God’s interference to keep us alive, and He’d have to use several miracles.

“You might be right about things heating up in Europe and our doing nothing to prepare, but Roosevelt and the other politicians in the know have a lot more information than I do. I don’t think they would lead us into disaster with no preparation. I’m optimistic because I honestly feel that things will work out.”

Lucien Vane replied, “That’s the longest oration I’ve heard from you about anything, ever, not even about the football team. So you are not as unaware as I thought. Tell you what, I’ll buy you a strawberry ice cream cone for suggesting that you lost my mail.”
That suited me. I’d rather eat ice cream than argue any time.

He said, “But you just watch. Hitler is killing Jews now to get their assets. Watch what he’ll do to the rest of Europe when he thinks he’s strong enough. If you think my feelings are ambivalent, you’re right.

“Come on, man. You know that I know in general what’s going on, so let’s go and eat ice cream and worry about things we can do something about, like the calculus exam.”

I had not seen Bill in several days and things were dull.

We lined up outside our rooms for long roll and Waters was missing. He never missed anything military or the chance to beat a freshman, so it was likely that something significant was wrong. We heard loud, confusing noises coming from below. Ike Grimball went into Waters’ open room, and nothing was amiss. He yelled, “What’s going on down there?” A voice replied, “Waters is down here on the ground. He’s out. Looks like he fell from the window.”

There was a sidewalk next to the building, then a grass strip that rose six feet or so until it met the concrete walk that led from second to third barracks. Fortunately, Waters had landed on the grass strip three stories below. We all ran down the steps to see if we could help with the catastrophe. Someone had called Dr. Holtzendorff, and he had sent a pick-up truck with a mattress in the bottom to transport Waters to the university hospital. His arms moved a little when he was lifted into the truck, so at least he was alive.

A few of us, including Lucien Vane, walked to the hospital to tell the students, back in their rooms, what was happening and to listen to the theories as to what had happened.

Waters was big, strong, aggressive and certainly did not seem to be a suicidal candidate. He also had the habit of wandering into empty rooms to pick up small items that might have been of some use to him or to embarrass the room’s resident. He had
too much good sense to lean out of a third-floor window, lose his balance and fall, although this seemed the popular opinion. Then, there was the idea that he was pushed out of the window, but none of us was strong enough to try.

When could it have been done? We were gathering for long roll at the time standing at the doors to our rooms, which would have made violence difficult.

The Clemson police, represented by an officer named Smith, appeared and took fingerprints around the room. He found that at least a dozen cadets had touched tables, chairs, walls and
windows but that all had reason to be there. No strange prints appeared.

The discussion went on into the night until we were all exhausted and, finally, the last man had gone to bed.

Bill had heard of the catastrophe and believed that with the almost universal animosity of the student body and no immediate clues, the fall would remain a Clemson mystery.

Everything seemed to start at long roll. One night, we missed the radio introduction to a piece of fiction warning that men from Mars in a space ship were on the way to earth to take over the planet. The possible landing place was not known, but its general direction was toward the New Jersey and New York area. The presentation was in typical radio-news-story mode without hysteria.

We had no reason to disbelieve the story except for common sense, which none of us seemed to have at the time.

Earl Mazo, Ed Schmidt (who lived on our floor and who was from New Jersey), and I raced with a group of three cadets to the first floor, where rifles and ammunition were stored. We armed ourselves with the rifles, stuffed our pockets with ammunition and headed for the parade ground, where we could view the cloudless sky and any space ship that might be headed toward Clemson. Schmidt, a loyal Jersey man, knew that a bus for New Jersey would make its stop at the Clemson downtown station and took off toward the bus to protect the northeastern United States from the invaders. It was at the bus station that he learned the truth.

Earl and I, heroes beyond belief, stood ready with rifles pointed at the sky, ready to destroy the ship before Clemson was attacked. This went on about five minutes when a loud voice came from the area of the third-floor barracks.

“Get the hell in here and put those rifles where they belong!”

We were astounded, and wondered whether a man from Mars had avoided us and, surreptitiously gaining entrance to the barracks, was trying to avoid shooting and, perhaps, wanted to take us back to Mars. The voice began again.

“Get back in here! There are no men from Mars coming.
That was a radio program aimed at jackasses like you!” This time the voice sounded like our first sergeant’s. So Earl and I cautiously approached the barracks and went to the gun room, where we found a group of guys laughing at us.

“That was an Orson Welles story that scared half the school,” we were told. We just missed the announcement of the program at long roll, and guys swallowed it whole. Back on the floor, we received more ribbing and finally took refuge in our rooms.

The next morning, I told Bill what a fool I’d been.

“Well,” he said, “you’re absolutely right. You were a jackass, but it could have been worse. Someone might have been hurt or killed with you and your cohorts holding loaded rifles and pointing them at an imaginary target. So thank your lucky stars that the only thing hurt was your dignity. If I were you, I’d try to forget it and go on about your usual duties.”

Since there seemed no alternative, I went to class, did the usual military things, and did my usual business with nothing hurt but my pride.

Dan had been attracted to a very pretty girl from Anderson and was seriously considering marrying her. He thought he would like to talk to someone about marriage and, of all people, decided on the single Bill. He was too bashful to talk to me and would have gotten no information other than that which I had garnered from books.

“Well, Dan,” said Bill. “You’ve probably come to the wrong man. All I know about marriage I’ve seen in the relationships of my friends. But there are a couple of things about women I learned as a young man that might be helpful.

“In the first place, we are attracted to women because they have pretty faces, lovely breasts and curvaceous behinds that you’d like to get your hands on. I’ve been through that desire multiple times. If you are lucky, the gal you pick will have all three.

“Marriage begins with sex and should because that’s the
reason for marriage. But not many marriages survive because of sex alone. As you know, half end in divorce.

"The most important thing about picking a woman to live with is not the fun of going to bed. You can have intercourse without marriage, but you can’t have a happy marriage unless you and the lady have a lot in common. I’d pick a wife because she can survive with my screwy friends and peculiar habits and who can put up with my talking shop at home. She would have to put up with my religion or lack of it.

"On the other hand, you must adjust to her peculiarities and survive her social desires. A happy marriage can exist with a woman who loves parties or one who would rather stay at home. The important thing is to pick someone with enough in common so that you can live happily together when the sexual desire begins to fade, and that’s an old man’s advice with no personal experience with marriage.”

Dan was not aware of anything that Bill told him, but he was impressed by the organization and thought that comprised the advice from a senior faculty member who was organized about even minor matters and more thoughtful about major matters.

There was no doubt that he was strongly emotionally attached to his contemplated fiancée by a pretty face, magnificent breasts, a fanny, and even more personal areas that he loved to touch. He could be sure that the first few years of marriage would be sexually magnificent.

But what else did they have in common? She was from a small town. How well would she get along with the other wives in a large city? She was not a particularly model dresser, and most of the wives were fashionable and might be unsympathetic to someone who didn’t dress with style. On the other hand, his girl might enjoy changing her pattern and dressing along with the most stylish wives, or she might think that attention to dress superficial and elect to stay her old self.

Would she feel at home with the variety of people that he brought home, some of whom would be Bill’s mountain friends or the much more sophisticated head of the Coca-Cola company and probably other business leaders as well? Would she feel at
home talking to that variety, or would she be unhappy with them and with him for inviting them? Was she a person who rigidly followed the tenets of her religion, or would she be unhappy with his inability to adjust to the rigid requirements of whatever church she chose to join after marriage? On the other hand, could he happily survive multiple parties or live with a woman who preferred staying at home?

All of these questions should be at least looked at before marriage, and Dan decided to postpone proposal and enjoy their present relationship until it was clearer what they had in common other than sex.
Well, each day after that was another day—no men from Mars, nothing unusual but calculus and chemistry and sociology; then the afternoon came when the boxing team gathered in the gym for exercising and batting each other with 10-ounce gloves.

The exercises were an afternoon all to themselves. The terrain is hilly, and we still ran with 5-pound weights in each hand. The first part was easiest. We went down a road behind the gym that ran through a hog farm. All the hogs were behind fences that appeared fragile compared to the fat animals that slopped in the mud, contained by the fences. The hogs all weighed hundreds of pounds. I was apprehensive running by them but never mentioned it because many of the boxers were from farms and accustomed
to dealing with monsters such as these.

Just beyond the hog farm was an open field that had in it, that afternoon, a cow and her calf. I ran too close to the calf whose momma galloped toward us with, I was sure, no good in mind. Fortunately, there was one tree in the field, and the big boxer rapidly became an expert tree climber and perched out of reach of the cow that just wanted to get her daughter away from a stranger, and when they were a safe distance away, I came down and ran toward Cemetery Hill. The downslope of the hill led to the gym where calisthenics then started. Following this torture came nine rounds of boxing, usually with a man or two your weight and one heavier. There would have been one lighter except there was none. Bob Jones coached, supervised and taught during the nine rounds each day.

In addition to the above, three bantamweights sparred with each other. The first of my own weight was Teddy Boselli, the number one bantamweight. He was a perpetual motion machine who at times seemed to have four hands. Standard boxing that I was taught at the Charleston YMCA wasn’t effective against Boselli. There was no problem jabbing him in the nose or hitting him with a right to the belly. It just didn’t seem to make much difference. He kept on going, apparently unaware of my punching and without fatigue for all three rounds.

I thought that I might be a better professional boxer than Teddy because I did not think it possible to continue his pace for more than three rounds. But I never asked to go ten rounds with him.

Next up was a welterweight or heavyweight. Lauren Dreisbach was the welterweight. He was a good student, a pleasant person, and a very good boxer. Every afternoon he out-pointed me. In spite of his being twenty pounds heavier, he was stronger and faster than I was. Unfortunately, he had a glass jaw, and after an intercollegiate bout, he was knocked down and didn’t recognize anyone, including his father, and remained semicomatose for five to ten minutes. That ended his boxing career. Coach Jones had a one-KO rule. After one, you were not allowed to box again.

