

Would wonder why he was stuck in that State
 Or strayed in a lapse of poetic pen,
 And could just, like you and me, curse his fate.
 But then, as winter's floods give way to sun,
 That muse, long fast asleep in the darkest night,
 Shakes a leg and says, "break the other one,"
 Rise up and give to poetry its right
 To place a form of beauty on dismay.
 Thus love and verse keep misery at bay.

SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT

January 18, 1999

Howard L. Tomb

William Faulkner, Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams write about a dominion dripping with the promise of forbidden fruit. A land foreign to the rest of us. A land of shadows, mystery and malignancy.

Welcome to Linden-population 2,500-the county seat for Marengo County, Alabama, somewhere in the southwestern part of the state. The Tombigbee River is the border between Marengo and Choctaw County to the west. The river starts a little above Eutaw (that's spelled E-U-T-A-W) and meanders slowly to the Gulf, just outside of Mobile.

The Tombigbee is shallow and, since the surrounding terrain is flat, there is water everywhere. The should along most county roads is almost nonexistent, as there is about a 4- or 5-foot drop on each side into swampy darkness. Furtive blue and gray herons patrol the murkiness. One can sense that drowned cypress trees are hiding nests of water moccasins, copperheads and rattlesnakes. The hardwood trees are shrouded with kudzu, so they bend unnaturally, tortured. The grayness is emphasized by Spanish moss draped from live oaks. Just before we came to the city limits of Linden, we saw two well-fed vultures ripping and devouring the carcass of a fawn.

There is only one traffic light in Linden, and it flashes amber intermittently. Champs, the supermarket, has been boarded up for years, and AJ's drygoods store is closed, too. Max's furniture store has smudged windows that obscure vinyl couches and pine chairs with chintz covers. A Chevron station is on the corner. Three churches are prominent by comparison-an AME Methodist, a Church of Christ and a Presbyterian. Because Linden is the county seat, there are three small regional banks.

We had lunch at The Depot Restaurant across the street from the stockyard. The meal was greasy and wonderful-barbecued pork sandwiches and onion rings slathered with gobs of congealed suet, washed down with enormous glasses of sweet iced tea. There are a few fast-food takeout places, like Kathy's Katfish Heaven, but no McDonald's, Burger King or KFC. Linden is strictly local.

Far and away the largest building is the yellow cinder block county courthouse, with its adjoining sheriff's office and new detention center. The old jail is to the west, across the street. It was too small to handle its guests. Although it has been vacant for less than a year, it is already falling prey to the encompassing dankness.

On the south side of Coats Road-directly facing the courthouse-is the office of the Democrat-Reporter, the weekly newspaper. There is a picture window looking out on the courthouse, where the editorial staff can keep an eye on the comings and goings of the county officials. The building itself is tiny and unimposing. The front office has two desks behind a counter, in the manner of an old-fashioned post office, with a small room off to the side, about the size of a guest bathroom. That's where editor and publisher Goodloe Sutton presides.

Jean, Goodloe's wife, is managing editor and chief reporter. They constitute the entire editorial staff of the Democrat-Reporter.

Goodloe looks amazing like Mole of Wind In The Willows. He's about 5'9", has thick round glasses, is

somewhat porcine in appearance, with tufts of unruly gray hair. He speaks with that deliberate, molasses Southern lilt designed for storytelling. Goodloe, when he is working always wears a tie, because he thinks it gives his position dignity. The day we talked, his cream-colored tie displayed three timberwolves looking out from a snowy forest. . .the knot was black. He doesn't look or act like Carl Bernstein, but he is.

Jean reminds one of an aging bobbysoxer: mouse-colored hair in a pageboy, gray wool skirt, navy blazer and brown penny loafers. She's a little on the heavy side, with a disarming smile and a forthright manner. No Wonder Woman here-but that was before Roger Davis was elected sheriff of Marengo County in 1990.

Roger Davis is formidable. He's 6'6", weighs 230 pounds and is a bully. Before he became sheriff he was an Alabama State Trooper for 27 years. He used to open the trunk of his cruiser and sell costume jewelry to folks he was about to arrest. If they bought, they walked. His last job for the state was to collect driver's licenses from people who had lost them because of a DUI conviction. He'd appear, ask for the license, and then offer it back for \$100, for \$500, for whatever he thought he could get. Davis was crooked, and there was little reason to think he'd reform. In fact, with a broader mandate he became greedier and more mendacious.

