

In the Land of Jim Crow

By Ray Sprigle

Ray Sprigle, Pulitzer prize-winning reporter and staff member of "The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette," recently disguised himself as a Negro and for four weeks "lived black" in the South among his fellow Americans. This is the seventh of a series of twelve articles in which he presents his findings. Mr. Sprigle has changed the names of persons and places in some instances to protect those involved.

Black of the rich earth and green of the springing cotton plants stretch from horizon to horizon. This is the fabulous Mississippi Delta, last outpost of feudalism in America. Here is land more fertile than any other in the world. Here close to half a million Negroes toil from childhood to the grave in the service of King Cotton, from sunup to sundown if they share-crop, from 6 to 6 if they work by the day.

Here are feudal baronies that run from 5,000 to 20,000 acres, where as many as 6,000 share-cropper families, wives and children, parents and grandparents, follow the one-mule plow and the chopping hoe all their lives.

On these tight little Delta principalities "The Man" (landlord) is the middle justice, the high and the low. Mississippi law stops dead in its tracks at their boundaries. No sheriff, no peace officer takes a man, black or white, off these acres until "The Man" tells him he may.

Briefed on Tactics

Back in Jackson, the night before we started our expedition into the Delta, half a dozen Negro leaders briefed us on tactics, strategy and general behavior for our Delta tour as if we had been going into an occupied country to join the Underground.

"Don't talk to share-croppers either at work or along the roads." "Don't argue if a 'rider' stops you and asks questions. ("Riders," by the way, are the mounted patrols that plantation owners maintain as field foremen and general overseers. Mounted field foremen frequently are trusted Negroes. Overseers are white.)

In any event—whether because of the briefing or because our smiling brown faces aroused no suspicions—nothing happened.

We did stop one woman share-cropper near Scott, Miss., on the vast Delta Pine Land Company holdings. All we wanted was to find out where we were. The woman regarded us suspiciously and then started to give us road directions. Suddenly she broke off, slipped down the road embankment and disappeared.

We found out why when we heard a horn honk behind us. We had blocked the narrow road when we stopped and a Mississippi car with a couple of white men in it had pulled up behind us. That's what had scared the woman away. I didn't feel so good myself. But when we pulled out of the way the car rattled on.

All the Negro leaders I encountered insisted that Negro life in the Delta was not far past the days of slavery. I couldn't agree with them. In the first place, the Negro share-cropper or field hand can pull up stakes and leave whenever he wishes. No longer do deputy sheriffs pursue fleeing share-croppers and drag them back to the plow and hoe to work out their debts. The Federal Government broke that up ten years ago. But the Negroes still take no chances. I talked with one share-cropper who was getting ready to leave. He'd gotten his parents away on a "visit." He was planning to send his children away in a few days. A relative had sent him tickets to Chicago.

"Best way is to just leave quiet at night," he confided. "That way there just can't be any trouble."

Delta Negroes are undoubtedly cheated out of their eyeteeth by "The Man," but certainly not to the extent that their brethren in Georgia are. None of them ever sees a statement of the prices brought by their cotton or of supplies they have bought from the huge commissaries maintained by the plantation owners. But there are few of them who get less than \$500 cash at settlement time compared with Georgia. For one thing, the cheating is more honest here. It's the accepted Delta custom that the Negro gets about four cents less a pound for his cotton than "The Man" sells it for—so all the Negroes I talked to assured me.

Normally, life flows peacefully and uneventfully for the Delta Negro.

Seldom, almost never, does the Delta break into the headlines of

the nation with the sensational lynchings and wanton Negro murders that spatter the bloody record of Georgia and South Carolina. Your Delta Negro seldom has any trouble with his white folks. Or if he does, neither the trouble nor the Negro lasts very long.

Iron-Clad Despotism

Reason is that the Delta Negro lives under an iron-clad despotism so ruthless and so efficient that your ordinary share-cropper and field hand seldom comes in contact with it. In the Delta, the Negro not only "knows his place but he keeps it faithfully from childhood to old age. Or he never lives to reach old age. It's seldom that the white folks have to kill a Delta Negro. But when they do it's done quietly, and expeditiously. And there are no "political and civic" leagues as in Georgia to start raising hell about it, either. Even the remarkably efficient and almost omnipresent N. A. A. C. P. functions limpingly in Mississippi. The white folks see to that.

Typical of Delta Negro killings was one that a group of Negro friends in one of the little Delta towns told me of. A Negro undertaker happened to be calling on a Negro share-cropper to collect a small balance on a bill. A "rider," gun-hung like a one-man army, came galloping up. In the friendliest tone imaginable he called out: "Jim, I just had to kill that brother of yours down near his place. Better see to getting his body out of there"—and galloped off again.