My other partner was our heavyweight, Warren Wilson, who
weighed 185 when he was in good shape, which was always. Warren knew that if he hit a man 65 pounds lighter, he might kill him, so he practiced his footwork, slapped me when he wanted to and permitted me to act like a champion, jabbing him at will and occasionally hitting him with a right to his gut, not too hard, though, because there is an end to good nature. I remembered fighting a heavy in the Charleston YMCA. Being a smart ass, I hit him in the belly as hard as I could to drive him back. He then hit me with a left to my middle and, when I jackknifed forward, carried me to the side of the gym where, after a few minutes, I could breathe again. I learned to be very careful with heavier boxers no matter how sweet they were.

At the end of the afternoon, we hardly had the energy for a shower, but usually made it.

In our room, Dan was in a tizzy. “I’m sorry we get newspapers,” he said. “The president has suggested that we strengthen the Navy, but there is strong opposition to this in Congress. This
is in the face of Charleston’s Alfred Von Kolnitz’s warning that World War I had discredited the illusion that the Atlantic was insurmountable and that America could put a million men in uniform overnight. In the meantime, the Italians and British moved toward a closer relationship while, at the same time, Italian and German ties remained as close as ever. What’s going on? The people are jockeying for as strong a position as possible, should war come, and it most likely will.”

“I’m not as apprehensive about European politics as you. The Atlantic is not a perfect barrier, but it can buy time if need be. So far none of those people have threatened us, and I can’t see anything in the immediate future that indicates they will. I’ll continue to pull for the football team, be thankful for the fact that I eat food instead of the major dining room swill, and curse the school military. Lighten up, man! We seem to be getting over a major depression, and things look good to me.”

“I wish I had your attitude. But they try to make anything they do seem necessary. For instance, Italy is appealing to the League of Nations to justify their wrecking Ethiopia for no reason that I can see except to prepare their fighting forces for a larger war in the future.”

“Dan, I know what you are trying to tell me. But I’m going to enjoy living until all hell breaks loose. I remain confident that the President and Congress know a lot more than we do and will do whatever is necessary to protect us.

“More practical is the fact that my last calculus quiz was terrible, and I don’t want to end up selling pencils in the streets. I could also use the very close company of a gal, but, being in this place with no car, you might as well be a monk.”

The two most important things to students were football and the military establishment. If you could stand up like a soldier, were fairly handsome and did not have bad grades, you became something with a title in the military that used pre-World War I drilling and tactics. The first sergeant ruled each company
under a company commander, and corporals commanded each squad. The cadet colonel was the top of the cadets’ military heap and he and the rest of the student military were backed by the faculty insofar as campus discipline was concerned.

Everyone had to have relief from this organization, and mine was in a little frame house owned by Professor Robertson, who had started the department of chemistry. His son, Ben, was the school’s most prominent literary figure. Ben had worked for the New York Times and had been the Washington correspondent of the Associated Press during Roosevelt’s administration, had reported in Java and Honolulu, and knew every politician locally and nationally in the world. He was proud of his family who had come to this continent before the formation of the United States and looked down on North Carolina because they hadn’t joined the union until 1668.

His family believed that the sun was oriented toward Clemson and during the night, unfortunately, brought light to the Chinese. His family was Baptist, all active in the church, and believed that all the little white churches in South Carolina belonged to them. His father hated banks that would loan money for three months, then foreclose; and the Robertson family would rather survive on grits and gravy than borrow to eat well. As a matter of fact, even in good times, when the price of cotton was high, grits were a part of their breakfast, dinner, and supper.

Ben lived in various parts of the world but would always come back home to rest for a while and talk to his family and friends. He had interviewed everyone who was important in the world, and who Earl Mazo interviewed for the Clemson Tiger, the school paper, and became a friend. He invited Earl and a few others, including Strom Thurmond, to the little white house, along with Wilton Hall, editor of the Anderson Independent and a political power in that part of the state, as well as a few faculty members, to talk about the places he had been. Ben was a great writer and would have been a wonderful gossip columnist. While he lived in Buckingham Palace, he was interested in the king’s daily in-and-out relationships with the queen. He was more interested in what went on between the servants and back-stairs gossip. The topics
of conversation between Mr. Thurmond and Mr. Hall gave all of us the in's and out's of that part of the state.

Ben had lived with Manuel Quezon in the Philippines and was fascinated by the happy relationship between a white husband and a black wife. The most frequent conversations concerned black and white relationships and how the blacks could occupy their society with dignity with no malice directed toward them. The evenings always ended with a wonderful meal and a gradual decrease of chitchat as guests left for home.

Among the family characteristics of the Robertson family was a quick temper with arguments sometimes settled with pistols. These were family matters and police were never called. This was a trait that, so far as one could tell, Ben did not share. The shootings did not lead to lifelong hatreds but were accepted as one way to settle a heated argument and separate from the multitudinous relationships.

If Ben had lived (he was killed in a plane crash at age 33), he would have been a great novelist. Besides what he did write, his sense of humor and his instincts as a gossip were memorable. In Red Hills and Cotton, he describes his restless family. It is a long description and cannot be epitomized, but the following is as close as one gets to his family feeling.

He says, "We are like kites in the hills of Carolina, like ships riding at anchor. We have our cotton fields, or big wooden houses. Someone is always keeping the home place. Someone is always there and no matter how seldom or unexpectedly we may come in, we know someone will rise and give us welcome. We can stay for a day, a week, or a month. We can sit in a corner if we like and read a book, or we can milk the cows or feed the chickens or shoot squirrels in the oaks along the spring branch. It is a great comfort to a rambling person to know that somewhere there is a permanent home. Perhaps it is the most final of the comforts they ever really know. Perhaps that is why one of our favorite hymns is that spiritual, 'I Got a Home in That Rock Don't You Know.'"

Perhaps that is not a description of the entire family, but it is compatible to Ben’s leaving for months or years and always com-
ing home to his rock, and that is why people of stature always looked forward to his coming–Strom Thurmond, Professor B. O. Williams, his cousin and classmate, and many faculty members.

Walking home with Earl after hearing Ben recount his experiences with the king and queen of England, I said, “It is hard to believe that Ben was educated in this isolated school, goes out and talks to the world’s important people and comes back here reminiscing about them like a country bumpkin who was fortunate to get to see the world’s leaders.”

“I don’t see anything unusual about that,” said Earl. “He’s a man who knows exactly who he is, part of a great big family that possesses the sun and lets China use it part-time. He couldn’t be anything but what he is.”
Transportation in the 1930s could be difficult. Few students were blessed with automobiles and there was no formal parking lot. One of the fortunates was classmate Hertz Warren who parked near a pump house close to the football field. It was an elderly Nash, but you could squeeze six people in it, and it always performed reliably. On holidays with enough time to get to Charleston and back, Hertz would bring the old jalopy in front of second barracks, where most of us lived, and, load up. Salvadore Sottile was always first on the spot, and, his brother Vincent and Buster Brown and me and occasionally one from the islands because there were not many of them and they had the additional problem of getting from Charleston to whatever island was their home. They usually elected to stay in school until Christmas or the summer break.

Conversation was nonstop, and, with complaints, they were told to take the bus. No one ever did. The bus to Charleston stopped at every crossroad, using most of the vacation time. Besides, they had the bad habit of charging a fare that few of us could afford.

Salvadore Sottile was always the first to ask if the auto would make it this time. He was told that he could be taken to the bus station, allowing with his wide rear-end room for an extra person in the back seat. Sottile replied that he would do his duty of holding down the back seat all the way home and would not charge for the service.

"Would you guys cut the crap! Nobody I know would mistake you for Jack Benny or any other comedian, and if he did, he'd get locked up in the Columbia nut house."

To break the subsequent silence, I told of riding the bus with Shad Bryant, who spit at citizens on the side of the road, catching them in the face with the bus doing 50. That seemed like something requiring emulation, so Buster unloaded from the front and scored a bull’s-eye on Salvadore in the back. It seemed a real accomplishment but Salvadore reacted unpleasantly.
“Aw, Sally, you know I didn’t intend to do that,” replied Buster. “Besides, if I could regularly spit in a curve like that, I’d probably open a sideshow and make more money in a day than you fuckers could get together in your lifetimes.”

I hadn’t talked to Bill for a while and decided to give him a ring and see if I could make a visit. The answer was positive, so I walked to the little white house.

“What brings you here, Art?”

“Well, I went home for the weekend, and was surprised at the aggressive and profane behavior of the guys in the car. Secondly, I am becoming more and more concerned with the manipulations of Austria, Italy and Germany. Italy is trying to make the world believe that their war in Ethiopia was honest and pure when they really destroyed a country too weak to defend itself and Italy prepares for what I think will be the next war.”

“Well,” said Bill, “least important is the action in the car. Everyone has a percent bad in them, some 10%, some more. But men, unsupervised, are going to use the bad percent. You are lucky to have everything end with horseplay, not violence. In dealing with people, use your 90% until situations make it impossible to continue peacefully. This is why men shoot their wives after years of unhappiness and why the wife is more sensitive to a long-term unpleasant environment than the husband. I’m curious about why more wives don’t shoot husbands. Anyhow, the behavior in the car was horseplay, a substitute for something more unpleasant.

“As far as the second part of the question, Europe remains an enigma. Germany wants the whole thing, but, until circumstances make it impossible, they’ll act like a civilized country. Given the turmoil in Spain and the mid-European countries, I believe that Germany is waiting for a reasonable chance.”
We finally arrived at the end of our junior year. We in the ROTC had planned to spend most of the summer at Ft. McClellan, Alabama, along with students from other southeastern schools learning the practical side of warfare. Unfortunately, a poliomyelitis epidemic isolated the school and kept us on campus during the several weeks before camp when we would have been at home.

Clemson without classes was unbelievably boring. We couldn’t get out so women couldn’t get in. We tired of basketball and baseball played without supervision or skill. More daring students found their way to Easley or some other nearby town, loaded a truck scrounged from one of the athletic departments, and sold whiskey on the campus in great secrecy. That was when I took more than one drink and still remember lying on my bunk with the room whirling around it, one foot on the floor to keep from falling off. I never got that drunk again, but time still passed more quickly with alcohol.

At long last, the quarantine was over, and we were loaded
into a hot and non-air-conditioned train with a coal burning engine. Smoke poured in through the windows, making us all hot, filthy and smelly. We may have been the first load of soldiers happy to see Anniston, home of Ft. McClellan.