Jean Sutton kept getting tips of malfeasance from Sheriff Davis' staff members, employees and deputies. Some came from the Linden Police Department, who refused to go on joint investigations with the County Sheriff's Office for fear of personal bodily harm.

The sheriff had an unconscious nervous habit, so every time he lied he'd pull on his earlobe. Even when Davis was present in the room, Jean's sources would pull at their ears to indicate to her he wasn't telling the truth. He would lie when it wouldn't serve his own purpose. As Jean said, "Roger would rather peep in the window than knock on the door."

The first story about the possible corruption of Sheriff Davis was published in the Democrat-Reporter of

April 28, 1994. It revealed that three years earlier the sheriff had purchased for his 16-year-old adopted daughter a 4-wheel all-terrain vehicle from the Tombigbee Farm Equipment Company with a check written on the Sheriff's Department bank account. Jean got copies of the cancelled checks-one payable to the Tombigbee Farm Equipment Company and one, written seven days later, back to the County, which included the state sales tax for the vehicle-and published these next to the story on page one. Denial was hopeless. . .but no action was taken against the sheriff. Goodloe said, "It's like an embezzler who gets caught, returns the money, and walks away scott free. And that's what he did. Just as free as a bird."

Jean went on to say, "I've got no proof so we didn't publish it in the paper. I do know that Roger was a mean drunk, and it was said that he beat up his wife Pat pretty hard. After one particularly severe thrashing, she threatened to move out, but was placated by Roger letting her adopt a child, who turned out to be sixteen-year-old Amy who desperately needed a four-wheel-drive truck." Perhaps only Jerry Springer can tell us if a reformed drunk in his 50's has lust or maybe even love in his heart for a 16-year-old girl. Or, why do old men buy cars for young, pretty dumplings? Jean, being the professional she is, wouldn't comment.

Question: If you found out in 1992 that the sheriff had misappropriated county funds to buy the car, why didn't you report it then? Goodloe: "Because we found out about it after the fact, and he had already paid the money back. We didn't feel the story had the impact we'd like it to have, so just sat on it until we got another half dozen more stories the next year, and a half dozen more the year after that. You see, the 1994 election for sheriff was coming up, and things were getting real hot around Marengo County."

On May 5, 1994, the Democrat-Reporter revealed that Sheriff Davis was charging the West Alabama Mental Health Center for driving mental patients to hospitals for treatment. According to courthouse records, no previous sheriff had even charged the Mental Health Center for this type of service, because the Center is

a county-run agency. The sheriff demanded that the checks be made payable to him personally and not to his department. (Again, copies of the checks were shown on the front page of the paper.). The sheriff is quoted as saying that the monies were used for fish fries for his staff. Not one staff member could ever remember a fish fry or any other meal hosted by Davis.

The third bombshell was an audit that revealed Sheriff Davis had deposited drug enforcement money in his own account. He was forced to pay back over \$5,000. Drug enforcement money is loose by its very nature. The county doesn't write checks to informants; it pays cash. Transactions are noted and, eventually, audited. There was perhaps over \$100,000 that had been withdraw, and there was little accounting for any of it. What is known is that there was \$46,000 in the fund when Davis was first elected, and any new drug enforcement money was gone.

Pat Davis, Roger's wife, was the county clerk and signed the checks. On March 25, 1994, Mrs. David announced her retirement, effective March 29, 194, giving as a reason for her departure "nerves."

Jean Sutton said that from this point on Roger Davis hinted at things he knew about their children. "We have two boys-Goodloe, Jr. and William. Young Goodloe was going to Auburn, and William was 9. Davis said he had hard evidence that Goodloe, Jr. was a known druggie. Well, of course, he wasn't. His father would kill him. In any case, he was stopped by the Alabama State Troopers driving home from school. He may have been going over the speed limit-everyone does on the major highways-but he was just going with the flow of traffic. He was cited, and his license was taken away."

