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His Criticism Never Ceased: Willard Cole's Pulitzer Prize-winning Campaign Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1950-1953

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*“Considering the three Ruffins, the Whiteville News-Reporter editor, the editor of the Tabor City Tribune and the Sheriff. I guess we despised the Editor of the Whiteville News Report most, and for good reasons. He conferred titles to the Negro race, referring to them as Mr. and Mrs. He had desegregated his publications . . . His criticism never ceased for one moment against the KKK.
– Early Brooks¹*

Old buildings moan and creak and shiver in the dark as the heat of the day settles out of their aging timbers. Willard Cole was oblivious to the night noises surrounding him. They were comfortable, predictable, and still sometimes unnerving. The clatter of the old Underwood typewriter filled the room. Every so often he would pause to pluck a key back into the machine or untangle several that jammed. His fingers were stained with nicotine and ink, ink from the typewriter ribbon and from the newspapers piled everywhere in his office. He would sometimes take a sip of very weak whiskey. Several small rings of moisture remained on the desk next to the small caliber revolver.

Thomas Hamilton carefully adjusted the cans and the flour sacks and the boxes of sugar on the shelves behind the counter of his grocery store in Leesville, South Carolina. In those days in small grocery stores most of the groceries were behind the counter and customers asked for what they wanted. But Hamilton was distracted, increasingly so. Since he had gained authority and confidence in the Masons and the Ku Klux Klan, he was committing more and more of his time to those activities and not the activities that kept food on his own table. It was 1949, and he had decided to sell his grocery store and devote himself to growing the KKK's membership and influence.

He smiled to himself. He thought North Carolina – Charlotte, maybe – would be fertile ground. And maybe down in the southern part of the state, near the state line. Whiteville, he thought. Whiteville is certainly an appropriate name for a town. The bell jangled as a customer walked in the front door. Hamilton did not bother to look up; he was still smiling to himself.

Southern newspapers praised the Klan and its mission

throughout the last decades of the 19th Century. In Montgomery, Alabama, the *Selma Times and Messenger* urged its readers to “organize a Ku-Klux Klan whenever ‘blacks’ organize a [Union] League.”² The *Mobile Register* echoed that, urging whites to organize “Ku Klux Clubs.”³ The editor of the Tuscaloosa *Monitor*, Ryland Randolph, formed and led a Klavern,⁴ while Colonel William L. Saunders, editor of the *Wilmington Journal* in North Carolina, was a leader of the Klan in 1867.⁵ The *Ku Klux Kaleidoscope* was published for a time in Goldsboro, North Carolina,⁶ while Texas had a pair of like newspapers: the *Ultra Ku Klux* in Jefferson and the *Daily Kukulux Vedette*.⁷ The *Forest Register* in Mississippi changed its name to the *Ku Klux* before an 1871 election.⁸ Other newspapers were less obvious in their affiliation, but no less committed. The Oxford, Mississippi *Falcon* in 1868 published the names of all local African Americans who voted.⁹ In North Carolina in the election of 1898, Josephus Daniels and his newspaper, the *News and Observer* of Raleigh, North Carolina, demonized African Americans and appealed to the fears of whites for

jobs and the safety of white women. Voices raised against the Klan were few in the South as the media, attendant to its financial interests and privileged place in Jim Crow culture, did not object to a system they were part of and helped perpetuate.

Horace Carter, owner and editor of the nearby *Tabor City Tribune*, and a friend of Cole, also battled the Klan. Their campaigns ultimately earned their newspapers the 1952 Pulitzer Prize for Meritorious Public Service, resulted in the arrest and conviction of over 300 presumed Klansmen, the imprisonment of 62 Klan members, and the complete dismantling of the organization in Columbus County, North Carolina and Horry County, South Carolina. These were the first Pulitzers awarded to any North Carolina newspapers or journalists and were the first non-daily newspapers nationwide to win.

Besides the *Tribune* and *News-Reporter*, four other newspapers won Pulitzers for Public Service, two of them outside the South: the now-defunct *New York World* in 1922 for exposing the internal operations of the Klan; Georgia's

Columbus Enquirer Sun in 1926 for a number of editorial stands, most notably for opposing the Klan, publicizing lynching, and supporting justice for African Americans; the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* for publishing editorial cartoons against the Klan and general news coverage; and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for its expose of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black's membership in the Alabama Klan.