The barracks there were like those at any other army camp but seemed luxurious for the first day or so. The first lecture outside with the temperature pushing 100 degrees was how to get along in the field with as little water as possible. A canteen of water was supposed to last a day, used for drinking and toothbrushing and washing as well. The use of minimal amounts of water was adhered to because we were usually in the field where none was available. The canteen did not include water served at breakfast and supper. The sermon was followed by a walk of several miles in the heat, a midday meal and a second march in the afternoon. Late afternoon and evenings were occupied by horse-shoe pitching, volleyball, and the like.

The following day, because I was being considered for an officer's position in the corps, I was given command of a regiment and ordered to attack an opposing regiment on a distant hill. Everything seemed to go well. The scouts were out and the bulk of the opposition located. Everything seemed to be going well when I heard a commanding voice shout, "Williams! Get your ass back down here!" Bewildered, I walked back to the regular army colonel who was supervising the exercise. "Williams," he said in a scathing voice, "can't you read a damn map?"

I almost collapsed. The road led to the wrong hill. I resumed command through the exercise, but my dreams of reaching cadet colonel were gone, and I spent my senior year as a lieutenant, next lowest to those who had demonstrated a complete lack of military ability and held the rank of senior private.

My energy thereafter was directed entirely toward academia, which was probably fortunate because competition to enter medical school was fierce, admission determined mostly by grades although other things were considered.

My final humiliation was reduction to senior private at which rank I handled the most unpleasant jobs. I was outpost of the regiment that I had previously commanded. My job was to
post myself between opposing forces and send a signal if the opposition showed signs of aggression. To top the day, I lay down in a bed of poison ivy and spent a large part of the year scratching.

Dan Moorer talked to me at supper. “Arthur,” he said, “I was sorry to hear that you screwed up reading that map.”

“Oh well,” I replied, “better to be a colonel for a day than never be a colonel at all.”

“Hell,” Dan replied. “When I look at the horses asses appointed as colonels in the corps, I think that I would be happy all day as a private.”

“Thank you, Dan. I don’t know of any outside the regiment who knew of my brief promotion.”

After supper, we gathered in the parade ground, protecting the rest of the regiment from the enemy. The only problem was that this was an all-night assignment and I found a soft bunch of bushes that would support me, with my rifle in shooting position should the enemy become obstreperous. Finally, the inevitable happened, and I dozed off. Waking at sunrise, I looked around the poison ivy that was around me and, of course, knew what was coming.

We walked to the firing range, where we were taught how to shoot .45-caliber pistols and .30-caliber rifles. On the way back, Dan, our newspaper-reading addict, said, “You know, while we are playing around in the heat and dust, a hell of a lot’s going on in the rest of the world that could make us real soldiers. Hitler says he loves everybody but is building 700 planes and training 10,000 pilots to protect his poor old country. In the meantime, he’s invading Spanish Morocco just to give his army a little practice. Practice for what? He’s building forts along the Belgian and Swiss borders. To keep his bricklayers busy? And what are we doing? Subsidizing football fields for colleges around the country. Roosevelt is a nut. At least a navigable channel from Charleston to Columbia has been turned down. Instead, money is being poured like water into a highway between New York and Florida. It will be called the Ocean Highway, and every politician between New York and Miami will get rich.”

“I don’t know, Dan,” said Lucien Vane. “The government’s
philosophy might be partly right. Somebody has to build the fields and roads, and it seems to me we are on our way out of one hell of a financial crisis. My father owned a couple of pairs of pants a year ago, and now he’s able to get a Sunday suit. We’re doing things through private companies. A lot of them collapsed in 1929 or thereabouts, but our economy has always been based on its advantages over government decree, and it seems to be working again.”

“Hey, you guys!” yelled Ike. “Let’s talk about women. We are all interested in them.”

Speaking of women, Anniston, Alabama, had more whores than any city in the south. Maybe more than any city anywhere, due to the proximity of Ft. McClellan, which was all men, thousands of them, and a few women who were nurses, secretaries, and such but not satisfying a fraction of a man’s need for a female.

Anniston was a pretty little southern town with mostly wooden two-story houses with a front porch that had rocking chairs and sometimes a swing made of wooden slats. The difference between these houses and those in the rest of the south was that they contained women for hire of any size, shape, or personality that best fitted your desire. It was within walking distance to the camp so that access was no problem. The men in need entered the living room, had a conversation with the madam who ran the house, and ended up in bed upstairs with the girl of his choice, having settled accounts with the madam. One made his way back to the fort with something other than sex on his mind. The intercourse industry made life considerably less stressful. This looked like a practical way to solve the sex problem. Nobody got hurt. You didn’t get mixed up with some woman who wanted to get married when all you wanted was to get between her legs. Picking a girl here gave you satisfaction and you could then pick a partner you could live with who would probably have some interest in sex.

These Anniston girls were part of a big industry and, for most, the only way they could make a reasonable living. The houses were part and parcel of the life of Anniston, and most of the
Tales of Clemson

cadets thought about visiting a house and going to a movie. Many did both. Venereal disease was part of the package.

Unless you wanted to participate in Anniston’s biggest business, or drink a chocolate ice cream soda, there was little in the way of entertainment in town. At McClellan your day was systematically scheduled, and, in spite of all the talking to the contrary, the discipline came at times as a relief.

Back at camp I read the Saturday Evening Post until supper. After eating, I walked to the gym and saw Lucien Vane playing with the weights.

“Lucien, what in the world are you doing, messing with those things? Don’t you know you’re supposed to be the intellect of the campus?”

“I fiddle with these things every now and then. I spend so much time sitting, I want to be sure I can stand up and walk. Besides, if someone flaunts the idea of smart-ass in my face, I’d like to correct his attitude.”

“Makes sense. But you look more at home in the library than here. Be careful or someone will call you a smart-ass just to see what will happen.”

“Don’t worry, Art. I keep physical activity to myself. I’m not sure that anyone but you knows that I know one piece of equipment from the other.”

I said, “Tomorrow is more pistol shooting. I hate those damn things. They kick like a mule. The bullet is a foot off target for every millimeter you aim. They are heavy and awkward, and how they can play a significant part in a modern war, I don’t know. If I wanted to fight the Slobovians, I’d donate a pistol to each one, and, sooner or later, accidentally or on purpose, they’d wipe each other out.”

“It’s not that bad.” said Lucien. “If we weren’t shooting pistols we’d be doing something else more obnoxious. That’s the pleasantest way to look at it. Even digging latrines might be more fun. Incidentally, what did you think of Jim Farley’s visit to the
“I don’t believe it,” I replied. “How a man can be introduced to you once briefly and remember your name forever afterward doesn’t seem possible.”

What Farley had done was stand in the middle of the parade ground, shake a cadet’s hand while hearing his name and walk on. That night, at a party in the gym, Farley wandered around and called each cadet by his proper name. He didn’t forget one.

“No,” opined Lucien. “That man has a rare gift of memory and intellect in general. I can’t imagine what he’s doing in politics and guess he was conned into it by FDR, the world’s greatest bull artist. He probably uses him to remind him not to say the same thing twice, and it must be nice having someone stand behind you in a crowd reminding you of every name. That’s classical FDRism. I don’t see why the president is paying so little attention to what goes on in Europe.

“I’m the only person in Clemson who hears directly from relatives what’s going on in Germany. I have a copy of a newspaper, Der Stürmer, that calls the Jews hideous-looking with a repulsive accent, and they cite studies that inferior breeding begets inferior. They use this superior Aryan philosophy and no doubt will use it on the Jews as a final solution, extermination. In the meantime, they throw the Jews into a fenced ring with large dogs trained to bite, so the victims end up without hands, ears or genitalia. If I can find out from relatives through the mail, why can’t the government know what’s happening and say or do something about it? Good old FDR!”

“Your source may be from a family who hates Hitler. I hope that we interfere if government information confirms what you tell me. We’ll see. In the meantime, Laura Bragg (the head of the Charleston Museum who was on leave in Pittsburgh) quit wearing silk stockings because they come from Japan and refuses to exhibit anything in Pittsburgh because the Japanese are murdering Chinese by the thousands.

“Anyhow, let’s go and learn how to shoot at the Germans or anyone else we have to. As for me, the casualty will probably be my foot.”
The pistol range was as unpleasant as anticipated. The recoil was hard, the barrel always kicking up after shooting, always kicking at the sky or my head, and, to make things worse, there was always an instructor watching my technique and yelling to pull the trigger smoothly and not to jerk it.

My scores were bad but not awful because two shots hit the bull’s-eye. I was convinced that someone either did me a favor or fired on the wrong target. The only people who did well were the John’s Island crowd, like Ike and Charlie Bryan who grew up with guns and with hunting squirrels, marsh hens, and whatever moved in the island woods. Ike Grimball actually laughed when he saw me shoot from the sitting position. At least I furnished the only humor on that hot, dusty, and, in general, unpleasant day.

Having destroyed my military career leading a regiment up the wrong hill, I elected to devote my energy to academics and writing. The messenger from Clemson to the world was The Tiger, and it so happened that my friend, Earl Mazo, was editor. I had preceded him as editor at our high school paper and so far had an “in.”

“What you want to write?” asked Earl.
Being the only reporter who was on an athletic team, sports seemed reasonable, so I was on the spot appointed sports editor.

My most important duty was spotter for reporters in the press box at football games. When twenty-two guys, eleven of whom dress in one color and the opposing team another, who’s who can become confusing.

Since I shared the dormitory with the football team, I knew each Clemson man standing, sitting or on ground face up or down. I even recognized them lying on their backs or on the backs of their necks, their waists sharply bent with their feet planted behind them in the playing field grass. I studied brochures of other teams but wasn’t much better than the other reporters identifying the other guys in weird positions assumed after a hard tackle or block.
Football was old hat to most of the people in the press box and there was the usual banter about individual performances in the game, the crowd, the school, the weather, but most of the talk did not concern football or, if it did, it was something unusual about football somewhere else.

Our first game was with Newberry and it was dull. The little college hadn’t the size, speed or skill to be an equal opponent for the larger Clemson team.

The first conversation was with a Greenville reporter who said, “You look Jewish.”