In and of itself, this incident doesn't seem very significant. But there was a whole pattern of harassment against the Sutton family:

Jean and I had gone to Faunsdale for supper on Friday evening in November of 1994. [Faunsdale has no Chevron or any gas station, no grocery store, only three double-wides and the Faunsdale

Bar and Grill.] We had probably a ribeye steak, and I had two Black Jacks. After eating I picked up a mint and popped it in my mouth, got in the car, put our seat belts on and put the cruise control at 55. About two or three miles south of Faunsdale I saw this car in my rearview mirror coming up fast. All of a sudden blue lights came on. I eased over to let him by, but he stopped behind me. We're on a real steep hill here, and he said, "Pull up where there's a better place to park." I did and he came up and noticed that we were buckled up and asked for my license. I gave it to him and for certain he couldn't smell alcohol, because I hadn't had much, had eaten a steak and after that had a mint. So I knew that there was no problem. He said, "Tag is expired." "I don't think so." [said Goodloe]. You see I wanted to take the ticket, because I wanted to go to court and ask him who told him to go after us. But Jean wouldn't have any of it. She just jumped all over that poor trooper. Told him the tag had not expired. That it was a business tag, and didn't expire until the end of November. But he wrote the ticket anyway. Monday morning she went over and talked with the judge, and he threw the ticket out. I said, "Jean, I really wanted to get that guy on the stand." She said she didn't want to mess with it.

The Democrat-Reporter started to lose subscriptions. Their readership had been about 7,500 before the stories on Sheriff Davis began appearing. Before it was all over, the number declined to 6,000. They also lost advertising of over \$1,000 a week. The Ford dealership where the county buys its cars pulled their ads. Goodloe said the banks cut way back, particularly the First Bank of Linden, which is right next door to the newspaper office. They had contributed over \$10,000 to Davis' election campaign. Question: Why would they contribute that much money? Goodloe:

Let me tell you summpin': I cannot prove or corroborate, but the bank chairman's son, Tommy Miller, got into trouble. . .big trouble. . .and Roger Davis somehow got the case dismissed. Bill

Roberts was president of the bank and they would do anything Mr. Miller told him to do. In the spring of 1994, I was going to teach a Sunday school lesson at our church. Jean and I had invited 10 or 12 families to listen. Before I could speak, Bill Roberts gets up and says I'm spreading vicious lies in my paper about the good sheriff. I was shocked and humiliated. So we left, and we've never been back. I never put it together why Bill Roberts would take out after me. Now, of course, I understand.

And then there was the case of Tiny Martin. He was retired military; lots of those down here. Tiny was hunting squirrels on his cousin's property, just off Highway 10 in Dixon's Mills. His pickup was parked three days in the same spot. So his cousin calls the sheriff's office. Davis came out to investigate. Well, they found Tiny all right, not with one but two bullet holes in the back of his head-shot gangster-style. Davis said, "If we find a spent shell underneath his body, we'll call it an accident. If we find Tiny's shotgun has been fired, we'll call it suicide."

When Tiny's relatives inquired, Davis told them they needed to keep quiet, and eventually someone would call. No one ever has.

Dick Martin is Tiny's brother. He had been arrested numerous times for selling alcohol to minors and on Sundays. Since the murder Jean Sutton, from her vantage point across the street, had seen Dick visit the sheriff, usually on Wednesdays, about every other week. Martin would drive up in his old pickup, put on his shirt, go in to see the sheriff for a few minutes and then return to his truck. But, to this day, there has been no investigation of the death of Tiny Martin.

It would appear that Sheriff Davis could get away with murder. . .or, at the very least, with accessory to murder. One would think that the Sutton family would be frightened for their lives. Goodloe thought then-as he thinks now-that printing the truth would arm

him against any adversary. "God is on my side, because I know I'm right."

In the 1994 election Roger Etheridge, nephew to Roger Davis, ran for probate judge of Marengo County. Jean exposed the candidate's string of arrests and convictions for writing bad checks. He had also declared bankruptcy. Etheridge came to the office of the Democrat-Reporter and promised he would "get" Goodloe and Jean.