There were precious few other voices. Ralph McGill of the *Atlanta Constitution*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Writing in 1959 and Hazel Freeman Brannon Smith, winner of the same award in 1964 and the first woman to win a Pulitzer. Smith owned four rural weekly newspapers in Mississippi and was cited for her general coverage of the Civil Rights movement. Hodding Carter II, owner and founder of the *Greenville Delta Democrat-Times* in Mississippi, was also a progressive southern journalist, but won the 1946 Pulitzer for editorial writing for his stands against the treatment of Japanese-Americans in World War II. Cole and Carter were in that thin tradition of progressive southerners who embraced

William Faulkner's view on race to "accept insult and contumely and the risk of violence, because we will not sit quietly by and see our native land, the South, . . . wreck and ruin itself twice in less than a hundred years."¹⁰

Purpose and methodology

It is the purpose of this study to examine the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in southeast North Carolina and northeast South Carolina during 1950-1953 through the *Whiteville News-Reporter* and its editor, Willard Cole. Cole's campaign took a toll on him personally and on the twice-weekly newspaper he edited: the *News-Reporter* lost 40 percent of its circulation during a three-year period while it opposed the KKK. Cole was repeatedly threatened and was compelled to carry a gun. This study relies principally on the archives of the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, encompassing the entirety the Klan's rise and fall in North and South Carolina, from its first appearance on the streets of Tabor City on July 22, 1950 through Cole's departure from the *News-Reporter* in the wake of the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize in May 1953.¹¹

Literature review

Like a storm-whipped wave, the Ku Klux Klan advanced and retreated numerous times since its founding, originally spawned amidst the chaos of the postbellum South "during the restless days when time was out of joint . . . and the social order was battered and turned upside down," stated scholar David Chalmers.¹² Into this environment, the Ku Klux Klan was founded by half a dozen ex-Confederate soldiers in Pulaski, Tennessee in a lawyer's office on Christmas Eve 1865.¹³ Historian Allen Trelease claimed the Klan was "transformed into a terrorist organization aimed at the preservation of white supremacy . . . a counterrevolutionary device to combat . . . Reconstruction policy in the South."¹⁴ Trelease added, "For more than four years [the Klan] whipped, shot, hanged, robbed, raped, and otherwise outraged Negroes and Republicans" and anyone else who crossed it.¹⁵ The Klan was never a monolithic organization as popularly portrayed, although its most prominent leader was former Confederate Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest.¹⁶

Renewed white patrols,

Black Codes, and anti-vagrancy laws were all aimed at controlling the behavior and movement of freedmen and were passed in the first two years after the end of the Civil War.¹⁷ The violence was echoed in the Carolinas in the early 1950s as the Klan attempted to reassert its dominance. By 1867, in scholar Sally Hadden's opinion, "Klan members routinely resorted to violence ... to punish freedmen for their political convictions and to prevent the enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment."¹⁸ The increasing violence, murders, and kidnappings and goaded by President Ulysses Grant, Congress reacted with the Ku Klux Klan Acts of 1871 and the Enforcement Acts,¹⁹ permitting suspension of habeas corpus and allowing federal intervention.²⁰ Driven underground, the Klan was given a new lease on life with the withdrawal of federal troops at the end of Reconstruction.²¹ In historian Walter L. Fleming's estimation, nearly all southern white men in the post-Civil War period took part in the wider movement that modern observers call the Klan.²² Fleming's scholarship runs counter to many histories that contend Klansmen were a distinct minority among

Southern men.²³

The Klan reappeared in 1915, stimulated by D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* and its romantic portrayal of the Klansman as the epitome of Southern chivalry.²⁴ A Methodist minister, William Joseph Simmons, took advantage of the racial tensions and formally reorganized the Klan in Georgia on Thanksgiving Day 1915 with a ceremony at Stone Mountain.²⁵ According to scholar Daryl Davis, the Klan was "depicted as the savior of the white race against the ravages and criminality of the black race."²⁶ Perhaps five million Americans belonged to one of the affiliated Ku Klux Klans during its height in the mid-1920s.²⁷ Even President Warren Harding was implicated.²⁸ More than 40,000 Klansmen paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., in 1924.²⁹

Thrusting itself into the political arena proved the Klan's undoing, Chalmers contended; the Klan simply could not deliver.³⁰ Its organization was splintered by factionalism and the greed and immorality of its leaders.³¹ The Klan expended considerable energy and political capital opposing Catholic Alfred E.

Smith's bid for the presidency in 1928 and, whether because of that or other reasons, it experienced a sharp decline in membership after that election. Its image became one of "popular disrepute" in scholar Arnold Rice's view.³² The Depression also contributed, in historian Daryl Davis's opinion, to the pullback of the Klan.³³ By scholar William Moore's reckoning, in 1930 there were only 35,000 Klansmen nationwide, a startling decline in half a decade.³⁴

There was always a strong moralistic and nativist strain to the Klan, overlaid by religious convictions. In both its first and second iterations, the Klan, historian Kathleen Blee explained, "linked sexual morality to racial and religious hatreds by depicting Jewish, Catholic, and black men as sexual savages."³⁵ Blee noted, "Wrapping political issues in the mantle of moral concern obscures underlying political agendas."³⁶ The image of white female purity and sexually predatory African American men were ubiquitous images that helped unite southern whites politically. As a technique, it effectively split the 1890s populist, progressive, and reformist movements in the South. It led towards segregation

and the disenfranchisement of blacks, according to historian Joel Williamson.³⁷ This transformed the political and social system of the South for half a century.³⁸ The Klan stoked a primal southern terror, what Williamson calls "the older fear," that blacks would "rise massively and kill whites, or do them bodily injury, or destroy their property."³⁹