“You’re absolutely right, but why bring that up in the middle of a football game?”

“Look at that punt!” he exclaimed. “Must have been 55 yards in the air! Oh, about that other thing—I heard from a friend, a newspaper man in Germany, who tells me Hitler is raising hell with the Jews. What’s going on? I don’t read much here.”

“I honest before God do not know. Hitler has convinced the Germans that the Jews are racially inferior, ugly and a pestilence. He says the Germans are superior in every way. The Germans, he says, are all handsome and 100% Aryan, whatever that is. If the Jews fight back, they are promptly killed. Roosevelt knows all about this and, I am told, has written Hitler to stop the killing.

“I believe we don’t interfere because the Germans are militarily strong and our politicians would rather see a few thousand people murdered than embarrass themselves in a fight we might not win. I also think that some Germans believe Hitler a temporary phenomenon.

“Oh, damn! Charlie Timmons fumbled the ball. Nobody touched him. He just dropped it! He just dropped it! Now that’s not like Charlie. I remember against Wake Forest, though he fumbled, accidentally kicked the ball 15 yards forward, and we eventually scored. No such luck this time.”

“Hey, kid,” the Greenville man said. “Don’t you have family over there so you can know what’s going on?”

“No,” I replied. “You know, you sound just like Hitler. The Jews are not in an international conspiracy plotting against anyone. We’re just a religion that hasn’t anything to do with politics.
in Germany or anywhere else, although I’ll admit that we have some rough discussions with the Arabs. You want to know what I know? Read Mein Kampf.”

“Hey!” a voice came from down the table. “Leave him alone and let him enjoy the game.”

“You’re right,” said Mr. Greenville, “but it would be nice to know for sure whether Germans are killing non-Germans or whether it’s all a matter of crap.”

“Thank you, sir,” I said. “If anybody wants me, I’ll keep on spotting. Maybe I’ll be able to enjoy the next game.”

“How you guys gonna make out against Carolina this year?”

“Don’t know, but it won’t be another Newberry.”

After the game, we walked to the Block C party where visiting teams were entertained. The Greenville reporter again tried to squeeze information that I did not have. I finally told him to go to hell and find someone in Greenville who could help him.

With as much information as I could get at the Block C party, I elected to go back to our room where Dan was stuffing something into his suitcase and said he was going to the library.

I went to the Tiger office and wrote the story of the game. It wasn’t much of a story, but it hadn’t been much of a game.

I had not seen Bill Lippincott in weeks and, after calling, walked to his home to tell him my troubles. First of all was the mess at McClellan and failing as a military star.

He said, “Art, you know how the faculty feels about the military and I’m a little surprised that you had military ambitions. I’m very sorry that you were hurt, but all a high ranking in the cadet military corps would have been was time away from more worthwhile things and the development of interests that wouldn’t have helped you later. Stick to your studies, man. You’re a good student, so go where your strength is, and that’s scholarship.”

I also told him about the Greenville reporter who was Jew-conscious to the point of obsession.

“Hell,” he said, “anti-Semitism has been around for more
than a thousand years because the Jews have been the best scholars around for a lot longer than that. Christ was necessary to give the people something to see and statues to touch and symbols to bow down to. I like Christianity because it does those things. I like being part of the crowd.

“But, if you look at the Old Testament, the principles of Christ’s teachings are all there. Anti-Semites, then, are people who find an excuse to hate a people who originated the religion they were taught. They violate the mandates of their own religion. But get used to it, Art. Anti-Semitism is everywhere including, as you know, students in this school. The guy from Greenville is one of the most benign you’ll meet.

“But don’t let these guys bug you. You’ll do fine.

“How did you like Anniston, not McClellan. I know how everyone feels about that tour of duty. But I understand that it is the whorehouse capitol of the world.”

I laughed and said, “You couldn’t be more right. The guys walk downtown for sex like others go for a soft drink. I participated in the soft drink part, incidentally, waiting for friends who felt the need for forgetting one course of frustration. To tell you the truth, if it weren’t for infection and unwanted pregnancy, it’s a pretty good system.”

As always, I felt better after talking to Bill and went back to the barracks. Nothing much was doing at the barracks, so I went to the The Tiger office. Earl Mazo came in scratching his head regarding the subject of his next editorial. I suggested that he might urge Frank Howard to cut down on his bacon and eggs in the morning to make room for another player on the bench, since Frank’s behind occupied space for two. That was rejected as inappropriate. My next suggestion was that black players be recruited because I had seen bigger, stronger black players on the Charleston playgrounds than on the football team. This was rejected as politically impossible. I’ve forgotten what the final subject of the editorial was, but it might have had something to do with urging the cadets to sell poppies on Poppy Day or some other subject that would not arouse controversy. Integration of black and white was a no-no. The only integration at Clemson was a
female student, Ellen Carpenter, who was allowed to attend the school of architecture. The cadet corps, to a man, would have voted against integration had they been given the chance. There was only segregation because that was the way God intended things to be.
Chaper Six:
"I really wonder what this antagonism is all about."

My next assignment was actual intercollegiate boxing—Clemson versus North Georgia Teachers College. My opponent was Terry Shanahan. I envisioned a mean Irishman with powerful lefts and rights. He turned out to be a nice person and a terrible boxer. Bantamweights fought first so that we were first in the ring. The first observation was that they didn’t furnish the powder that boxers rub on their shoes so as not to slip on the canvas. They wore tennis shoes, so that didn’t bother them but was terrible for us. This was brought to my attention when I touched gloves with Shanahan, then threw a tremendous right hand. Unfortunately, I slipped and did a complete flip and landed on my back. The judges were kind enough to call this a slip, not a knock down. There was no count and the fight contin-
ued. In spite of the first-round slip, I won on points. The account of the fight in *The Tiger* omitted my landing on my back in round one.

My most difficult fights were in the Clemson gym, and every afternoon was a repetition of one before. First we had our run, then calisthenics, and then boxing against a bantamweight, a welterweight, and a heavyweight.

The bantamweight was usually Milton Berry, our first string 120-pounder who hit very hard and fast and didn’t seem to mind getting hit. He constantly moved forward, and I tried to counter this with clever footwork that wasn’t very effective. He didn’t mind missing if he could just keep moving forward constantly swinging. The next scheduled afternoon sparring was against a welterweight or lightweight. The welterweight was usually Lauren Driesbach, a much better than average boxer. I was surprised to knock him down once with a blow that would not have bothered Berry. He was later asked to leave the boxing team because he couldn’t remember his father after a knockout, and there was concern about future permanent injury.

The heavyweight was always Warren Wilson, the best fighter on the team and the conference champion. I usually warned him before we started, “Watch your step, baby. My right hand is going good, but I’ll be careful and try not to hurt you too much.”

His usual response was, “I’m terrified, but I’ll try and stick with you.” After the preliminary remarks, he tattooed my face with jabs, never threw a hard right, used his feet better than a man 65 pounds lighter, and outclassed a little guy because he was faster and better.

Joe Sherman was the faculty advisor, and his office was *The Tiger*’s headquarters. While I was typing an article about Warren Wilson and his chances of making the transition from amateur to pro in boxing, Joe walked in and asked how things were going in the sports world.

“Everything’s great. I’m getting to know the guys on the boxing team and the rest of the teams as well, living in the barracks with them. But at times it’s hard to keep focused on sports. With England and France apparently about to go to war with
Germany, it’s hard to think of anything else as relatively important, but Mr. Roosevelt continues to tell us that we’ll stay out of a European war. All we can do is believe him and carry on in our world as usual. There’s nothing else to do. Milton Berry’s giving me a shellacking every afternoon is unimportant when compared to merchant ships sunk by German subs all over the ocean. The President says they can’t sink civilian ships in our part of the Atlantic. What’s our part of the ocean? I can’t believe him when he says we’ll not fight. Sitting on the sidelines watching friends being murdered is not possible.”

Earl Mazo came in, his hands full of papers mostly about campus activities to publish in the The Tiger. “You philosophizing again? My old man runs a delicatessen store. He spends his time selling Mr. Rudich’s kosher bread, lox, and dill pickles to eat with herring and onions. Mrs. Garfinkel or Mrs. Applebaum might care about a British ship torpedoed by a sub, but when they deal with my old man, they care more about cheese and bologna. Ain’t a thing they can do about the war, but they can keep their husbands from raising hell if the food’s not kosher or the pickles too small. If the sports writers wouldn’t try to run the world from Clemson and pay more attention to people getting their asses kicked here, we’d have a better paper. For now, I suggest you think more like Mrs. Applebaum.”

“Mazo, you’re as full of bologna as your father’s delicatessen, but I’ll try to concentrate more on how not to get hell beat out of me and less on English strategy in the Atlantic.”

“Hey, Hertz,” I called when I saw him in front of the canteen. “What about bumming a ride with you to the state fair next week?” It was hard to believe that the time for the fair and the great football game, South Carolina versus Clemson, was almost here.

“Yeah, man. There’s always room for one more.”

The passengers were the same friends who rode with him at the holidays who were going to celebrate the big game. A foot-
ball coach’s reputation rested on the outcome regardless of the rest of the season. A team was a success or a failure depending upon the outcome of the athletic, alcoholic, let-your-hair down riot.

For Carolina students this was the day you needn’t act as a student but as a loud mouth provocateur saying nasty things to the enemy for the day. Of course, the coeds said girly-mean things to Clemsonites.

I told Earl, “I really wonder what this antagonism is all about. There must be something reasonable about it. Perhaps it’s because in other parts of the world their aggressive feelings are displayed by actual hatred and war against each other. There is a certain amount of murderous aggressiveness in all of us manifested in different ways. In this country, the Yanks hate the Dodgers and the University hates Clemson for a day or two at a time. But we take our aggressiveness out with rough sports. They have fun killing each other.”

“This is the day we hate Carolina, and the two teams will fight for being the big boys in the state for a year.”

The fair determined all sorts of championships. The football field was close to the fair where the best rooster, pigs, and other farm animals were judged. In Dirty Dan’s opinion, judging breeding animals was more important than football, and he didn’t go to the game, preferring to wander around the animal area, matching his view of the best animal compared to the judge’s opinions. Lucien Vane didn’t give a damn about football or cows and stayed home.

