

Chapter Nine

Sweet Potato Pie

Facing me on my right, a sign said Now Entering South Carolina. A minute later I noticed the back of another large highway sign on my left. As I passed I looked back and noticed it said, Welcome to North Carolina. I suppose the true state line was somewhere in between. Only a wagon traveler going two miles an hour would give such a minor detail a thought. At a car's speed of 55mph probably the signs were as good as straight across from each other.

I studied signs a lot as I traveled. There were other instances where pace made a huge difference. For example, a large sign for a road that turned off up ahead might be there before me, but where was the road? Eventually I would come to it, perhaps around a curve or beyond a set of buildings.

It irritated me, to sometimes see huge billboards blighting the otherwise serene countryside. One would appear announcing a tourist trap of some sort ten miles down the road with another equally large sign every mile for the place, until you got there and then another huge sign would tell you that you had just passed the place and need to turn around and go back. The signs were so big and loud they forced their way into my field of vision, like it or not. I thought if it weren't for fast cars these billboards could be much smaller. I could tell there were others who were not particularly fond of road signs either, because so many were riddled with bullet holes and defaced with spray paint.

The area I was entering was relatively infertile and dry. The soil was sandy and the vegetation a bit stunted. The grazing didn't look very good. The farmers didn't seem to be growing much corn. I wasn't able to glean ears for Brownie to enjoy eating as I had from the freshly harvested fields back north. I decided I'd better buy some feed in Cheraw. I bought a 50 pound sack of sweet feed for \$3.50 which was a reasonable price. It was the first feed I'd bought so far on my travels.

As I went through town, a local car salesman burst out of his dealership and stopped me. Amazingly enough, he was really interested in what I was doing and asked a lot of questions. He asked how I decided what roads to take. I told him I tried to stay on the less traveled back roads as much as possible, and used county maps when I could get them. Instantly upon hearing that, he dashed back into the car showroom and came back with a Chesterfield county map. He told me to just take it and he was glad he could be of help. I thanked him heartily and headed on out of town.

By late afternoon and close to quitting time I came upon a place that looked like it might have a spot I could camp at overnight. It had been an extra warm day. Brownie and I had developed a thirst for some nice cool water. I asked the folks at the house if I could get some water from their water hydrant. They gave me permission and seemed real obliging and friendly, so I asked them about parking overnight on their land as well. The young man said he wouldn't mind me camping on his, but he had a place in mind he thought would be a lot better. He suggested I go on to his folk's farm. It was down the road and then back toward town, a mile off the main road. I thanked him and went on, wondering if I was getting sent on a wild goose chase. Backtracking even a mile out of my way was a lot at my pace and especially when there wasn't much day left.

I soon arrived at the farm, and to my relief, the man's elderly parents were standing outside to welcome me. In fact, they were downright thrilled to see me and have me as their guest. I quickly explained all I needed was a place to park my wagon, water, and some grazing for Brownie. But they insisted I come inside their beautiful big old farm house, eat supper with them, and sleep in their guest room. We put Brownie out in a pasture with an old mule. My host, J.C. Chapman, made sure Brownie had plenty of hay and grain as well. I asked him about the mule.

"Maggie is 43 years old," he said. "When I bought this farm from my father, I also bought seven mules. She's the only one left."

The mule was nothing but a bag of bones, blind in one eye and quite stiff in her leg joints. But she seemed to get around well enough considering she was probably the oldest mule in South Carolina and maybe anywhere.

"Maggie's done her share of work around this farm. She's more than earned her retirement. She'll be buried on the place like the others were," J.C. said.

He was happy to have someone like myself to reminisce with. I provided this kind of outlet for many old timers along the way. I was ever hopeful of picking up bits of history and lore.

J.C. suggested we hop in his pickup and tour the farm. Heading down narrow dirt roads, we passed acres and acres of soy beans. His property was very extensive. He talked nonstop with a strong southern accent. His conversation was sprinkled with expressions I'd never heard before. To describe an animal or person acting up, he'd say they were "cutting the fool". As we drove, J.C. filled me in on some local history. Closest to home and bordering the property was what was left of a little town called Cash. We drove by a couple of long abandoned, old buildings with a small cemetery near them. He linked the fall of Cash to a few people who'd "cut the fool".