In historian Peter Williams' view, "Violence has for centuries enjoyed a legitimacy in Southern culture that has shocked and baffled outsiders."⁴⁰ This is "expressed in such forms as dueling, lynching, or even overly aggressive stock-car racing," plus the violent outrages of the Klan, Williams added.⁴¹ According to Simeon Enser, an active Klansman in the 1950s, Klan violence had a salutary effect on people.⁴² "It kept a lot of people that was raising hell, and beating their wives, and running around, damn, if it didn't keep a lot of them home," he recalled.⁴³ Some Baptist preachers were in the Klan at that time, according to Enser.⁴⁴ In fact, some men joined the Klan to avoid becoming its target.⁴⁵

Again at Stone Mountain, Georgia, this time on May 9, 1946, the Klan tried to rise once more

from its own ashes, rejuvenated by an Atlanta physician, Dr. Samuel Green, who styled himself grand dragon.⁴⁶ In the early 1950s, the Civil Rights movement was just stirring and times were again unsettled in the South.⁴⁷ President Truman's unilateral integration of the military portended nothing good for Southern whites, many fretted. The southern "situation ... seemed conducive to Klan reorganization."⁴⁸

Green's death in August 1949 deprived the Invisible Empire of its only truly national leader until David Duke in the 1970s.⁴⁹ Into that vacuum in the early 1950s in the Carolinas stepped Thomas L. Hamilton, who had attended the Stone Mountain ceremony. He was initiated, along with 500 others, into the Klan, and was made an officer of the reborn KKK.⁵⁰ It was Hamilton, styling himself grand dragon, moved to Leesville, South Carolina and reintroduced the Klan into the area, only to be challenged by Cole and Carter.

As the 20th Century blended into the 21st, the number of hate groups doubled nationwide from 457 in 1999 to 917 in 2016.⁵¹ The vast majority in 2016 (663) were anti-government "patriot" and/or

militia groups that cast far wider nets of racism than the Klan, especially against Latinos and Hispanics. Scholar Patsy Sims claimed some violent hate groups regard the Klan as "outmoded and tame" and are committed to a "level of violence that makes the Klan pale" by comparison.⁵² Between 2006 and 2016, the number of organizations using a variation of Ku Klux Klan in their names had declined from 164 to 130 distinct groups.⁵³ Though accurate numbers are hard to come by and difficult to update, the Southern Poverty Law Center estimated there were between 5,000 and 8,000 active Klan members in the early years of the 21st Century.⁵⁴

Cole's background

Cole was born in Miller's Creek, North Carolina and graduated from North Wilkesboro High School.⁵⁵ The son and grandson of itinerant Methodist ministers, Cole spent a life in newspapers, jumping into journalism without a college education.⁵⁶ "We were brought up without any concept of race," his daughter Mary Jo Burnette recollected. "We were brought up to take account of people's

character, not their color.”⁵⁷

Cole worked first at The *Journal-Patriot* in North Wilkesboro in the printing department. One day, the newspaper’s publisher “came back and asked if there was anyone here who can write. My dad raised his hand. Two years later he was editor,” Burnette remembered.⁵⁸ Demonstrating a flair for journalism, Cole eventually became editor of the *Ashe County (N.C.) Journal*, following that with a stint as a reporter for the *Winston-Salem Journal*.⁵⁹ He was married twice and divorced once from his only wife.⁶⁰ In the midst of the Depression, gambling debts forced him to leave his family and hide with a relative in Ohio.⁶¹ He lived “the life of a hobo,” said Burnette, drifting from jobs in the coalfields to construction.⁶² He took over Carter’s job for two years as executive secretary of the Tabor City Merchants Association before assuming the editorship of The *News-Reporter* in 1948.⁶³ He left the *News-Reporter* in 1954 for several years, working as a field representative of the United States Brewers Foundation. In 1958, journalism lured him back again, and he became editor of the just-launched the *Lumberton Post* in

Lumberton, North Carolina.⁶⁴ He worked at the *Post* for five years before founding the *Robeson County Enterprise* in 1963, also in Lumberton.⁶⁵

This study employs historical research methods to examine the actions and coverage of Cole while he challenged the Ku Klux Klan and sketches the frames of those events. Historian and social scientist Donald Shaw contended a quarter century ago, “The content of the newspapers reflect the day-to-day judgments of the press at one level and the intrinsic values of a social system and culture at other levels.”⁶⁶ Each small decision accumulates, demonstrating and creating with considerable precision a picture of the opinions of a newspaper and its effect and agenda for the communities it serves.⁶⁷

I. COLE CONFRONTS THE KLAN

On Saturday evening, July 22, 1950, the Ku Klux Klan suddenly appeared on the streets of Tabor City, North Carolina, 20 miles from Whiteville. A parade of nearly 30 cars carrying 100 rifle-brandishing and robed vigilantes wound through its dusty streets; there was no violence at the KKK’s first appearance. A little

over a week later, the *News-Reporter* on July 31, 1950 ran the first of dozens of editorials opposing the Klan.⁶⁸

Columbus County has no need for such demonstrations as was staged recently by the Ku Klux Klansmen in Tabor City. Indeed, it has no need for the Klan.