The game itself was dull, and our top-notch freshmen couldn’t play in spite of this. Quarterback Pearson led Clemson to a 19-0 win. End Walter Okurowski didn’t play exceptionally well, and I had to clean his room as a freshman and was not unhappy to see him kicked around a little.

Following the game, I elected to see Aunt Etta, my mother’s sister, who lived on Southwood Road not far from the field. I hired a taxi to see Aunt Etta and her children, Carolyn and Raymond. She was happy and cordial even though things did not go well. She told us about her latest near disaster.
“Junior,” she said, “I know that you can hardly believe this, but driving home after shopping for groceries, I saw a light flashing, a bell ringing, and a pair of black and white warnings swinging down. I wondered what the confusion was all about and continued on my way, crossing the track just under the warning signals and just before a freight train roared down the track. I had been over this route a thousand times and never seen a train on this track before.”

Shortly after this, realizing that she was too senile to drive, she admitted herself to a nursing home. Even there, she never lost her sense of humor.

After the visit, she drove me to the Jefferson Hotel, where I joined the crowd of slightly-to-very-drunk cadets celebrating the win. After all, this had been the Clemson-Carolina game, and drinking was a ritual, celebrating the fact that we were the football champions of the state.

I searched out Hertz in the mob, and we gathered his passengers and started the trip back home. The season was over, there wasn’t much talk, and we spent the time mostly speculating about Europe and the chances of getting drawn into that war. News from Europe was neither voluminous nor informative, so much was left to speculation, chiefly, of course, whether or not we would be drawn into the European conflict. The majority believed that it was their problem, not ours, and that we should go on with our civilian careers. We were aware of Japanese aggression in the east, but we believed that distance negated any sort of conflict.
“I really wonder what this antagonism is all about”

“Lucien Vane had told me he had a friend in Germany who wrote to him from time to time and told him that even in Germany he doesn’t know what is what. The only thing is that Hitler is gaining control of the country and everybody else is kissing his ass or getting shot. Hitler wants all the world to adopt Nazism. The relationships between France and England, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Austria are so complex that the future is bad but otherwise unpredictable.”

“Holy cow!” came from Sottile. “That’s the best lecture in politics and economics I ever heard. But it doesn’t help me decide whether I’ll be drinking French wine next year or getting stewed in Charleston on the same old stuff.”

Hertz opined, “I don’t mind drinking champagne, but Japanese alcohol might give you the slant eyes and I don’t know how women would like it if your eyes were Japanese and the rest of you weren’t.”

“Quit worrying,” said Sottile. “Any change in your puss would be an improvement. I haven’t seen anyone from Hollywood poking around the campus looking for a star in their next blockbuster.”

“Give ‘em time,” said Hertz. “There are a lot of good-looking guys around, and, sooner or later, they’ll recognize this sexy face. At least, I hope some gal will.”

“Did you guys know that recruiting officers from the air force have been in the gym talking to all members of the boxing team about joining the air force? I guess the government is taking...”
the European mess seriously. Boselli, the Brady brothers, and Driesbach seem interested. I sure as hell am not going to be trapped in a fighter plane unless I’m drafted. The thought of going through fighting maneuvers makes me nauseated. But, thankfully, there are those guys who either haven’t thought much about flying and have flown and liked it and think that we will have a superb air force once one is built. At least, we’re thinking about building one.”

Buster Brown couldn’t have disagreed with me more. “The thought of crawling through mud and burying your own stool turns me off. One thing about the air force is, it may be dangerous, but fundamentally it is clean. I can have a shower every day if I’m stationed at almost any base. I can eat meals at a table, not in a trench or mud puddle somewhere in France. The thought of flying, and I have done a little before, I find exciting.”

Salvadore Sottile spoke up for the navy almost for the same reason as did Buster Brown for the air force.

“None of you guys talk about fighting in the Far East. Those guys are well-prepared, well-armed, and vicious. I would commit suicide if the threat to be captured by Japanese troops was imminent. The thought of invading the Japanese mainland frightens me. They kill for the love of killing and usually find a vicious way to do it,” said Hertz.

“Well,” I interrupted, “we won’t have much choice as to where we want to go. Where I want to be is at a team reunion after the war, preferably in the ’50s. But wherever we go or whatever we do, we’ll have an armed force that will not be a set-up for anyone, no matter how well trained or armed they are. Like all of us, we might not like what we are doing, but we’ll do it damn well.”

I was concerned but not confident.

If you loved football and the stimulation of being with a crowd, Clemson was the place to be. As with any college, there were multiple minor activities (except fraternities, which were not allowed) but none except The Tiger interested me.
I was homesick for Charleston and asked my parents for a bus ticket for a long weekend. They sent the funds, and I thought it might be fun to have stimulating company such as Lucien Vane. He’d never been to my home town, and I wanted to see his reaction to a colorful but largely disheveled city. Times seemed to be getting better, but painting a house was still a major economic undertaking.

He accepted the invitation. “You know, I’ve always wondered why Charleston, with less than a hundred thousand population, is known around the United States as a major city. You don’t manufacture much except fertilizer. There aren’t many people nationally recognized except a few politicians or writers like Dubose Heyward. There aren’t any major holidays like the Mardi Gras. What is your thing?”

“I’ll try to show you over the weekend and hope you’ll enjoy your visit even though I’m sure you’ll find a lot of faults.”

So we took the bus in front of Hoke Sloan’s men’s store.

“Where I took history, the only thing I learned about Charleston was that your troops attacked a fort in the harbor to start the War Between the States. It always seemed ridiculous reasoning to try and split the United States and, as a matter of fact, it seemed the major reason for the war, in spite of elegant presentations before the legislature, that whites intensely worked to keep blacks from any political position of consequence, although this was never mentioned in the hundreds of bills considered by the legislature. Perhaps I’ll find something other than stupidity and prejudice started the awful mess the war became.”

I said, “I hope so, but you won’t find many who will agree with you.”

The bus progressed through the hills, then flat land, and finally pulled into the bus stop on Society Street where my parents welcomed us. We were taken to our home on Rutledge Avenue and settled down for the night.

My problem was how to present the city to him in two days. I elected to show him Fort Sumter and Fort Johnson last to avoid controversy during the entire trip. We started by walking to the Sword Gate house that epitomized old Charleston and was
surrounded by residences of the same vintage, many occupied by
families who had lived in them for generations. Lucien Vane was
intrigued by the architecture and all the porches, some running
parallel to the street, others horizontal. He was most interested in
the lack of paint and the middle-class appearance of Charleston’s
most exclusive residential section.

John Buist wandered by on Church Street and said,
“Howdy.”

“Howdy,” I inquired.

“Where you headed, John?” I inquired.
“Just going to see a cousin on Tradd Street,” he replied.
I introduced Lucien Vane, and they shook hands, with John
saying, “Hope you enjoy your visit to our dilapidated homes. We
are working on it, and, if you come back in ten years, we’ll be
prettier.”

Lucien Vane thanked John for his greeting as John walked
away to see his cousin.

“Many people related to each other in this part of town?”
Lucien inquired.

“As a matter of fact, yes,” I replied. “Most of them first
settled on indigo farms. Many of them still own the land, planting
cotton or something other than indigo. They then moved their
commercial interests to town. ‘Most everybody is related to ev-
everybody else. Their society is hard to crack unless you’re a multi-
millionaire from somewhere else. Most belong to St. Michael’s or
St. Phillip’s churches. Their social year is capped by the St. Cecilia
Ball attended by members of these and a few other old churches.
Almost everyone else in town is excluded. Relations with each
other are more important than paint on the house.”

“I lived in Atlanta for a while,” he said, “and social status
depended on money. If you lost your bank account, invitations to
parties stopped, and there was no waiting a generation or two
until you recouped. One of the things that makes Charleston
unique is that even though, at the moment, you are broke, social
status remains the same, and if your forebears could make a for-
tune, you’ve the ability to repeat.”

“Still,” I opined, “these loosely bound people make life
comfortable for the rest of us who pay little attention to those
sequestered down town.”

We walked to Broad Street and took a look at St. Michael’s church, beautifully designed and in good repair, and St. Phillip’s, just as well kept, the two being the center of the old Charlestonian elite.

I pointed out City Hall, the courthouse, the post office, and St. Michael’s as the four corners of the law. This made little impression on him.

We then went to the battery, the waterfront area from which Ft. Johnson and Ft. Sumter could be seen. He asked where the various forts were. I pointed to the right toward Ft. Johnson and toward the center of the harbor, the general direction of the strongholds from which the first firing of the Civil War began. The confederates struck the match on Ft. Johnson. That led to the fire that could have meant the death of the United States.

Lucien said, “I lived in Atlanta, but grew up in New York, believing that the conflagration was unnecessary and, in fact, stupid. The South had nothing to gain, except slaves to till their fields and an agricultural community inherited from their forebears and little else. There was no logical reason why they should have anticipated anything but defeat.”

“You know perfectly well that many issues including states’ rights were involved, that the Southern way of life had consolidated over the years and was uniformly supported by all Southerners.”

He replied, “No other issue superseded cheap labor as the cause of the war and the end of slavery, and the freeing of slaves would have been the end of a way of life with no possible immediate replacement. It could have been predicted that defeat of the South would end in poverty and total misery. Any animal will fight for survival, and I wouldn’t call their effort noble but a fight for a way of life that, had it succeeded, would have been a disaster for the progress of civilization.”

“I’ll tell you, Lucien, continuing this conversation can only result in bitterness between us. Let’s say we call it off for the present and perhaps continue it in the future, when I am not too angry to be completely rational.”
“Fine,” he replied, “but, believe it or not, I am as upset about the Southern attitude as you are about the Northern.”

We continued our walk down the battery, gazing across the harbor to James Island, then down Rutledge Avenue to number 11. My mother inquired, “Lucien, how did you enjoy the trip?”

“Mrs. Williams,” he replied, “the city is unusual and lovely. I can’t say as much for your loyalty to the confederacy.”

“First of all,” replied my father, “I can understand your disagreement with a war that is unnecessary and illogical. The thing that you cannot understand is civilized people trapped in a war that promoted slavery, fought by many Southerners who disagreed with the principle of slavery.