After our tour we returned to a fine meal at the farm house specially prepared by Mrs. Chapman. I couldn't have felt more at home if these people were my own grandparents. The next morning I got my big old view camera out and shot an 8x10

glass negative of Maggie the mule. It took a bit of coaxing to get her posed right. I wanted her to stand by the farm wagons and plows she'd once pulled. She was shy and Brownie kept trying to barge into the scene. Finally, I got the picture I wanted.



Before I left, J.C. tried to give me another bag of sweet horse feed. He'd given me one the evening before. I assured him I had quite a good long supply now and didn't want to weigh the wagon down anymore. Of course, I did find room for the pan of fresh baked chocolate chip cookies Mrs. Chapman handed up to me. I thanked the Chapman's for the red carpet treatment they had so generously shown to me and Brownie, and resumed my trek.

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Traveling South The Old Way



BY DAVID LINTON

What gets into a man that makes him want to build a carriage, buy a horse and go 1,400 miles?

John Coffey wanted to live the old days over again and this is the best way he knew how.

John left Lancaster County, Pa. in the early part of August and was photographed in Wallace the latter part of October. He figured he had traveled 700 miles and had 700 more to go at a rate of 15 miles per day. His destination is Florida.

John said so far he had had no problems out on the road except for one incident in Pennsylvania. His horse, Brownie, "fertilized" a street in a Pennsylvania town and an officer was about to arrest him. He was able to talk himself and the horse out of that situation.

John said that throughout the trip people were nice to him. He said people who lived in the country were most helpful. A lot of families let him stay in their homes or sleep in their barns.

Wherever they pull over is where they make their home for the night. John said it was usually a place where Brownie could graze.

The traveling photographer has been doing everything he can the old-fashioned way. John washes his clothes in creeks on a scrub board, writes with a dip pen and develops prints without any modern methods.

Taking pictures is one way John is financing his trip. While out on the road, he takes pictures of families or individuals and develops the pictures in his wagon where a darkroom is set up.

John spent a night in Cash with the John Clifton Chapman family.

By lunch time it was getting extra warm. We stopped by a very clear blue pond nestled between the scrub pine-covered sand hills. Brownie got himself a good long drink. I tied him to a nearby tree on a long rope so he could graze while I ate a couple sandwiches and finished off the cookies. It all went down extra good with the milk I had and needed to drink up before it spoiled in the heat. I was able to keep milk for awhile by keeping the carton in some cold water in my oaken water barrel. I often went through a half gallon of milk a day if I could get it.

When I was done eating I read a little and gazed out at the unusually clean clear pond before me. So many in my travels were on the murky side and ringed with lots of water weeds. But then, Brownie would drink his fill from them too. He'd need it to sweat out on the tough going sandy backroads we'd be taking ahead. I had decided to go through the Sand Hills State Forest. I passed a Boy Scout camp set amongst the pines. It was quiet, closed for the season. It made me think about my own boyhood and what Scouting had meant to me. I read the Boy Scout manual numerous times cover to cover. I dreamed of long camping trips in the mountains with other scouts. But I never actually became a bona-fide Boy Scout, as there was not a troop close enough to my home and unlike many mothers of today, my mother was not interested in being my personal chauffeur. I had to be a scout only in my own

mind and do my exploring on my own. My mom got me several forest service maps of the nearby mountains and I would draw out imaginary trips on them. She also bought things I thought I would need on such adventures: a camp hatchet, pup tent, hunting knife, small shovel, and a backpack. The little shovel and hatchet were with me still, there in the wagon. Clearly many of my present interests had their roots in my boyhood.

When I first left Lancaster County Pennsylvania, I tended to be more in a hurry and less resigned to Brownie's slow plodding pace. Now I was a lot more patient and attuned to Brownie's way of doing things. He, after all, was the only horse I had. Brownie's well being was my well being. I'm sure it struck people as a little odd when I would jump down out of the wagon as we were rolling along and walk along side if a hill was the least bit steep or on the rough side. In fact, a by stander called out to me once, "Hey, I thought them things was for riding on!"

Going down a hill I would always ride in the wagon, as I had to work the brake to keep the wagon from pushing on Brownie too much. Most of the time, I did in fact ride in the wagon.