It may be that some good may have been done by this organization [in the past] but the evil so outweighs the good that any county and any state can well do without this type of fraternity.

Any organization, whose roster of members is not available to the general public, may be, quite properly, looked upon with considerable skepticism. However orderly their parades and their meetings may be, Ku Klux Klansmen need some distinguishing characteristic other than a face covering before they have any place in the American way of life.⁶⁹

The *News-Reporter's* second editorial appeared in the August 31 edition – no separate news stories had yet appeared in the

News-Reporter – and was in response to the Klan attack on Fitzgerald's Myrtle Beach nightclub that resulted in the death of a police officer/ Klansman. "When James Daniel Johnson donned the pants, shirt and coat of a Conway policeman," Cole editorialized, "he was wearing the uniform of protection. When he draped himself in the robe of a Ku Klux Klansman, he was wearing the uniform of deception. It was in such a uniform that he was killed."⁷⁰ Cole continued,

Public judgment should ... be withheld until an inquiry is completed ... and only then will we know the full extent of the ignominy of this officer's demise.

If the information now available to the public is correct, Policeman Johnson got only what he deserved ... The Klansmen, of which Johnson was one, had turned into hoodlums and "torn up" the dance hall ...

It was bad enough for private citizens to cover themselves in the garb of the KKK, but for a

policeman to put a KKK robe over his officer's uniform and then engage in hoodlumism is almost incomprehensible.

The hope here is that there will be more men who don the uniform of protection and fewer who don the uniform of deception.⁷¹

In a September 21, 1950 editorial, Cole blasted the Klan for dragging a swimming instructor from his car and beating him.⁷² The *News-Reporter* blamed Hamilton for inciting mob violence in that same incident. "Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances when a man or men commit crimes of passion," said the editorial, "but there can be no mitigating circumstances when robed hoodlums attack innocent persons on the public highway."⁷³

A cross carved

An African American woman, Evergreen Flowers, was severely beaten by a mob of 40-50 unmasked men and was "virtually unable to walk" after the attack, the *News-Reporter* revealed in a January 22, 1951 front-page article.⁷⁴ As a "caravan of cars" encircled the Flowers' rural home,

Mrs. Flowers' husband, Willie, retrieved his gun, but found he was out of ammunition.⁷⁵ He "ran outside and went to the home of his brother about a half-mile away to obtain shells," though by the time he returned the assailants had fled.⁷⁶ Neighbors reportedly did not recognize any of the cars or their occupants, the story contended. Because neither Mr. nor Mrs. Flowers was "robbed or marked," this "eliminat[ed] any suspicion that it was an organized act of the Ku Klux Klan," according to authorities.⁷⁷ Since the Flowers could not identify any of their attackers, it was "difficult to make any progress in the investigation," the *Times-Reporter* explained.⁷⁸

In the *News-Reporter's* next edition, a front-page article revealed the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) had joined the investigation into the Flowers attack and new details were released.⁷⁹ No further violence had been reported to authorities, the newspaper observed. Mrs. Flowers had been beaten with a gun and sticks, had a cross carved into her hair, and shoved into the trunk of a car.⁸⁰ The Flowers' daughter was also home at the time of the attack,

which occurred just before midnight.⁸¹ Conversations overheard between the nightriders indicated that Willie Flowers was the target of their attack.⁸² Special protection was offered the Flowers, but they declined.⁸³ Authorities still clung stubbornly to their original assessment regarding the perpetrators, as did *The News-Reporter*: “There was a strong presumption that the Ku Klux Klan, as an organization, had nothing to do with the attack,” *The News-Reporter* continued. “It was believed that a gang of hoodlums, some of them from outside the county, had imbibed too freely and had set themselves up as judge and jury.”⁸⁴ However, the article concluded, “The proximity of the Chadbourn incident to Horry County, where the Ku Klux Klan has been charged with numerous crimes against helpless victims, served to heighten State and national interest.”⁸⁵

Four days later, in a January 29 editorial, the *News-Reporter* discussed the Flowers incident, again without mentioning the Klan. Instead, it still referred to the nightriders as a mob and as gangsters.⁸⁶ “There is no sanity in such a mob and not a semblance

of decency in the entire group,” Cole wrote. “Columbus County has no need and just as little respect for mob violence. Those responsible for this outrage deserve all the loathsome epithets that have been hurled in their direction and they must feel terribly cheap to have to listen in silence when called the sneaking cowards they are.”⁸⁷ Finally, Cole stated, “Columbus County does not want men of their stripe to take action against any citizen, no matter what the provocation.”⁸⁸ A month later, the Flowers’ home burned to the ground.⁸⁹ The Flowers family, however, had moved out of the rental property weeks earlier, though some of their property was still in the house and was destroyed.⁹⁰ A Columbus county sheriff’s department examination found no evidence of arson.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the SBI was invited to assist in the investigation, said the *News-Reporter*’s story on February 26.⁹² Future events and evidence would demonstrate it was a Klan attack.