They got threats in the mail. They saved one because, while it was serious, it had a certain amount of gallows humor. Typed entirely in capital letters, it began:

GOODLOE AND JEAN:

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE WORDS, INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY? YOU HAVE A BAD HABIT OF TRYING TO RUIN PEOPLES' LIVES. THINK ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES, OR DON'T YOU HAVE A HEART?---**NO**. YOU TWO HAVE GOT TO BE DEMON POSSESSED. JUST REMEMBER THIS WILL ALL COME BACK TO YOU ONE DAY. MAYBE IN THE FORM OF GOODLOE'S ALCOHLISM[sic], JEAN'S UNFAITHFULNESS, OR MAYBE LITTLE GOODLOE'S HABIT. (YES) BUT THIS WILL NEVER BE TOLD, BECAUSE IT IS ALRIGHT [sic] FOR YOU, OR YOUR FAMILY. WE WILL NEVER READ IT IN YOUR PAPER. YOU LOVE T DOWN THE SHERIF'S [sic] DEPT., BUT YOU WOULD BE THE FIRST TO CALL THEM IF YOU HAD TROUBLE. YOU WORRY ABOUT A DEPUTY CAR COMING AT YOU, DOING 100 M.P.H., WHEN IN FACT YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT A 90 M.P.H. FIST.

YOU ARE BRAVE PEOPLE, WITH YOUR PENS IN YOUR POCKET, BUT I WONDER HOW BRAVE YOU WILL BE WHEN SOMEONE CATCHES YOU IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE NO WITNESSES [sic]. I FOR ONE WILL WELCOME THE CHANCE, AND YES EVEN YOUR FAT WIFE. . **REMEMBER, YOUR DAY WILL COME SOON.**

DEFINITALY [sic] NOT YOUR FRIEND

ME.

P.S. I HAVE KNOWN AS LOT OF SONS-OF-BITCHES, BUT YOU TWO ARE THE BIGGEST OF ALL. PRINT THIS IS YOU DARE.

Sheriff Davis seemed to have allies in all quarters. He had deputies who did his bidding. The head of his drug enforcement force was Wilbur "Sonny" Breckenridge. Sonny was a friend of the Sutton family. He went to high school with Goodloe, Jr. Sonny was always lucky. The guy had it all. He played quarterback and had an arm like a cannon. They used to call him "The Flame Thrower." His problem was he couldn't get the plays down. He graduated forty-first in a class of 42. He was strong, standing 6'6" and weighing almost 250. There was a linebacker from Monroeville High saying he'd rather tackle a stump than Sonny. The girls liked him, and he liked the girls. In the South, boys and girls grow up real quick, and Sonny was no exception. He was big, blond and always had a smile. . .sort of cuddly, a lot like a previous governor of Arkansas.

Ever since he was a boy, Sonny wanted to be a game warden or a cop. In 1990, at age 20, he joined the police force in Demopolis, the largest city in Marengo County. Sonny would go to schools and admonish all the kids not to do drugs and told them what the consequences would be if they did. He preached to prisoners in orange jumpsuits chained and shackled in the lockups and warned them that if they did drugs they'd spend the rest of their lives behind bars. Sonny enjoyed kicking in doors right and left while making drug busts. Numerous commendations from the Demopolis Police Department came his way.

Sonny's parents, Wilma and Julian Breckenridge, used to sit in their living room at night, listening to the cracking coded chatter of their police scanner for mention of their baby. They followed the scanner like a quarterback's most ardent fans. Almost every night they were rewarded with a call about a drug bust that Sonny had led.

Chief Avery, head of the Demopolis police, said, "Sonny's goal was to stomp out drugs in Marengo County. He seemed to be an all-American boy. Great

personality, like a friendly bear. He just brought life to wherever he was." He went on to say that if Sonny had run for his job he probably could have won. He was just that popular.

In January 1994 Roger Davis called and asked Sonny to join the Marengo County Sheriff Department as its drug enforcement officer. His salary would be \$30,000 a year--\$10,000 more than he was making in Demopolis. Sonny knew Roger had connections in Montgomery and friends in all the right places. Roger was up for reelection, and he needed some muscle, as his deputies were to "campaign" for him. Campaigning in this case meant going into the black community and buying bloc votes. Black leaders traditionally demand cash of anywhere from \$500 to \$3,000, depending on the number of votes they could guarantee.