On this day, we traveled along sandy roads. The narrow wagon wheels cut into the sand and made the wagon extra hard to pull. I walked beside a tolling sweaty Brownie until the sand finally played out and became a firm hard clay. The wagon then rolled along nice and easy. I'd had enough of hoofing it and was glad to hop back up on the wagon. It was about sundown and we happily came out of the pine forests into farm country. Up ahead was a big square gray weathered wood clapboard farm house with a peaked tin roof. As I approached the driveway to the place, a UPS truck pulled in and went up to the house. An older black man and what looked to be some of his family came out and were talking to the black UPS driver when I pulled up near by. I could overhear some of their conversation. The UPS driver was asking for directions. I couldn't help but notice the sharp contrast between the UPS man and the farm folk. The former had an air of sophistication. He spoke clearly, fast, and with emphasis. He looked crisp and sharp with his neat brown uniform, shiny black shoes, trimmed mustache and brown UPS ball cap. The latter were dressed in ill fitting, half worn out work clothes. Their speech was slow and uncertain. When the driver discovered they were of no help to him, he turned his attention to me. He wanted to know where I was bound for and when I told him, plus where I was coming from, he thought my trip sounded real interesting and downright amazing. I was thinking to myself about the new southern black and the old southern black that seemed to be represented here. But, of course, I kept these thoughts to myself. The driver had to go.

"Hang in there, partner!" he said, as he stepped into his truck and sped away.

The family from the house was still standing nearby. I stepped up to the man who had been the one doing the talking with the UPS truck driver and asked him

permission to camp on his farm over night. I'd noticed the nice pasture with a pony in it near the farm buildings and suggested that maybe my horse could keep the pony company overnight.

"Well sir," he said in a thick southern drawl. "Dis here place ain't mine to give no permission for. Da man who own it liven in Hartsville."

"Do you think he'd mind?" I asked.

"Don't rightly know wud he'd think of it. But you kin just go ahead and do as y'all please and if anybody asks, I didn't says you could or you couldn't."

To me that was as good as permission, considering it would be getting dark very soon. I parked the wagon near some long metal sided sheds and put Brownie in with the pony. She instantly fell in love and became Brownie's shadow, following him as he explored the pasture. After a bit, I gave them both some sweet feed.

Tractors being driven by young black men began pulling into the farm yard. They were towing long metal screened-in trailers filled with freshly picked cotton. Evidently they were coming back from a days work in the fields. The men backed the trailers into the sheds, got off the tractors and then went on their way. A few went into the old farm house. Others headed on, walking down the road. They waved and said hello as they passed by me and my camp.

I sat on the back end of the wagon and began to eat a simple supper I'd put together. While I was eating a car came up the road and pulled into the farm yard. The wagon was illuminated by a bright flood lamp high up on a pole nearby. As the car came closer I noticed it was full of teenage black kids. For a moment a feeling of apprehension swept over me. It reminded me too much of my teen years in Las Vegas, when small gangs of black toughs in our newly integrated high school would do all they could to terrorize white kids as a sort of black backlash. They had near complete control over the bathrooms and regularly shook down students in the lunch lines for any change. They didn't seem to understand I was as much a prisoner of the public school system as they were. I got through unscathed by not eating lunch but rather spending that hour in the library reading or hanging out in the computer science room. Both those places seemed to hold no interest to toughs of any sort. I even went to the extent of not drinking much, so I wouldn't have to use the bathroom. Finishing my sentence and being released from High School was one of the happiest days of my life.

The car stopped not far away and the driver of the car got out and said in a very timid voice, "Would you mind if we talked with you for a little while, sir?"

I said, "Sure, I'd like that."

These young folks turned out to be very nice and I enjoyed our visit very much. The fellow driving the car was nineteen and he worked for the farmer whose place I was on. He assured me that the landlord wouldn't care about me being there.

“Besides, he rarely ever comes out here anyway”, he told me.

We talked until about nine and then they had to leave. They thanked me for sharing my adventure story with them.

While I was getting my bedroll arranged on the floor of the wagon the same car came back. It was the same young man. This time it was only he and his wife. They gave me a pie pan covered with foil. It was a sweet potato pie. I thanked them and they left. I'd only recently eaten mashed sweet potatoes for the first time. I enjoyed them but I couldn't imagine what a pie out of sweet potatoes would taste like. My curiosity quickly got the best of me and I tried a slice. It was some of the best tasting pie I'd ever eaten. The next morning I pulled out without much ado. The pony was somewhat broken hearted and whinnied at Brownie as we headed on down the dirt road. I noticed a simple cinder block house off the road a ways to my right. It was where the people who'd given me the pie had indicated that they lived. A matronly looking black lady stepped out on the front porch and watched me go past. I smiled and waved and she did likewise. Then I reached for another slice of sweet potato pie.