In the dark overnight hours of Monday, April 30, 1951, “[u]nannounced and unobserved,” masked Ku Klux Klansmen fanned out across Whiteville, plastering stickers across town.⁹³

The stickers read, “KKK: Yesterday, Today and Forever,” next to an image of a Klansman on horseback waving a torch. Cole regarded the appearance of the Klan with rage. For the two years after Klansmen slapped those stickers on the *News-Reporter’s* building that April night, he angrily banged out articles and editorials on his ancient typewriter. Cole’s worries for his safety were well placed, said the memoirs of Early Brooks, a former police chief at Fair Bluff before and during the Klan uprising. “It was very well know[sic] the New Report [sic] editor slept with his pistol at his bedside, as well as traveled with it,” recalled Brooks.⁹⁴ “Most any of us would have taken a chance with him on his travels, but the occasion never presented itself.”⁹⁵

Unequivocal

In a May 5, 1951 editorial, the *News-Reporter* responded to stickers incident in unequivocal language.⁹⁶

Whether the pasting of stickers on doors and windows in Whiteville was the work of Klan representatives or pranksters, this is the sort of thing that is unwanted here.

The KKK has no place in a democracy.

The KKK is a symbol of mob violence. And mob violence is too much like a foreign ideology to be desirable in America.

Even if it were assumed that the Klan always has a noble objective when it marches in mobs, that is not the American way. Floggings lead to lynchings and lynchings lead to riots.

It cannot be said that justice is always meted out in a democracy, but there is no justice in mob action.⁹⁷

“If there are Klansmen in this area,” the editorial concluded, “let them take warning that their presence does not meet with the approval of the citizenry.”⁹⁸ As the editorial campaign and the violence escalated, Cole began to feel the effects personally. Handbills and notes were slipped under the wipers of his car and under the door of the *News-Reporter’s* office, warning that the Klan was watching.⁹⁹ Cole’s children had a personal curfew,

keeping them indoors after dark.¹⁰⁰ Occasionally, the family would be awakened at their Clay Street home in the middle of the night by knocking at the front door. But there would be no one there.¹⁰¹ Cole's car was vandalized.¹⁰² James High was courting publisher Leslie Thompson's daughter and only child Carolyn during the height of the Klan campaign. "We were just not allowed to park outside of the house and stay sitting in the car," he recalled.¹⁰³ In those days, couples would often sit on the porch on a summer's evening, but that, too, was unacceptably dangerous. Coming home from a date, the couple "had to knock on the door and announce who we were ... because the door was locked," something "a little unusual" during the early 1950s in rural North Carolina.¹⁰⁴

Cole would often write late at night and the shadows and the darkness and the noises of the old building and the outdoors left him uneasy. "When you're working at night and the wind blows sometime and the doors shake" made Cole justifiably nervous in High's opinion.¹⁰⁵ Sportswriter Jiggs Powers found Cole poking his revolver in his face one night when he entered the *News-Reporter*

building quietly.¹⁰⁶ Both men often worked late at night, Powers because of the nature of sports and Cole, probably because of the lack of distractions. "At night [Cole] would rare back in his chair, brought him a glass [of bourbon] ... and on his right side he had a pistol ... and they would converse about" what Cole had written, High stated.¹⁰⁷ "What do you think about this? ... Let me read you something," Cole would ask Powers, said High.¹⁰⁸ "Then he would light up a cigarette, maybe take a swig, but always like I say, had the pistol."¹⁰⁹

A Sunday school picnic

Cole splashed word across the front page of the August 13 edition of a night rally, promised to be the most spectacular in the Southeast for a quarter century.¹¹⁰ Hamilton and Grand Dragon Bill Hendrix of Florida were slated to speak at a rally in a tobacco field on Saturday, August 18.¹¹¹ The *News-Reporter* stated that District Solicitor Clifton Moore would prosecute anyone caught disguising his or her voice, giving secret passwords, and/or covering her or his face.¹¹² Cole reported on the rally in the August 20 edition. The story appeared on the front

page of the *News-Reporter*, as did virtually every article during the Klan uprising (editorials excepted). Cole made a conscious decision to let his community know that the most important issue facing the area was not the ongoing Korean War or the impending presidential election, but the challenge presented by the Klan.

“The Ku Klux Klan openly invaded Columbus County with a spectacular, circus-like roadside show eight miles south of here Saturday night,” Cole wrote, “and defiantly declared that “there will be many more such meetings in North Carolina during the coming months ...”¹¹³ Turning out for the well-advertised assembly were an estimated 5,000 people – robed Klansmen, Klan sympathizers, and those drawn through curiosity. The well-organized meeting apparently went off as planned.