The undertaker, right on the scene, got the body. Next day the Negro minister preached the funeral sermon. They put the dead man in the ground and that was that. No fuss, no questions.

No Negro votes in the Delta. In all Mississippi with its more than a million Negroes, not more than 10,000 vote and those only in the larger cities where selected handfuls of Negro leaders are permitted to go through the motions of voting. But Mississippi, like Georgia a few years ago, is having Supreme Court trouble when the folks try to kill a Negro by "due process" with a rigged jury.

So just recently the county officials of one of the Delta counties called in a Negro friend of mine. "Asa, we've got to make new arrangements," they told him. "We want about six Negroes we can trust. We'll let 'em register and vote so we can put 'em on the jury list."

"Supreme Court's held up hanging of a nigger down below Jackson because no Negroes were called

Patrons Give Name To Dining Room— For a Price

Have you ever wondered how the Rose Room, the Blue Room and other rooms named for every color of the rainbow, got their name? You may think that the owner's mother-in-law simply put her foot down and that was that.

Well, maybe so. But the Allencrest Tea Room is using a new angle. They've decided to let the guys and gals who dine there have the final say about the name for the newly-decorated room.

Furthermore, they're offering a \$10 prize for the best name submitted. The contest closes November 26. Everyone is invited down for a look-around and a chance to decide upon an appropriate name. Who knows? Maybe you'll be the winner.



Sonya Tilles and George Miller, shown as they appeared in leading roles in last weekend's Players' production of Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth."

Brunner to Lead FFA Music Group

Dr. Henry S. Brunner, professor of agricultural education, again has been named to direct the National FFA Band, inaugurated at last year's convention of the National Future Farmers of America.

Dr. Brunner, with Prof. Glenn Stephens, also of the department of agricultural education, left this week to attend the 20th Anniversary Convention of the group, to be held in Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 14 to 18.

This year's band includes 120 Future Farmers from 44 states, Pennsylvania having seven high school boys participating. The group will perform at several concerts and parades during the convention.

Professor Stephens, representing the College chapter of FFA, said that although receiving little attention at the annual conventions, the local chapter has been growing in size and scope of activities.

Hort Club Names New President

Louis Rave was elected president of the Hort Club to fill the vacancy caused when William Custer, former president, enlisted in the Navy. Rave was vice president of the club.

The new vice president is George Rosenkranz. Other club officers are George Teel, secretary, and Robert Calhoun, treasurer. William Wilson was elected as the new sophomore representative to Ag Student Council, and John Felty was added to the program committee.

Nightmare Gadget Lawn Sweeper

That vacuum sweeper you've seen on campus lately isn't the Rube Goldberg creation that it resembles.

The gadget is a highly efficient lawn sweeper that will do the work of six men in picking up the leaves, according to Walter E. Trainer, supervisor of landscaping.

Army Scientist Inspects Project

Dr. N. F. Beardsley, scientist for the U.S. Army Air Force, visited the College physics department Friday afternoon to inspect a research project now in progress.

The project, in charge of Dr. R. C. Raymond, associate professor of physics, is concerned with the development of equipment for measuring the transmission of atmosphere in the very long infra-red zone. This is the range between visual light waves and radar waves and is a comparatively unexplored field of research.

Dr. Beardsley, physicist for the Air Materiel Command of the U.S. Army Air Force, traveled here from Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, where his office is located. He visits the College every two months to confer with members of the physics department concerning government research projects.

Bowl Prospects

(Continued from page one)

that military reservation stuff," said Jones.

"I'm sure the SMU boys would love to meet Penn State again. As far as Penn State is concerned, some of the boys have been talking a bowl game since the first of the year."

ed for jury duty. We got to see that that can't happen here."

Who said Mississippi white folks wouldn't let Negroes vote?

Next: A Marble Monument to Cruelty.

Continuous Quality Is Quality You Trust



5¢ Plus 1¢ State Tax



Ask for it either way... both trade-marks mean the same thing.

BOTTLED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY BY Coca Cola Bottling Company of Altoona

© 1948. The Coca-Cola Company

There's MUSIC in the AIR

So why not make the Harmony Shop your headquarters for all musical supplies. You'll see what fine Christmas gifts our record albums and famous make, low-priced radios will make. Stop in today!

The Harmony Shop

THIS WEEK'S McCLELLAN'S SPECIAL 1940 PONTIAC 4-DOOR SEDAN

- New Rubber
- Good Paint
- One-Owner Car
- Must be seen to be appreciated

Always A Large Selection To Choose From

McCLELLAN CHEVROLET INC.

642 E. College Ave.

DIAL 6769