Soon I was on a busy paved road going into Hartsville. As usual, I was anxious to get through it to be out of the traffic. After awhile I was able to turn down a lesser traveled road heading south through an area called Kellytown. A gentleman by the name of Goz Segar stopped me to talk and quickly invited me to stay at his and his family's place just down the road a piece. In fact, he offered to let me stay a few days and rest up if I liked. As much as I loved this adventure I was on, I had to admit it could be a little exhausting at times for me and Brownie. I didn't often get this kind of invitation. Not that I was sure I'd take him up on it. When Goz drove ahead of me slowly leading the way to his sumptuous home, I wasn't thinking about being pampered. I wasn't thinking about a long soak under a hot shower and delicious meals. I wasn't thinking about how nice it would be for a few days to not have to worry about whether or not the next car would slam into me, or whether I'd find a descent place to camp for the night. I figured that I'd just spend the night and head out the next day and not intrude upon anyone any more than I had to.

The Segars lived in a very sumptuous home in a new upper class subdivision Goz and his father had made from a section of the family's large plantation. The senior Segars still lived in the old white columned plantation house not far away. Goz and his wife were in their thirties and they had two small children. Brownie and I were soon put up in style. Brownie was turned out into a nice big corral with plenty of grass and hay to eat and a cute little pony to rub noses with. Then Goz ushered me into his house to show me around and point out the guest room that would be mine. It even had its own private bathroom with a shower. The Segar family were some of the most hospitable and warmest people I'd ever met. I had hardly gotten there and already Goz was telling me I could stay as long as I wanted and that would

include three meals a day. He's lucky I'm not still there!

As it turned out, I stayed three days, three delicious restful days. But, there were activities too. One of the afternoons we went to a runner's long distance race that Goz ran in. We also attended the local high school football game one evening. That was especially exciting. The home team, which I rooted for right along with the Segars, lost by only one point. But, mostly the Segars made me and my interests the center of their attention. One day Goz took me to his office which was in what had been the old general store on the plantation. On dusty shelves in the backroom were some old unopened medicine bottles, some still in their original cardboard boxes. He thought I might like some for my wagon shelves. In the same room were a pair of very old high top ladies shoes and another pair of child's button sided shoes. They were in excellent condition. Goz thought I should have those and could put them to use as props too.

Another evening I hitched up Brownie and we all piled into the Photographic Van and went to a neighborhood outdoor barbeque a few streets over in their subdivision. I admitted to them it was the first time I'd driven Brownie in the night. It was exciting to watch the sparks shoot out from Brownie's shoes as he trotted on the pavement. The children were especially fascinated by the whole experience.

Another day the Segar's little girl's kindergarten class came over to see what I was about. I shot some tintypes. One of the Segar family came out particularly well.

During my stay I was able to get caught up on things that are hard to do while traveling: oil Brownie's harness and make small repairs on it and the wagon. The Segar's black maid even washed my clothes.

The day I pushed off, the Segar children wore their farmer overalls and straw hats. The local reporter was there to photograph us together. Goz's wife had packed me a lunch and their little girl Francis gave me a small bag of M&M's. It was, after all, almost Halloween. Francis was so young, I wondered if she'd remember me later on in life. But, I was pretty sure her older brother would. He had turned down the brim of his straw hat the way I wore mine.

A day and a half later I passed through Camden, South Carolina. The big picture windows in the shade on the shops I passed on Main Street acted like giant mirrors I could see myself in. I enjoyed looking at the site as we plodded past the parked cars on the sunny side of the street. I was half way through the business section when a town policemen stopped in front of us.

I said quietly to Brownie, "Oh boy, what did we do now?"

The policeman strode back to me, all smiles, and said, "What can I do to help?"

I was nearly dumbfounded. Help? Wow! I couldn't think of anything at first, but then I saw a busy intersection up ahead.

I suggested, "Well, maybe you could help me with traffic up there."

Beyond the intersection the road looked filled with traffic the rest of the way out of town and across a long two lane bridge over the Wateree River. This bridge crossing was going to be somewhat of a dangerous feat with all that fast moving traffic. I mentioned this dilemma to the helpful officer.

“I’ll call the sheriff’s department about it. That’s in their jurisdiction.”

The policeman went ahead in his squad car and stopped all traffic by pulling into the middle of the intersection with all his lights flashing. Then he got out and opened all the rest of the squad car doors and began motioning for everyone to stop while Brownie and I glided through. It was a true Barney Fife moment.