“In upper South Carolina, most of the people were at least distantly related to each other, and perhaps for that reason alone they believed that the land was theirs. Why, they reasoned, should a man born in Poland have anything to do with a foot of land in Oconee County? In the southern part of the state, it was very much the same. Charlestonians came because of land deeded to them by the King of England. Most of them were umpteenth cousins. Moreover, since black female slaves were often sex partners of the young whites, many of their children passed as whites, at least after a few generations. I suspect that most of the Southern families are in small part black but have stuck that fact in the remote hinterland of their memories.

“Moreover, the upper and lower South Carolinians mostly considered themselves Carolinians, Southerners and members of the Union in that order. States rights became an emotional issue and the firing on Ft. Sumter an irrational act. They fought for their philosophical identity, not for slavery. This is difficult for you, growing up in a different culture, to understand.

“As far as the present attitudes go, how can we denigrate our forebears who fought for their dignity and their rights as they saw them? I am proud of the fact that my grandfather rode with Stuart’s calvary and, after he was injured in an accident caused by a horse falling on him, came to James Island and acted as a nurse for the Confederate soldiers there. He did not believe in slavery. He was a farmer who had bought slaves, gave them all their free-
dom, and hired them to work on his farm in Camden.

“We did fight a good fight against a more powerful oppo-
nent.”

“Thank you,” Lucien replied, “but, the present response
above the Mason-Dixon line, if they heard your arguments, might
meet with a more kindly but still disapproving response.”

“Time will eventually obliterate bitterness that will be to-
tally forgotten.”

After a fried chicken and rice dinner, we headed for the
bus. No more was said about North-South attitudes.
CHAPTER SEVEN:
“TIMES WERE GRADUALLY IMPROVING . . .”

We got off the bus about the same time that Bill Lippincott left the drugstore with an ice cream cone in his hand. “Hi, Dr. Lippincott,” I hailed. “What’s new in Clemson?”

“Can’t say there’s anything worth remarking upon,” he answered. “Where you guys been?”

“In the old home town, Charleston, showing my friend, Lucien, the philosophy of the confederacy.”

“Well,” said Bill, “that was an unnecessary mess that became a tragedy. We’ve talked about the percent of evil in people manifested in various ways. The South seemed to have consolidated their evil all against the North. No sensible man could possibly believe that slavery was a proper part of this country. But if they spoke against it, their neighbors would not speak to them. It was a self-induced hysteria that could only lead to many deaths,
North and South, but the South had no chance at all of beating a highly industrialized region that housed most of the industry in the country. And the South? An agricultural slave culture that should have been the shame of the people who operated it. The blacks did the work, and the whites made the money. I would have thought that all the issues would have been settled by now, but greed and this crazy mass hysteria can only lead to destruction of the South as we know it.

“They were courageous and probably brave fighters, but it has been centuries since that’s made any difference. All wars are won with armaments, and the South could manufacture only relatively small amounts of it, and I can’t imagine what they were thinking of.

“Worse than the war was a recovery period with no money to pay people who used to be slaves. There wasn’t adequate industry so there was not adequate money.”

“Lucien had been impressed with poor upkeep on houses even in what is called the elite part of town,” I interposed, “but what did Charleston look like after it had been shelled?”

The day of our return highlighted the ROTC, and the cadet colonels were the men of the hour. There was a parade with Alex Graham, head of the formation, followed by all of the cadet
Tales of Clemson

colonels, none of whom I knew very well. The corps marched by presenting arms in front of the main building, where the companies became individuals again. I participated, wondering what we had accomplished.

Times were gradually improving. Manufacturing had begun to turn around from survival to recovery. A few more students had cars on the campus. Airplanes were becoming faster and deadlier. It was obvious that the next war would be fought with machines and new weapons. The skills to employ these weapons in battle required weeks, not four years. There would be man-to-man fighting, but that, too, depended on discipline developed in a short time.

The parades and, as a matter of fact, the whole ROTC was passé, and future combat depended on this technical know-how and the superiority of equipment. Individual battles were bloody, but the time devoted by the ROTC was largely wasted.

The only minor news in Clemson was that Waters had been arrested in Anderson for fighting and had been released chiefly on the basis of his being a Clemson student. I suspect that most students would have sentenced him to life in Anderson.

So that night was a night for tail beating. Most cadets accepted this as part of living and had little reaction to the humiliation, like a pauper who accustomed himself to “that’s the way things should be.” Then, there were the hyper-reactors, furious at having someone beat them with a board. That night Charlie Bryan told him, “Mr. Waters, I’m from Johns Island, and we raise a lot of cotton and pigs. It was my chore in the family to slaughter the pigs. I know how to.”

Waters stared, unbelievingly, at Charlie. He started to talk, thought better of it and walked away.

The rest of us, not knowing what to say, walked to our rooms where we cheered for Charlie and wondered why one of us had not previously called his bluff. Talk in our rooms brought up the old questions. Are we following Clemson tradition? Are we
subjecting ourselves to an unsuccessful battering? Most thought hazing to be of no value and should be abolished, certainly in its physical form.

It was decided, as the discussion rolled on, that war could not be avoided. The pressures, economic and physical, had gone beyond any peaceful solution. France and Belgium had asked for alliance with England to prevent German invasion but no solution had been reached.

With that, Waters stalked into the room and reasonable conversation stopped. “You guys see what happened out there?” he began. “You know I could have whipped Charlie’s ass but didn’t want to interrupt long roll. But I’ll get him.”

Ike Grimball advised him, “I’m sure you will, but remember that Charlie is 5 feet 11 inches and weighs in above some of his hogs and, as he says, is an expert in managing animals. If I were you, I’d think twice before tackling that guy.”

The rest of us nodded in agreement.

The revolt against Waters had begun.

At the next long roll, Waters swung with less force, except when the smaller cadets like Lucien Vane came down the line.

Ike opined that every group had its sadists who had to hurt or kill someone. In Europe, killing in absolutely inconsequential battles was a murderous way to get their kicks. Here, satisfaction was obtained by slamming into a man running with a football or throwing a baseball toward a batter’s head or stepping on a basketball shooter’s forward foot, or beating an opponent with a paddle but leaving him uninjured.

Following the rules of war or peace dictated what could or could not be done, depending largely upon geography.

Shooting at a bull’s-eye was the same as shooting at a head, hiking and calisthenics generated the same strength needed for hand-to-hand combat. The discipline for combat could be developed over a period of weeks, not four years.

The powerful urge for survival didn’t need teaching. This is God-given to us all.

∞
The social system at Clemson, as at other military schools that aped West Point, depended upon rank. The top of the heap was Alex Graham. I first heard of Alex, who had been a high school leader, at the beginning of his freshman year at Clemson. Roy Pearce, the Brady brothers, and a large group from Columbia promoted Alex as head of the freshman class. I expected to find him aggressive and self-promoting but found instead an intelligent, handsome man. Had I been from Columbia, I would have supported him. As it was, I voted for him.

The lowest men on the social scale were the senior privates. The only one I knew well had been our next-door neighbor in Charleston and was the son of the principal of Charleston High School. Heaven only knows how Henry had acquired the post of the lowest man on the totem pole. Maybe he had led a regiment up the wrong hill twice or, more likely, had a difference of opinion with an important member of the administration. He didn't seem to mind, however, had a satisfactory senior year, and later became a successful businessman.

I remember one parade with Alex in front of the corps and his sycophants at his side. When the parade passed a visiting dignitary, the colonel and lieutenant colonels pulled their swords out of their scabbards as they passed the visitor, all but one (I do not mention his name because it must still be an embarrassing thought to him). He struggled with the sword, but it remained stuck. Later, it was discovered that someone had glued the sword to the scabbard. Strohecker was suspected, but the perpetrator of the crime was never found.

The area around Clemson was lovely. Low, rounded hills, mountains in the distance could be seen through a light haze, all creating a memorable setting. John C. Calhoun had built his home there because of the setting, his home later becoming part of the college campus. Unfortunately, in the relatively carefree days in the late 1930's, most of the cadets were exposed only to the campus itself and saw little of this surrounding beauty. I was seldom ever more than ten miles away, and as part of the Block C club initiation, I was left once at that distance dressed only in my un-
derwear to try to get back to campus. I was fortunate in spending some weekends at Bill Lippincott’s home in the mountains. The campus itself was used for the usual things that engage a military college although, once in a while, something extraordinary occurred.

One day, for example, I was attracted by a commotion behind me while drilling and was astonished to look back just as Lucien Vane threw a remarkable hard right hand that landed on Waters’ jaw and landed him on his backside. The confusion was quickly cleared by cadet officers, and the drill went on.

Later, Waters and Lucien Vane Rogers were court-martialed. Waters was confined to the campus for the semester. Rogers was not disciplined.

Later, I talked to Lucien Vane in his room. “My God!” I exclaimed. “How in the world did you deck Waters?”

“When I was a child, I was teased unmercifully about high grades and poor physical ability. I was a bookworm and had no close relationship with anyone in my age group. It was impossible for me to become closer to other students who were fascinated by physical activity from ‘Kick the Can’ to football. Their goals were to excel at something physical and make a passing grade. The few students with good grades and poor athletic ability were not part of the team.

“The time finally came to retaliate. I started boxing and calisthenics in the local YMCA and, for a while, was as compulsive as with my usual activities. I did win my weight in the Atlanta Golden Gloves. At that point, teasing became less, and I pursued my usual interests.

“I will talk to him, will not apologize, but will suggest that life would be easier for him if he found himself acting less like a bum and more like a member of the human race. There must be a reason for his unreasonable actions, but that is his business, not mine.”

Dr. Sikes had been president of the school for years. He
kept a low profile, spoke softly and, so far as I know, had no practical jokes directed toward him. In high school, students loaded the rear of a particularly austere faculty member’s car with fireworks. As he started the car, they started to explode in the back seat. To the disappointment of the students, Mr. McLaughlin, our Latin teacher, showed no reaction and drove quietly away. Dr. Sikes was not only austere but had the students’ well-being in mind, and none of us would be crude enough for a practical joke.