In the spring of 1994 Sonny challenged Goodloe. "If y'all don't quit writin' bad things 'bout my sheriff, you're gonna wake up one mornin' and find yourself surrounded. And you know what we'll find. Down at the paper, too." This was the same boy who went to school with Goodloe's son, the same boy Goodloe had cheered for at high school football games. The same boy who, when he made a drug arrest (usually in the middle of the night), would call the Sutton's and ask them to come down to the detention center to photograph him with his quarry. Goodloe's reaction to this threat was outrage. "This is my family, my home and my business. I'll defend them any way I can." He did. . .with his pen.

Goodloe and Jean were besieged. Can you imagine owning a rinky-dink weekly newspaper that has uncovered criminality of major proportions right across the street, printing the evidence for all the world to see, and no one was doing anything about it? Added to this is the fact that you're losing revenue from advertisers and subscribers who are leaving you just for printing the truth.

But the Sutton's are not passive; they take action. Goodloe sent information from sources, records, receipts and, of course, copies of the newspaper articles to Alabama's Attorney General, Jimmy

Evans, requesting that he investigate and prosecute Davis. Evans was a Democrat, as was Davis, and Evans would not even respond to the inquiries. Goodloe didn't know that Bobby Timmons, Executive Director of the Alabama Sheriffs' Association, was following the Democrat-Reporter's revelations carefully and was lobbying for Davis, labeling Goodloe's complaint as "just politics in Marengo County."

In July 1994 Goodloe files a complaint with the Alabama Ethics Commission. He characterizes the commission as the true definition of an oxymoron. There was no response. In 1995 the editor tried again with the Ethics Commission. The newspaper's files and records had to be copied seven times, because the commission claimed to have misplaced the evidence.

"We had more than 300 signatures on the complaints that we presented to the Ethics Commission. Scores more wanted to join in the signing but feared loss of jobs and/or physical harm to themselves or their family." They were wearing Goodloe down. One is reminded of Margaret Mitchell's observation: "Southerners can never resist a losing cause."

Roger Davis did get reelected in the fall of 1994. Goodloe didn't let this dissuade him. He demanded an official audit of the sheriff's accounts by the local district attorney, Barrown Lankster. Again, he was pushing water uphill: "We presented the same evidence that we showed the Ethics Commission. Lankster said, 'There's nothing to it.' He quickly tossed aside the audit. . .and discouraged the grand jury from using its legal right to call witnesses."

In November 1994 Jeff Sessions, a Republican, was elected Attorney General of Alabama. He had two interviews with Goodloe in Montgomery early in 1995 and didn't really seem to be sympathetic. As Goodloe recalls:

I said to him: "I know you and Roger Davis went to high school together in Wilcox County, and I guess you're going to protect him no matter what." He was sitting across from me at a big mahogany table. I guess that was good, or he would have

come after me right there. He got red to the top of his head. Boy, he was mad. After he cooled down, he yelled at me that he would protect no man if he had done wrong, but the fact was that when Evans left office, the agency was \$1 million debt, and Sessions didn't have the manpower to prosecute now. But he leaned across the table and said to me straight on: "Goodloe, this man is dirty. We will get him."

Sessions had no idea how prophetic his words were. Roger Davis' corruption exceeded even Goodloe's imagination.

Back in the summer of 1994, Sonny Breckenridge, already the head of Marengo County's drug enforcement unit, had met Cedric Jones, a 23-year-old man from Uniontown, an almost entirely black enclave northeast of Linden. Uniontown straddles U.S. Highway 80, a four-laner that runs from Atlanta to Meridian, Mississippi. From there, Interstate 20 will take you as far as Pecos. Highway 80 is the only major east/west artery through Alabama's "black belt" region, so called because of the richness of the soil. Uniontown used to be a center of cotton production; then it was a steel town; and, it was always a wealthy town. But, by the 1980's, it had become nothing but a crack town.

Cedric Jones' brother, Tommy, was a drug dealer operating out of LA, Detroit and Miami and using Uniontown as a port of entry for marijuana and crack cocaine coming from Colombia. Sonny and his fellow deputy, Robert Pickens, were soon on the take for a mere \$1,000 a month to protect the dealers.