When I arrived at the beginning of the narrow bridge, the traffic seemed heavier and faster than ever. I waited to the side of the road awhile, but no deputy showed up. Finally, I decided to just go on without an escort. The bridge was about a half mile long. I was halfway across when a Sheriff’s car came up from behind and passed me and continued on slowly just ahead of me. There was no way I could explain to them that my rear end was what needed their presence to deter any reckless drivers, not my front end. There were still plenty of cars whizzing past me. In my lane cars were backed up now and then. When the opportunity presented itself, they plunged past me. As I continued on, I could hear the wagon wheels make crunching sounds as they went over small pieces of broken windshield glass, red bits of tail light lenses, and other debris from recent smash ups. Some of the railings and the curb had incredible gouges and gashes in them from the same smash ups. Perhaps the deputies up ahead thought they’d be Johnny on the Spot, picking up this Johnny’s pieces, should I get hit. I was immensely grateful when the bridge gave way to open road with a nice shoulder on solid ground I could get off onto. The deputies, all smiles, soon passed me going the other way and waved. I waved back smiling just as big, and sourly said out loud to myself, “Thanks a lot for nothing. You Bozos!”

It was nearly quitting time. The rush hour traffic was by now playing hard on my nerves. Two women pulled off ahead of me, forcing me to stop. This was one method people often used to stop me, whether I wanted to or not. The women bounced out of their car, beaming with delight.

“Oh, are you the man traveling to Florida in your wagon?” They asked excitedly.

“Yep”, I answered. Thinking to myself, let’s make this brief.

“Well, ah, we read about y’all in our hometown newspaper down in Georgia.”

“Probably the story is making the rounds on one of the news wire services,” I said matter of factly.

At this, one of the ladies said, “I simply must get a couple pictures with my camera. Is that all right?”

“Uh-huh,” I nodded half heartedly as the sound of the traffic flying by seemed

to amplify and the sun sank closer to the western edge of the sky.

She backed way up to get the whole outfit framed up in her camera's view finder.

"I don't take pictures very often," she admitted.

The late afternoon sun was beaming on us with maximum intensity. But that wasn't enough light for her camera, I guess. I saw the little plastic camera's flash cube go off and then once again. Fortunately, that satisfied them and they jumped back into their car and sped on their way. I doubted her pictures turned out and somehow I didn't care.

Soon Brownie and I were able to turn off onto a secondary road. This route didn't take us into farm country as I had hoped but rather through housing subdivisions and farmettes of an acre or two. I stopped at one place that had some kids playing outside and asked if they knew of any pastures further down the road. A girl of about ten years of age spoke up and in all seriousness said she didn't know of any pastures down that way, but there was a reverend. I needed some comic relief. I chuckled and went on.

I didn't find a pasture or a pastor the further I went. After being rejected at several farmette type places that had horses, I decided to take my chances on a dry, sandy, weedy clearing up a dirt driveway and settle in for the night without anyone's permission. This was no doubt the site of some future farmette. It was dark and I was out of the way enough so that no one would probably notice. I had watered Brownie and filled my water barrel and canteen at one of the last places I'd asked about a spot to camp. I gave Brownie an extra helping of sweet feed to make up for the lack of grazing and staked him out on his tether rope. We made it through the night without incident.

The next day to my great relief I found myself traveling down peaceful country roads, once again. Only a few cars passed me all day. One really set my adrenalin running, however. At first all I heard was a distant whistling sound. Then, almost instantly, a full size pick-up shot past me. I figured he must have been going over a hundred miles an hour. I watched as he continued on, not slowing down any as he took the next long curve ahead, swinging wide into the left lane as he went. How careless, I thought. He's playing with his own life, and worse, other people's too. I suppose if he had been asked, he'd say he had everything under control. Now from a wagon seat, I had a different outlook about such things. I hadn't exactly been a saint in my car driving days either. I had never been a speeder but I had driven very drunk before and had fallen asleep at the wheel while pushing myself on long car drives.

One of the other handful of cars to pass me that day stopped and a man got out to talk. He was a local veterinarian. He was impressed with Brownie's condition after having traveled so many miles.

"I'd

like to do a long trip like what you're doing," he said. "Or else I'd like to go out to the West Coast and look for Big Foot."

"If that's what you want to do, you should do it," I assured him.