Dr. Sikes had a similar response when he had been his own victim. He was talking to a thousand or so students, and things went well for five minutes or so. At that point, the president’s upper plate fell out. He recovered it with one swipe across his chest where it had fallen, and adeptly replaced it where it belonged. Dr. Sikes went on with his talk with no comment about the incident, and there was no reaction from the students.

Dr. Sikes

Lucien Vane believed that the student-body’s reaction typi-
fied the sort of man who should be president.

After the talk, I went to the mail room. I was known chiefly on the campus as the mail man, throwing letters as I read the name, from the second floor of second barracks, and, miraculously there were few complaints. The only major fuss that day was from Lucien Vane who thought that a letter he was waiting for had been lost. We searched the room that Mrs. Goodman’s (the mail director’s) emissary left the letters in but were unsuccessful.

Lucien Vane remained upset. I imagined that the letter must have been of unusual importance, probably containing money, but was puzzled by his unusual and aggressive emotional reaction. “Whatever it is, it will probably come tomorrow.” He replied that he hoped so, but that if it didn’t, he would have to bring the matter to the attention of the Post Office Department, regarding a system that was crude and ineffective.

I was still puzzled by his reaction when he had not fussed during the preceding years. I was upset enough to talk to Earl Mazo, who took the matter seriously and thought that we might get advice and probably reassurance from the chief advisor of the paper’s reporters and editors.

Dr. John Lane taught English, but, as with other superb teachers, he taught speaking, writing, and a love of literature and culture in general. Most important, he was able to develop rapport with the students and advise them about life’s problems.

When we arrived at Dr. Lane’s home, he was playing the old straight-backed piano inherited from his father and used to help pass the time of day.

We were greeted with, “Hi, Earl and Art. What brings you?”

I outlined Lucien Vane’s reaction to the missing letter, contrasting this with his moderate reaction to everything else we’d discussed with him during the last few years. I asked whether anything needed to be done to investigate his outburst.

He replied, “It doesn’t seem that you have a problem, but he might. The letter may have contained money, a letter from his girl, or any number of things. If your concern continues, I would suggest that you talk to Mrs. Goodman and have her ask the Post
Office to look into the matter. In any case, the problem is his and possibly the Post Office Department’s.”

Late that night, Lucien Vane came into my room. “As you know,” he said, “I receive mail from Germany from time to time. Usually it is the sort of news that we have talked about, the Jewish problem, European politics, and so on. Last week I received a letter that my brother, with whom I am very close, was wounded in Spain and that word regarding his condition would follow this week. The implication was that he was seriously hurt. When no news arrived today, I went out of control.

“But that is the sort of thing war brings: depression, uncertainty, and hysteria. Today I became hysterical, but, war being what it is, I have to wait for news from Europe. I am ashamed of my lapse in self-control and can promise that it will not be repeated.”

“I understand your reaction,” I replied, “but no harm has been done. Most of us will sympathize with you, and all of us wish your brother well. If you should need support, call us. Tragedy is not best faced alone and, though there is little that we can do, feel assured that you have friends who might help in sharing your difficulties. The best thing to do about this morning, in my opinion, is try and forget it and remember that there are many of us who sympathize with you and will do what we can to help.

At the beginning of my senior year, I finally was appointed to a position of command, captain of a company quartered in temporary barracks. My tenure of office was the football season, after which Walter Okurowski, a full captain and linesman on the team, would replace me. I was astounded that those in authority would place that much trust in me after the “going up the wrong hill” episode. My temporary captaincy proved to be a pleasant time.

My duties were to see that everyone was where they belonged at long roll, leading the company in parades, attending meetings at which only ROTC officers were welcome, seeing that
rooms were well-kept and other minor matters. As unnecessary as I thought the ROTC to be, this was a boost to my ego, though everything returned to normal when Okurowski took over after football season.

Having nothing else to do, I took “snap” courses in sociology, botany under Frog Ware, who was a bird enthusiast and who banded, with the help of students, heaven knows how many birds in the course of a year and, perhaps with even more ardor, identified his banded birds the following spring.

These courses and others like them were utilized by those who needed reasonable grades to maintain academic eligibility. Important to me was the fact that they gave enough credits so that my graduation came in January, instead of June.

My romance during the year was Tirzah McAlpine, who was one of the world’s nicest people and lived to play bridge. She and her friend, Margaret McCollum, played daily so that I had to learn the game and became reasonably capable but never lifted a card after leaving college.

The undoubted leader of local bridge buffs was Dr. Huff who probably had a first name but nobody used it. He taught physics and was thorough, humorless, and probably a genius or bordering on that category. His preparation for a bridge game was unusual, and only he could have devised it. I was honored to be invited on a bridge preparation field trip.

We went into the hills nearby and gathered flowers. A surprising number of orchids grew near Clemson and in the nearby mountains Huff’s chief targets were Lady Fringe or one of the other orchids to decorate his bridge table. A number of other flowers complemented the orchids. The next step in preparation required strawberries. These were not just dumped into a bowl but arranged on a platter in the form of a giant strawberry, tediously arranged in layers that got smaller from bottom to top, each strawberry tediously placed. The orchids and other flowers were arranged around the pyramid on a table near the bridge table.

Huff was a perpetual winner of the bridge game, being able to recall everyone’s hand in sequence from the previous weeks.

During the course of my card-playing career, I became a
minor employee of the Registrar’s Office, working under Gus Metz. The only significant event during my career as Assistant Registrar occurred one day when a secretary yelled, “Arthur!” I thought that I had probably been fired, but it happened that my diploma had worked its way through the bureaucracy and landed in the Registrar’s Office. “This is yours,” she said as she handed me the diploma. This was probably the world’s shortest graduation ceremony.

I was now formally a graduate, a position even more influential than the cadet colonel’s.

I gave myself an award, a trip to Charleston, and because of his work with me playing bridge, invited Huff to visit. A second reason was his love of flowers, for the gardens were in bloom.

Even away from school, Huff could speak only of bridge, flowers and physics. Neither of my parents was high school graduate and both knew little about Huff’s loves. So conversation was
skimpy. To satisfy his love of flowers, we went to Magnolia Gardens, which were in full bloom on a lovely day. New rustic wooden bridges had been built over canal lines with azaleas and other flowers. Huff was intrigued by the bridges that were made of unpainted wood and were colorful unto themselves. He was intrigued by the various preservatives that might have been used on the wood, the probable methods of impregnating the wood and the methods of holding what appeared to be loose branches to form the structures. He appeared uninterested in the masses of flowers. Certainly, he thought the orchids in the hills around Clemson to be lovelier.

When we returned home, my parents didn’t know how to handle this character, so my father excused himself because of an impending insurance sale and my mother had to leave to play a most important game of Mah Jong. Consequently, we went back to Clemson the next morning, where everyone felt more comfortable.

I was fortunate enough to have rented a room from Mrs. Goodman, the postmistress. She was middle-aged, always well-groomed and efficient. Her hobby was her flower garden. Asked if anything had come of Lucien Vane’s outbursts about his missing letter, she said that she had contacted the Post Office and had heard nothing from them. He had rented a post office box and would no longer be bothered by the sloppy practice of my throwing mail from the second floor.

The rest of my time at Clemson was spent drinking soft drinks at McCollum’s, dating Tirzah, and wandering around the campus to see parts that I had no occasion to visit as a student. I even volunteered to visit the cow barn at awkward times, usually at night, to tend to the cows with milk fever by giving them calcium gluconate and watching them quickly regain their strength. This was my only medical activity prior to medical school. In general, life as a minor assistant to the Registrar was a bore.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
LAST WORDS: "FROM RABBITS TO REASONS"

But life picked up with an invitation from Bill Lippincott to Highlands. This time, however, I was invited as a faculty member, not a student who was a first string basketball player. The other faculty had not changed and the conversation with local men continued to center around guns, birds and rabbits.

"Hey," said Dr. Hunter, "you use a shotgun on squirrels? All I've ever used was a 21."

"I can understand why," replied a local inhabitant. "We shoot to eat. There's no Piggly Wiggly nearby, and if there were, we couldn't afford to buy much. But don't think that we are deprived. Homemade bread would cost a fortune if you could buy it, but you can't. Mountain apples are the best in the world and we don't have a mess of people curious about everything we do. We
live like we do because we like it. Bill has a house on this mountain because he thinks that living here is good, and I’ll bet that if he quit teaching, he’d live right here.”

While the talking was going on, I was busy eating steak cooked by a 6-foot-5-inch basketball player who was having as nice a time as I did way back yonder when I was a student. He had one advantage. Because of his height, he got the big bed with the thick quilts, and I was demoted to a smaller bed and shared a toilet with the rest of the faculty.

So the conversation went from rabbits to reasons for fluctuations in Coca-Cola stock. Peter Carodemus, a chemistry teacher, heard that Waters, by now a graduate student, was in trouble with the administration. I was not aware of the details. I wondered, of course, why he had not had trouble before but, remembering my black and blue bottom from my freshman year, was not unhappy that Waters was in trouble.

Dr. Hunter added that he remembered that Waters was a bully and troublemaker who knew whom to bully and to whom to kowtow. Bill remarked that Waters had tried to pass chemistry by catering to his instructor but, actually being bright, passed the course by the skin of his teeth.

The conversation went on for an hour or so when everyone decided that sleep was in order. In spite of the fact that I no longer had the room of honor, I slept well and awoke in time to take a walk around the lake before breakfast and return to school.

The next morning, things in the Registrar’s Office seemed the same, an efficient organization created by Gus Metz. There was no talk of Waters, who, after all, was one of many cadets in trouble for one thing or another, from theft to raising cain after long roll.

Late in the afternoon, Tirzah had organized a bridge game with a couple from Atlanta. The man had been sent by the Postal Service to be certain that the Lucien Vane Rogers mail incident had been thoroughly investigated. He admitted that the Rogers’ incident was minor trouble but that it was the responsibility of the school to take action.

The afternoon went along pleasantly enough, but I was
still curious to find out what the investigator knew about the case. After the bridge game, Tirzah and I dropped by McCollum's drugstore and ice cream parlor. Margaret McCollum was working and wanted to know whether we had heard the news. Extracting information from her was like pulling a tooth, slowly. She knew that we were anxious to find out what happened, and gossip in the drugstore furnished more information than the investigator could. The truth seemed to be that Waters was seen entering Rogers’ room while he was out, searching the room and finding a key in it. Waters believed that the key was somehow related to the affairs of the school. Waters reported this finding to his company commander, who promptly gave the key to the administration.