There was no disorder ... Police seemed to be everywhere as a reported 97 robed Klansmen went through their ritual, but they had nothing to do except handle traffic. The Klansmen were as peaceful as a Sunday school picnic and the crowd was just as orderly.¹¹⁴

Scattered applause punctuated Hamilton and Hendrix’s speeches. The two leaders “blasted virtually everything but the BIBLE and the Klan” for 90 minutes, Cole wrote.¹¹⁵ Photographers lit the scene eerily with “almost continuous” picture taking.¹¹⁶ A trio of Klansmen posed for photographs in front of their Klan banner as if it was a tourist attraction.¹¹⁷ As many as 700 of those present asked for membership applications, said a source. Applicants were reportedly vetted to prevent infiltration by law enforcement or anti-Klan sympathizers.¹¹⁸

On an inside page, another article appeared, filled with small observations and anecdotes from the rally.¹¹⁹ “The audience failed to respond in saying the Lord’s Prayer,” when prompted by Klan leaders.¹²⁰ Readers learned that there were “a million flash bulbs” and that *Life* magazine had sent several photographers, as had the Associated Press.¹²¹ Hamilton tolerated the flashes until a photographer snapped a shot of Klansman passed out from the heat.¹²² Hamilton told the crowd, “the KKK stands for truth, right

and justice” and would “fight for segregation to the last ounce of blood” regardless of what the Supreme Court might rule.¹²³

The Klan held a nocturnal rally in a field between Whiteville and Tabor City on August 18, 1951 prompting a rare front-page *News-Reporter* editorial.¹²⁴ It was the most intensely and overtly religious editorial by either newspaper involved in the Pulitzer Prize-winning campaign against the Klan. The themes discussed – morality, religion, loving thy neighbor, submitting to civil law, conformity to the social order – are many of the general themes interlaced throughout the entire campaign by the *Whiteville News-Reporter*.

The *News-Reporter* chose to frame the editorial through strong religious imagery, choosing “The Doctrine of Love” as its title in a good versus evil, love versus hate dichotomy. There are numerous other similar pairings in the editorial: defiance of the law and obedience, moral and immoral, Christian and antichristian, law and order and chaos. Just below the title of the editorial, in large letters, was a scriptural quotation: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s

sake.”¹²⁵ It set the tone for the entire piece. “Every Christian should be concerned – prayerfully concerned – and every citizen should be concerned with what was advocated at the Klan meeting between Whiteville and Tabor City,” the editorial began.¹²⁶

Every citizen of our country should be concerned because the very foundation of our way of life – the Christian and democratic way of life – is at issue. Are we to become a nation where class is pitted against class and race against race?

The doctrine expounded by the speakers at the meeting was, in the main, a doctrine of hate and defiance – defiance of the law ... Hatred of certain people and groups and races was fervently demonstrated. Certain conditions that exist in our midst were related in an effort to justify this doctrine of defiance of the law and legally constituted authorities ... The failures, evil and immorality of some were used as some of the pitiful reasons, or excuses, to justify this group taking the law into their own hands, becoming self-appointed judges, jury and

executioners. Such a philosophy is difficult of acceptance.¹²⁷

After setting the scene, the editorial then moved into the heart of the religious argument.

Jesus taught us by saying, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “And who is my neighbor?” the lawyer asked Him. He answered with the parable about the good Samaritan, with which we are all familiar. This parable teaches us that our neighbor is anyone – red, yellow, black, white, Jew, Gentile, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist [sic], or Moslem . . . Our neighbor is all men because God created man – all men – in His own image, and after the creation, God blessed man.¹²⁸

Then the editorial moved from God’s law and sphere into that of humans: law, liberty, and order. The *News-Reporter* contended that Christian duty required obedience to human law to protect a nation from external and internal enemies.

The very existence of our material world is founded upon the law and order of God, as

taught in our Bible. Our social order is founded upon the laws of our land. Our country was founded upon the principles of freedom and liberty. Our laws are based on the wisdom of the ages. We, as citizens of this country, have the Christian duty, as well as the patriotic duty, to uphold and defend our country from attack, both from without and within. We have only to become acquainted with what is going on in the world today to realize that ours is the most favored nation, and we, as citizens of it, are the most favored of all peoples. We reached this position, not by defiance of authority, but by living under and in obedience to the laws which we have (or should have) a part in making. We reached this position, not by hating one another, but by an honest effort to understand our neighbor.¹²⁹

Concluding, the *News-Reporter* urged forgiveness, not retribution.