By quitting time I decided to check out a place up a long driveway that had a very large horse barn and several good sized pasture areas. It was owned by an attractive brunette in her thirties. She was in a hurry to be leaving but gave me permission to park by the barn and put Brownie in a nearby pasture. She also offered me all the hay Brownie might want to eat. I noticed a guy about her age working in the barn yard. She soon introduced him as her boyfriend. Then I noticed a certain pickup truck parked in the driveway. It was the one that had passed me so fast and dangerously earlier in the day. I asked the guy if he'd seen me on the road.

"Oh yeah, I saw you and told my girlfriend you might be passing by before long".

"How fast were you going when you passed me?" I asked.

"I usually get it up to at least a hundred on that stretch. Hell, there's no cops out this way to tag anyone anyway," he said confidently.

Ever the diplomat as I traveled, I was in no position to speak my mind and lay into him. So I just let him wallow in his own arrogance.

My hosts said they'd see me in the morning and then rushed off in their cars. After awhile I decided to get a bucket of water from the water hydrant in the horse barn. As I was starting back for the wagon I was met by the farm's two Doberman Pinschers who went immediately into guard dog mode, growling and gnashing their teeth, looking as though they were ready to attack should I take another step. They had seemed so friendly and docile when their owners were there. The lady had told me their names and luckily I remembered one. I called that out in my most sugar coated voice and told them what good dogs they were. That seemed to do the trick and they calmed down and let me pass. I came back with a couple pieces of balogna for them to make sure the truce would hold.

I soon went to bed in the wagon for the night. I'd just dozed off when I was awakened by the noise of a car engine and voices nearby. I opened the back flap enough to see what was going on and who should it be standing there but Speedy with another guy.

"We were at a party down the road and wondered if you would like to come to it?"

I told them I'd been sound asleep and wasn't interested in any party.

"Oh but there's lots of booze and good looking women there," they said.

I told them I didn't drink and just wanted to get some sleep. But they couldn't be dissuaded.

Speedy said, "You could use the bathroom and take a shower and there will

be plenty of stuff to eat, like barbecued steak.”

I decided it could be worth it after all. We got in the big luxury car and went a few miles down the road to a newly built large mansion set in the hills. I was glad Speedy wasn't driving. He seemed at least partially inebriated already. The party turned out to be for a bunch of rich playboy polo players who were in the area for a big match. A couple of them said they had seen a write up on me in Time magazine. I begged to differ with them, as I didn't know of any Time magazine story on me. But who knew for sure, there could have been. I did know that stories about me had made it on the UPI wire service.

They'd been talking before I arrived and thought I might really be famous or at least someday famous. So into this scene I walked, still half asleep, hardly the life of the party they may have expected. But, I did answer their questions, took that much needed shower, and enjoyed a great steak dinner. Before midnight I was given a ride back to the wagon.

The capital of South Carolina, Columbia, loomed ominously ahead of me. I had every intention of skirting it just like I had other cities and big towns that had been in my path. But, this time I didn't have a county map. I found some back roads and picked my way along, hoping one back road would lead to another one, until I had gotten around and past the city.

As I progressed at my slow usual pace, I noticed a small animal out in the road weaving from one side to the other. A couple of cars passed me and swerved around it. When I got close I could see it was a puppy with its head stuck in a tin can. I stopped and got down and pulled the can off him. He quickly ran up the embankment by the edge of the road to a run down house where he probably lived. As I traveled on I wondered how long it would have been before the little guy would have been run over and turned into a grease spot on the pavement.

I saw lots of animals as I traveled. I saw people's pets around their homes or lunging at the windows barking their full heads off trying to get at Brownie and me. Cats didn't seem to care so much. I saw lots of wild animals too: birds, squirrels, skunks, possums, deer, snakes, mice, and frogs. A lot of the wild animals I saw were dead on the road or alongside it. I saw plenty of domestic animals in the same condition as well. I was appalled by the slaughter. It was such a pitiful destruction, the feathers or fur all bloody, smeared in with the guts and perhaps a little beak or mouth half opened, frozen as it uttered its last peep or cry. Frogs were a little easier to take. They just seemed to flatten out and dry thin as paper on the surface of the pavement.