Unbeknownst to Goodloe and Jean Sutton, the FBI and the ABI (Alabama Bureau of Investigation) had already been working behind the scene for three years to bring justice to Marengo County. When it came, it came like an Alabama spring tornado-fast, furious and unforgiving.

On May 16, 1997, undercover drug agents sold Robert Pickens ten pounds of marijuana worth \$8,000. It was a classic sting operation. Pickens was to take

the pot to Sonny Breckenridge, who would transfer it to his patrol car and deliver to Cedric Jones. When Pickens recognized the federal agents' car, he immediately fled the scene, racing at speeds up to 110 mph. (Pickens later denied this, saying the car he was driving at the time-his wife's red Nissan-wouldn't go over 95 mph). In any event, his pursuer, Lieutenant Ed Odom of the ABI, pulled up along side Pickens and motioned for him to stop. Instead, Pickens cut his car into the side of Odom's full-sized Ford. Both cars rolled and plummeted down an embankment. Inexplicably, Odom suffered only minor bruises. But Pickens sustained critical internal injuries that put him in the hospital for over a month.

The charges against Pickens were: trafficking in marijuana; resisting arrest; and attempted vehicular homicide of a law officer.

Roger Davis did not dismiss Pickens, saying that "to go in and fire a man who is bleeding to death internally is not the right thing to do."

On May 29, 1997, two hundred officers representing the FBI and the ABI invaded little Uniontown and arrested 67 people, charging them with the possession and distribution of crack cocaine and marijuana.

But the first arrest that day occurred before dawn and away from Uniontown. Agents kicked in the front door and immediately handcuffed the suspect. . . Sonny Breckenridge. Following Pickens' arrest a week earlier, Sonny knew his days were numbered, and he had bragged that if they were coming after him, they'd better "come shooting." But the threat of violence was all talk. In the end, he surrendered meekly.

Sonny's neighbor/landlord, Terry Gaines, heard the commotion next door. "I thought: Hell, Sonny's having another party." He glanced outside and saw 30 men in bulletproof vests surrounding Sonny's house. "I just hate to see it happen," the landlord said. "He's such a nice guy."

Meanwhile the agents in Uniontown were like an arresting army. They hit the key places first and

spent the remainder of the morning nabbing individuals as they were spotted walking on the streets or driving by. The suspects were taken in state vehicles to the command post set up by the Alabama National Guard in Selma, where buses were waiting to transport them to Mobile for processing. Simultaneous arrests were made in Demopolis, Birmingham, Detroit and Los Angeles.

The prosecution of the drug dealers was prepared. There were hundreds of exhibit sheets, black books with names and addresses, drugs, guns, photographs and 609 wiretaps. Each defendant was served with 115,000 documents. The government does not like to lose drug cases.

At the arraignment and before the trial U.S. Marshals sold 218 cows that had belonged to BoBo Beauregard, one of the defendants. BoBo, if convicted, could do 20 years or more. He was particularly upset when he heard that his herd was gone. His lawyer was overhead to say to the sullen BoBo, "Forget about the cows, unless you had a personal relationship with them."

Sonny Breckenridge pled not guilty. Many people came forward to speak on his behalf. Sarah McKinney said he was her son's best friend. "He was caring and kind. I believe he was truthful. No testimony changes my opinion." She was weeping as she asked the court to have mercy.

Tim Robinson of Tuscaloosa told the judge Sonny was his best friend, too. "When he tells me he is innocent, I believe him."

Becky Jones recalled how Sonny had arrested her for misusing prescription drugs, and that had saved her life. She also told the judge that, "Sonny got little Willy off crack." She cried, "These charges don't make sense."

Allen Ramsey recalled that when he moved to Lincoln the seven-year-old little blond-headed kid rode up on his bicycle and asked if he could help with the move. "It's been like that all his life. Sonny always helped."

Robert Pickens, however, turned against his partner and cooperated with the authorities. Without his testimony it would have been difficult to convict Sonny. He told how Sonny planted dope in people's homes before arresting them; these were the folks who were in arrears to Cedric and Tommy Jones. Pickens also said he feared for his life as long as Sonny was on the loose. This testimony was given in open court while Breckenridge listened. Sonny was handcuffed and shackled at the ankles; there was a metal wand across his back to further restrain him, although he sat silently in his orange prison coveralls.