The challenge that faces our nation and world today is not the hate doctrine as preached so fervently on this recent humid August night between

two of Columbus County's important communities, but the doctrine of love as taught by the Blessed Messiah two thousands years as He walked in a world that was just as sinful as the one we know . . . in a world that He pleaded with to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's . . . in a world where He was to hear men who hated, not loved, so bitterly that it chose a murderer in preference to the Son of God . . . a doctrine of love, not hate, such as Christ manifested when He prayed: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."¹³⁰

There should be no hatred – no hatred even of the Ku Klux Klan. There should be only an earnest effort to understand that Christ taught obedience to law – that he preached a doctrine of the brotherhood of man.¹³¹

An editorial in the August 20 issue, suggesting that Klan headgear might be masking hoodlums, drew a threatening letter from a Klan sympathizer,

published on the front page of the August 27 *News Reporter*.¹³² In a few sentences, rife with grammatical errors, Cole was told to "stop your yapping about the KKK," since it was "only out for the right things in life," the letter writer stated.¹³³ "Every decent person is in favor of the KKK & their purpose," so "stop acting the fool" and "you wont have anything to worry about."¹³⁴ The letter concluded with a warning against further "publistie" and to "watch your step here after."¹³⁵ The *News-Reporter* did not comment or reply editorially, though it is important to note that the newspaper was allowing its opponents the right of reply and did so in as prominent a location as its own criticisms of the Klan. Carter believed doing so actually helped prevent physical violence against the editors and reporters opposing the Klan.¹³⁶

A thin crowd

The next Klan rally, nearly two months after the first, drew a thin crowd that "seemed indifferent and munched boiled peanuts as if bored by the proceedings."¹³⁷ What it lacked in numbers, it made up in vitriol, according to the *News-Reporter's*

account.¹³⁸ The Klan “emptied its bag of hate in an hour-long tirade before a few hundred people . . . on the same field where it attracted 5,000” people earlier.¹³⁹ Instead of “praying language,” Hamilton “hurled unprintable words at the Klan’s pet hates.”¹⁴⁰ Three days later the *News-Reporter* commented editorially on the rally along with the earlier one in August.¹⁴¹ “In the August Klan rally, Grand Dragon Hamilton prayed piously and invoked the blessings of God,” opened Cole’s editorial. “It was a stirring appeal with every indication of reverence and was accepted as such even by those who disagreed with his subsequent declarations of hatred.”¹⁴² Cole came to the point of the Klan in the next paragraph.

What is underneath the Klan’s cloak of piety came to light at the second rally. Undoubtedly peeved by the lack of public response to his hate campaign, Hamilton could restrain himself no longer and unleashed a tirade of unprintable words, calling people names not used in polite society and certainly not by people who claim an affinity with the God of love.¹⁴³

A month later, the Klan rated another editorial, this time in

the wake of the arrest of 11 of 25 robed Klansmen for parading down the aisles of a church in full regalia and then stepping onto public property while still masked in violation of a new South Carolina law.¹⁴⁴ About a dozen of the Klansmen escaped police, doing “what any scared rat will do,” Cole remarked, “scurry for the cellar and the attic.”¹⁴⁵ Horry County, South Carolina sheriff Norman Sasser was applauded for “a long struggle in his balliwick” that eventually culminated in the arrests. “He couldn’t convict anybody for the murder of a Conway policeman because a grand jury wouldn’t indict,” the *News-Reporter* editorialized, “but the South Carolina Legislature gave him and other officers an anti-mask law which should prove most effective.”¹⁴⁶

II. FEAR RODE ALONG

It was rare for a byline to appear in the *News-Reporter* of this period. However, on the front page of the November 19 edition was an exception, “Fear Rode Along,” carrying Cole’s byline and set in two-column type.¹⁴⁷ It was the story – part-opinion, part-fact – of one of the victims of the nightriders. “I saw the dark spots

on the victim's thighs!" Cole began. "Through the red coloring of a common disinfectant, I saw the results of a vicious assault by masked hoodlums," made by a leather strap "cut from a discarded harness for a horse." He continued the narrative:

He told me how it happened. He was at home, where all citizens, both good and bad except those convicted of crime and sentenced to jail, should be at 11 o'clock at night. The guise of an emergency was used to bring him out into the open, the details of which will be omitted from this item. Ordered inside a waiting automobile, he sat down with burly men whose faces were hidden by masks. Let all the honest, upright, God-fearing people take this ride with him!

For a mile or so, his eyes were free to see whatever there was to see in a murky night. Others sat in the car, but they were not the only passengers. Fear, with a capital F, rode with him. A screaming, hysterical family had seen him go. Their cries were still ringing in his ears.

Where? What? Why? These

were questions which surged through his fear-stricken mind. But for the moment they went unanswered. As the victim and Fear, and his captors rode along, other cars joined the procession. And a blindfold was put [on] . . . to blot out everything except the unreasoning dread of what might be in store for him.

Cole then turned to the attack itself, delivering images that must have taken his readers right to that spot on an empty country road.

Perhaps, it was less than an hour that passed before the victim came face to face with his punishment. Two men held both his arms. And the barbarism of centuries ago welled up in the men who had gathered for this resurrection of savagery and bestiality.

Swish went the instrument of torture as it slapped against human flesh on one leg. Swish went a similar instrument of torture as it struck the other leg. And alternately went the belt-type pieces of leather as a man on the left and a man on the right satisfied their lust for

the sight of pain.