A visitor to my camp that evening brought by a county and city map for me to look at. Then I knew in detail what lay ahead of me and what my options were. I saw right away that the biggest obstacle in my path was the Broad River. The only bridges over it were in mid-town Columbia. No way was I going to go over those

traffic clogged bridges. Instead, I opted to go twenty-five miles northwest and cross on a much less traveled rural bridge. This confused people as I traveled on. They'd ask where I was heading and then scratch their heads and tell me I was going in the wrong direction. It didn't make much sense to them that I was going northwest when I told them I was going south to Florida. But that's the way it had to be. Safety was more important than straight lines.

But how safe was I? The day before I crossed the Broad River I made camp by a little country store. I ate breakfast with my hosts, who owned the store and lived across the road from it. A young man who was dating their daughter was there as well.

They asked him, "Have any more earthquakes over at the plant?"

He said, "A little tremor or two but nothing like the real shaker we had the night before last."

I was surprised and concerned by their conversation and asked, "Where was the earthquake?"

"At the Broad River Nuclear Plant, across and up the river," the young man said. "They have been having earthquakes under the gigantic reactor building. They think the water that's backed up in the reservoir used for cooling the reactor is causing a fault to shift."

I marveled at this information and wondered why it wasn't front page news.

"Oh, no damage has been done," my hosts assured me. "Whatever did happen will likely be kept in-house."

This seemed a bit disturbing to me. I told my hosts I didn't think nuclear power was necessary. I told them people just needed to live not so big, was all. I went on to say it was not worth the health hazards it no doubt posed. My hosts seemed to agree with me but then went on to tell me how the plant made a lot of real good jobs for folks in the area. A few months later the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant disaster took place. I wondered how many more unreported shaky events would take place at the Broad River Plant and go by unnoticed in the future.

The next couple of days were especially pleasant. It was warm and sunny and I passed through beautiful countryside. I stopped for lunch by a big creek named, of course, Big Creek. A little turn off allowed me to pull down by the creek's bank under the spreading limbs of several large trees. It was so serene and the water was running so clear I decided to wash my dirty clothes. I took out my well used scrub board and placed it in my wooden bucket full of soapy water. Then I rubbed the clothes up and down on the rippled sheet brass surface of the scrub board. I soaped up the extra dirty spots with my bar of Octagon laundry soap and then scrubbed with my wooden handled natural bristle scrub brush until the spot was gone. The rinsing was easy. With my shoes and socks off and my pant legs rolled up, I waded out into the creek's swift current. I held onto shirts and pants while the water swirled

them about. It was the most fun I'd ever had washing clothes. All my senses seemed to be amplified and stimulated as I got the job done. I liked the feel of the cool water rushing over my feet and hands and the sounds and sight as it moved gurgling over the rounded rocks and boulders. The red and yellow fallen leaves of autumn floated along on the creek's surface here and there, or lay as a colorful mat in the quiet eddies. I washed the outside of the wagon down with some buckets of soapy water. Then I hung the wrung out laundry up to dry on a rope tied to the side of the wagon top. As we continued on our way the clothes dried quickly in the warm afternoon breeze.

I knew I was in the deep South now. I was beginning to see the lacy gray streamers of Spanish Moss hanging off tree limbs. Also, a type of palm tree began to appear in the woods. I was familiar with this kind of vegetation from my days of living in Florida. The weather seemed warmer too. I began to think more about setting up my Tintype portrait business. I hadn't done that since Virginia. The opportunity arose one morning when I stopped at a little country store to get a few groceries. The owner was really excited about what I was doing. As we visited, some of his customers pulled their snapshot cameras out to take pictures of their kids by the wagon.

The owner suggested I stop over for a day and set up for business by his store. I decided to give it a try. I got permission to put Brownie in a fenced pasture across the road. It took me an hour and a half to get my photography equipment out and ready to go. But, by then I was alone. The crowd of curiosity seekers that had been there earlier had drifted off. I was beginning to realize that this was not the location I had hoped it would be. Even Brownie was sending me signals to that effect. He stood across the road in the very eaten down and dry pasture, looking at me unhappily with his ears back. To fill the rest of the day I made some prints from a few of the glass negatives I'd shot on my travels so far. As I worked, a couple of old farmers clad in blue denim overalls played croquet on a specially kept green behind the store. After awhile the store owner came out. I suppose for reasons of sympathy more than anything else, he wanted a Tintype portrait made. He quickly decided on the smallest size, which was 2 ½ by 3 ½, for only \$2.75.

The next morning as I packed up and got ready to leave, I again attracted quite a crowd. Again the sounds of Polaroid cameras zipping instant color prints out filled the air. One lady's Kodak instant snapshot camera had to be cranked with a little built in plastic crank to get the color photo to process and come out of the bottom.