All of the drugstore gossip proved to be true. Waters had, indeed, ransacked the room until he found the letter and the key and gave it to his company commander. He told the reviewing officers that all of the story was true. However, he said, his only motivation was to save the school embarrassment, though he was vague when it came to what sort of embarrassment a cadet might cause, even if he knew more than his teachers. Waters was asked whether being knocked down was reason for vengeance. He replied that he did not hold grudges and that, of course, the parade episode had nothing to do with robbing the room.

The testimony of his company mates was all negative, indicating that he was a domineering bully who would get by with whatever opportunity be found. In due course, he was dismissed from Clemson. During the trial he had no defenders. Tirzah and our bridge-playing friends were all for Lucien Vane. During the trial, Lucien Vane was subject to considerable stress because of the mysterious key that, it was rumored, might somehow damage Clemson's reputation.

I talked to Lucien Vane during his inquisition, and he said, “I have done nothing wrong and am accustomed to students’ reactions to rumor. This sort of behavior caused me to increase my strength (that only you know about). None of them have accused me of anything but have protected themselves from association with a possible criminal. I am, of course, unhappy that my classmates and I are even further alienated, but that will disappear with
Once Waters was dismissed, all investigation came to an end. There was no mention of the cadet who fell from his barracks window. That had been forgotten, and I was the only member of the corps who knew what might have happened, but that will always remain my secret postulation.

Finally, the months of working with the registrar and playing bridge with Tirzah, Huff and Margaret were over and it was time to get ready for medicine.

Someone once asked why I went to medical school. For I did not have a burning desire to be a doctor; rather, it was because the hodgepodge of courses that I elected made me eligible to study medicine. Moreover, there was nothing else I was interested in.
So I left Clemson well prepared for graduate work though irritated by the fact that the school was nationally known only for its athletic teams. Academically, however, then and now, the school is tops, and much of the country runs on expertise originating there.

Tirzah and I remained friends and nothing more, chiefly because of irreconcilable religious differences.

Lucien Vane finished first in our class and disappeared. I have not heard from him since.

Shortly after I left Clemson, Bill Lippincott suddenly died. He was responsible for good advice as well as those memorable times in the mountains.

I have never returned.
Appendix
Appendix

Several Highlights from the Sports-writing Career of the Author

Prologue by a Former Tiger Editor

As a life-long friend and admirer of Arthur Williams, I’m delighted that he has written a sequel to his fine memoir, Tales of Charleston 1930’s. Arthur’s experience at Clemson was unique in that he was an honor student, an outstanding sports figure, and a leader in extracurricular matters—all at once.
My favorite “Arthur Story” involves The Tiger, Clemson’s student newspaper.

Arthur was sports editor, probably the most unique one of that era. Not only did he see to the adequate coverage of football, basketball, and boxing (he was a star of the boxing team), but mostly he was the paper’s most avidly read columnist. You see, his was no ordinary sports column. In it he adequately covered the event; but then, mid-way, he would deviate to comment on ladies’ fashions, most notably what various spectators were wearing: their hats, skirts, make-up, and so forth. In short, his column was written from the supposed viewpoint of a female reporter. (There were no female students in the olden days!) And he wrote the column under the by-line of “Arthurina McGillicuddy.” To me and countless readers, it was hilarious.

Arthur Williams was a great classmate and is a terrific person. After Tales of Clemson 1936-1940, I look forward to a further sequel, on Arthur Williams, M.D. In his time he was a great doctor and an outstanding professor at The Medical University. He was a scientist whose accomplishments include a role in the development of the artificial kidney.

- Earl Mazo
Washington, D.C.
February 2002

[A s a nom de plume, A rthurina M cG illicuddy has a family history, not all of which will be obvious to readers in the 21st century. O n the distaff side of the genealogy, W illiams’ mother inadvertently contributed “A rthurina” when her son adapted his given name. The surname was not just a funny-sounding one current in contemporary theater and radio but derived, surely, from one of the patriarchs of baseball, C onnies M ack (i.e. C ornellius M cGillicuddy, 1862-1956). A s manager of the Philadelphia A thletics for nearly fifty years, M ack attained distinction with nine titles, five W orld S eries pennants, and the record for most wins in a lifetime (3,776). W ith sixty years in baseball, he also holds the record for losses (4,025) and total games managed (7,878). T he young sports editor’s ruse must have been transparent to the Tiger audience of 1938, just as they would have appreciated, aided by]
Winthrop Journalist Covers Tiger-Gamecock Classic For Local Sheet

By Arthurina McGillicuddy

The Clemson football team, beautifully dressed in purple and gold, defeated the handsome Carolina Gamecocks 34 to 12 in the simply glamorous state fair game.

The Carolina boys wore lovely silk red pants and yellow woolen sweaters. Clemson was stylishly garbed in the latest model purple sweatshirts, purple pants. The sweatshirts had egg-yellow stripes on the sleeves between the elbow and shoulder. Padded shoulders and hips seemed to be in vogue with both sets.

Mr. Alfred Grygo, of Columbia and Chicago, seemed to do most of the playing for the Carolina boys. He had brown, curly hair, hazel eyes, and looked adorable in his new suit.

Mr. Shad Bryant, an outstanding member of Clemson’s younger set, ran beautifully one time. He was escorted down the field by almost all of the members of the Clemson team. It has been rumored that Mr. Bryant is engaged to be married.

Carolina made one very unusual and spectacular touchdown. One of the cute Clemson boys batted the ball way up in the air when he was tackled so the Carolina boys couldn’t get it. But one of the Gamecocks jumped up, caught the ball and ran over the goal so fast that, really, none of the Clemson cadets could catch him.

Cigars seemed to be favored by the Carolina coaches, and chewing tobacco had the favor of the Clemson mentors.

Lukewarm Coca-Cola was served by members of the
Miss McGillicuddy Tells of “Precious” Wake Forest Game

By Arthurina McGillicuddy

Miss Tootsie Mackerulpuss gave a lovely coming-out party in Wake Forest last week. After the party, those still able to stagger attended the football game between Terrible Clemson Tigers and the Devilish Wake Forest Demons (we’re catching right on to the swing of this sports writing).

The party was very much of a success. Right at the very first of the football game, one guest, a Mr. Heffleblinger Herringbone, whose aunt is a third cousin to Mr. Aster’s second wife’s third husband, kept screaming, “Heil Hitt.” This nuisance was quickly stopped since Mister Herringbone had been imbibing
heavily of champagne, vintage 1911 (this is the very best champagne year that France has ever had).

**Such Awful Mud**

The playing field was soaked very heavily with mud, making it most difficult to detect the color and material of the uniforms.

A Mr. “Greaseball” Trunzo, who is associated with the “Trunzo Fruit Stand” in Chicago when he is not pursuing his studies in the south, seemed to enjoy the mud a great deal. He was a guard for the Devilish Demons, and every few moments he would break through the Clemson line, dash into the backfield, bump into Read Pearson, and sit down in the mud. He would slowly get up while he rolled a mudball at the same time. Then he would raise the mudball above his head and smash it into the ground. He did this many times, and seemed to enjoy it very much.

**Heil Hitt**

Unfortunately, our parasol began to leak at this point, and we were forced to bid Miss Mackerulpuss and her lovely friends farewell. As we left, the rain seemed to revive Mr. Herringbone a bit, and he said, “Heil Hitt.”

[Editor’s Note:— The coverage Miss Arthurina McGillicuddy made of the Clemson-Carolina game in the last issue of the Tiger received so many favorable comments that we have asked the young lady to serve us a little more. If her archs and nerves stand up she will “cover” all Clemson athletic contests henceforth. Miss McGillicuddy, we think, is a student at Winthrop. A prominent member of the local sheet’s staff invited her up for Tiger Ball last week-end, but when she got wind of the drastic “late date reforms” put into effect by the C.D.A. she didn’t come. And, incidentally, the Mr. Hitt mentioned in the above story is sports editor of the Charleston News and Courier, and a man who occasionally (humorously) mentions something about The Citadel’s claim on state football championship this year.]
November 10, 1938

**Miss McGillicuddy Remarks of Bald Heads and George Washington**

*By Arthurina McGillicuddy*

Following the beautiful interference and charging hard and low, I finally got through the gate of Sirrine Stadium and into the George Washington game. Mr. McMillan, the outstanding Sergeant Major of Clemson was our escort.

I was faced by a very difficult situation during the first half. The sun was from the west, and I was sitting on the east of Mr. McMillan, and his haircut being what it is, the sun was reflected into my eyes all the while. But by pointing, and giggling, I finally very courteously and gently let Mr. McMillan see what was happening, and he very kindly moved east and I went west.

Right across from us some boys and girls were sitting in the stands and cheering for George Washington. I asked my escort who they were, and he told me that he thought some prep school children must have come down with the Washington team to form a cheering section. “Oh no,” he finally said, “they must be from that little Furman place. Isn’t that in Greenville?” Never having heard much of Furman, I couldn’t answer.

The game was very simple. McFadden grabbed the ball and ran for a touchdown. Bryant grabbed the ball and ran for a touchdown. Everybody on Clemson’s team grabbed the ball and ran for touchdowns. So many boys made touchdowns that once, when George Washington made a long gain on a play, Coach Neely ran out on the
field and made the referee give George Washington the ball so they wouldn’t get discouraged, and so the Clemson men wouldn’t have to run for so many touchdowns.

One woman three rows down, and two seats to the right, had on a hat just like mine, but in spite of that the game was a great success.

[Editor’s Note:— Anyone knowing anything of the whereabouts of Furman College please write Arthurina, care of this paper. ]
Dr. Williams, who taught for many years in the nephrology division of The Medical University in Charleston, South Carolina, has published an account of the Jewish settlement in Charleston and of his experiences growing up there. That book of memoirs, Tales of Charleston 1930s (Charleston, SC: College of Charleston Library, in association with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina; 1999), is a complement to the present volume.