Cedric Jones also testified for the government. With both Pickens and Jones against him, Sonny didn't have a chance. But he still pled not guilty. He was given the opportunity to accept a plea bargain that would have him serve 12 years in a minimum security facility at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery. He would be allowed a release to see his family for one weekend a month. Goodloe Sutton said, "Wilma, his mother, screamed at his attorney, Billy Kimbrough, 'We're not paying you \$50,000 to get 12 years! We're paying you \$50,000 to get him off!'" Sonny rejected the plea bargain.

On August 25, 1997 Wilbur Keith Breckenridge was found guilty. On December 11 of that year he was sentenced to life in prison without parole. Judge Butler spoke to Sonny's supports: "I regret, for you, what I must do. But I don't regret it for Sonny Breckenridge. My hands are tied by the sentencing guidelines passed by Congress in 1988."

Sonny is presently in Leavenworth, a maximum security prison that houses the most dangerous criminals in America.

On August 22, 1997, Sheriff Roger Davis was arrested for extortion. He had approved only one bonding company for Marengo County and was taking payoffs from them. The FBI had a videotape of Beverly Jo Rhodes, of the Rhodes Bonding Company, handing Sheriff Davis \$975. The FBI and ABI agents surrounded his car, and he was arrested without incident.

On September 30 Davis pleaded guilty and resigned his office the same day. On October 29, 1997 he was sentenced to 27 months in a federal detention center, since his crime of extortion violated interstate commerce. Davis told the court, "I would like to apologize to my family, my friends, my church and the people of Marengo County." Then he sobbed, "I'm sorry." He is currently serving his sentence in a minimum security facility in Memphis, Tennessee. One of his jobs is cutting the grass at a military golf course nearby. Jean Sutton scoffs, "Roger never even played golf." To this day, he has never admitted any involvement in the drug dealing in Marengo County, but the Suttons hint that the story of Roger Davis isn't yet over.

Goodloe Sutton is a prophet. But people don't like or trust prophets, and never have. He brought a popular and powerful sheriff down, along with an even more popular deputy. One of his editorials reads:

Muslims, cousins of Christians, blood relatives, take a harsher view of illegal drugs. The dealer is forever deterred. . .from doing anything ever again as his head and his body are parted. America needs this, has needed this; the bleeding hearts liberals want to rehabilitate the criminals. The Holy Bible and the Koran teach us differently. Punishment makes people rehabilitate themselves or stay out of trouble so they do not need rehabilitating. . .It's time we think about the proposal put forward by Governor George Wallace: Execute all drug dealers swiftly.

On November 3, 1998, Goodloe Sutton ran for a seat in the Alabama State House of Representatives. His opponent was Andrew Hayden, the incumbent and former mayor of Uniontown. Hayden was recently indicted on three ethics charges. His trial is set for March 1999. Goodloe lost the election.

Goodloe Sutton accomplished what he did by being absolutely relentless. He did in a particularly violent section of the nation without using violence. As E.T. Rolison, Assistant U.S. Attorney in Mobile,

said: "Never get into an argument with a man who buys ink by the barrel."

BUDGET

January 25, 1999

- 1 - What Seems to be the Problem Here? George Gibson Carey IV
- 2 - Nothing is All about Anything . . Stanley B. Troup
- 3 - From the Cradle to the Literary Club Robert W. Hilton, Jr.

1

What Seems to be the Problem Here?

As originally conceived, there was to be a unifying theme in this evening's budget: we were to write about someone we admired. This seemed a very worthwhile and pleasant prospect: there are many people I admire, and it felt like fertile ground. In subsequent weeks we somehow strayed from our original direction, and the doors were opened to a broader range of subject matter. But for me it was too late to change. My train had already left the station, so to speak, and it could not be called back. I had invested too much emotional energy in the original subject.

But the more I looked into the broad subject of admiration, the deeper it became. I began by inventorying the people in my life whom I find admirable, and this was a very happy exercise. But it raised a further question: why do I admire them? What