She commented, "Mine's a little bit more old fashioned. You've got to crank it."

At this, I insisted I had to be moving on. These people had been nice, like most people I had met, but I just wasn't in the mood to be treated like I was part of a

circus side show. And a free circus side show at that. I was still smarting over the previous day's poor business. As I headed on south I consoled myself with the thought that I still had plenty of money left from what I had made in Virginia and Pennsylvania. My expenses were incredibly low as a wagon traveler. It reminded me of a book my mother had gotten when I was a boy. The title had been, Mexico on \$5 a Day. I thought I could easily write the book America on Less Than \$5 a Day.

I looked at Brownie's hoofs a lot now as he walked. His shoes were wearing thin. The one on his right rear hoof was nearly paper thin in places and coming loose. I knew now I should have demanded the abrasion resistant Borium be put on his shoes when that know-it-all shoed him only a hundred and fifty miles back in Rockingham. Brownie was slipping some from time to time too. The gritty texture of the super hard Borium crystals would have prevented that, as well.

I made camp for the evening at a nice young couple's place. They had several horses and mules. They called around for a horse shoer, but all seemed to be out of town. As a last resort, they called an old timer friend of theirs who used to shoe horses. He came over, anxious to see my outfit, and volunteered his help. He said he had been a ferrier many years ago but was too old and crippled up to get under a horse now. He said if I held Brownie's hoof up, he'd tack the shoe on for me. I had only one extra shoe, so we decided to put it on to replace the right rear that was so worn out and about to fall off. With a good bit of resistance from Brownie, we finally got the shoe on. It was poorly fitted to his hoof but was at least on tight and would get me down the road some more miles. The old horse shoer joined the family and I for supper. Later, a few other good old boys and their wives came by to visit. The women folk sat in the kitchen to talk while us men folk sat on broken down old sofas and easy chairs in the living room. I was the only one who didn't have a chew of tobacco in his mouth.

"Say Fred", said one fellow, "You bring your can with ya? I forgot mine and left it in the truck." This chewer spoke awkwardly as a couple of brown dribbles came out the corners of his mouth.

Fred passed me his recycled Campbell's soup can to give to the needy tobacco chewer. I took a glance in it and nearly gagged at the sight of the moldy, green-brown, mucousie mess lining it. I couldn't pass it on quick enough.

The topic of conversation came around to horse shoeing again. Someone asked the old man who had nailed the shoe on Brownie's hoof, where had he learned to shoe?

The old Tar Heel drawled out, "Well sir, it all started many years ago when I went to a dog trial. In those days, a lot of handlers brought their riding horses along to help them keep track of the dogs. There was a horse shoer set up there, and he was doing a cracker-jack business. I decided to have him shoe my horse and he ended up charging me \$20 for the job. That was one heck of a lot of money in those

times. That's when I decided I'd learn to shoe. A year later I was shoeing my own horses and taking on customers. I went to the same dog trial I had been to the year before and offered to shoe other people's horses for \$10 a head. The same horse shoer who had been there the year before was there again. He wasn't as busy as he had been last time around. Finally, he came over and watched me work awhile. Then he said, so every one could hear around us, 'Who the hell showed you how to shoe a horse?' I says right back to him just as loud, 'You, you son of a bitch, when you charged me \$20 for shoeing my horse last year!'"

The men all laughed and a few more brown streaks came down the corners of bulged mouths. Aside from the chewing, I felt like I fit in pretty well with this crowd. I'd been cultivating a southern accent by this time and it agreed with me. But one word this group used took me by surprise. Sometimes they referred to a person as "Chap", as if they were British. This was the only place I heard the word "Chap" used like this. Perhaps this was a small remnant of speech left over from British Colonial days.

The next morning my hosts wanted me to see what they claimed was the only Appaloosa mule in the world. Sure enough, it was a mule. It was white and spotted like a Dalmatian dog from head to rump. But, what caught my eye more than the mule was the old farm wagon they had parked out in front of their place. They called it their lawn ornament. It was a real study in dilapidation and making do with little of nothing. The wheels had bailing wire wrapped all around them with old boards and sticks wired in place where spokes were broken or missing. My hosts said an old black man had sold it to them. He had used the wagon up until a few years before they got it.

They said, "The old chap had kept it going on what we refer to around here as 'Afro-engineering.'"