When these gentlemen (?) of law and order had finished with their human target, they set him free – free to go home but not free of fear.¹⁴⁸

The investigation was at a dead end and the logistics of the case were daunting. “Can they patrol every [sic] road in the county? Can they call every citizen in for questions and get an admission of guilt from the guilty?” Cole asked.¹⁴⁹ He wondered whether it was the work of Klansmen. “Your guess is as good as mine. But they were wearing masks. And this sort of thing wasn’t happening before the KKK was organized in this area,” he believed.¹⁵⁰

The victim I talked to declared emphatically that he was innocent of the fault which the masked men gave as their excuse for the flogging. I don’t know about the merits of the case. I just saw the results.

The bruised flesh made me wonder how many others have been treated in the same manner. It raised the question of how many citizens cannot go

to sleep at night with a feeling of security that they will not be molested in the privacy of their homes.

“Officers will never raise the curtain from this sort of lawlessness and hoodlumism,” Cole admitted, because there simply were not enough personnel.¹⁵¹ He chose to overlook the obvious – that some of those officers were either Klansmen or at least sympathetic to their cause. It would take “an aroused public” to dismantle and banish the Klan, he concluded. “Until this is accomplish [sic], each citizen may well ask the question: Am I next?”¹⁵²

A photo of the bruised legs of Clayton Sellers, who was unidentified, appeared in adjoining columns.¹⁵³ The front-page banner story described two recent floggings.¹⁵⁴ Sellers was kidnapped from his home, but not without a struggle. Both his wife and he managed to fire five shots at the masked men who abducted him, while his mother nearly pulled off the mask of one of the nightriders.¹⁵⁵ Sellers was taken across the South Carolina line, flogged with a piece of tire, and accused of beating his mother, a

charge he denied then and later.¹⁵⁶ The beating of Robert Lee Gore was detailed in another front-page story, with a notation that it had not been reported immediately by the victim, said the *News-Reporter's* account.¹⁵⁷ The Klan's campaign of violence was accelerating and the pages of the *News-Reporter* began to fill with stories of the KKK.

A dream

"We dreamed last night of a trial in court," Cole began an editorial on November 26, 1951.

On the bench sat a man wearing a robe, but not the robe of a jurist. His face was masked and none could tell whether he was ... any of the ... legally-trained men who ordinarily occupy the bench in Superior Court.

Over in the jury box were 12 men, all wearing masks and robes. There was no way of knowing whether they were Klansmen or just men who happened to cloak themselves in the regalia similar to that of the Klan ...

Counsel for the defense was denied the privilege of asking

the name of any juror who was about to sit in judgment upon the guilt or innocence of his client. He could make no challenge.¹⁵⁸

The defense was not allowed to find out whether there was "spite" in the heart of the jurors, whether one of the juror's "corn had been trampled last summer by the defendant's stray cows, or whether the judge was a "booze hound, a philanderer, or an honest, God-fearing citizen."¹⁵⁹

We knew that this was typical of how victims of mob violence are tried. The only regret was that those who participate in terroristic activities could not have a similar dream, because we know that if any of them were brought into court and asked to stand trial before a masked judge and jury, they would be the first to cry out for their rights in the Constitution.¹⁶⁰

"It was a revealing dream," Cole concluded. "May others have the same."¹⁶¹

Three issues later, Woodrow Johnson, a white mechanic, was beaten for "drinking."¹⁶² He left his house to help two men whose

car, ostensibly, had broken down.¹⁶³ Johnson was hustled into a car and driven to an isolated spot where he was bent over the car's fender and thrashed with a belt.¹⁶⁴ As many as 25 men were involved, Johnson estimated.¹⁶⁵

Christmas wishes

Following in the vein of "Fear Rides Along" editorial, Cole addressed his next letter to Santa Claus in the Christmas Eve 1951 edition.¹⁶⁶ The editorial opened with a list of the three top stories of 1951: the approval of the health and agriculture program in a special election, location of a new industry in Whiteville, and the "invasion of Columbus County" by the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁶⁷ Cole let Santa Claus off the hook for the Klan's appearance. "Our earliest recollection of you and annual contacts for two-score years furnish positive assurance that you strive only to give the best possible for each person you visit," Cole wrote. "So, we're not blaming you for the KKK invasion or the subsequent acts of mob violence."¹⁶⁸

[W]e ask you, Mr. Claus, to fill our homes with love for humanity, with a broader understanding of the meaning

for Christmas, with a knowledge that the birth of Christ was God's way of showing His love for His people, and with the realization that the Messiah taught a doctrine of love rather than a doctrine of hate and terror.

If you, Dear Santa, have space in your pack, will you please leave all of us enough of the capacity to think clearly to enable us to understand that when the people run the government, there is mob violence; and when the government runs the people, there is dictatorship. Give us a package of common sense to maintain the balance in which we preserve our liberties and free enterprise and at the same time our cherished tradition of law and order.¹⁶⁹

Santa Claus may have been employed as a stand-in representation of Jesus, allowing a more informal and conversational approach in keeping with the holiday season that was a combination of the sacred and the secular.

III. THE TURNING POINT

The New Year 1952 came, and there was no turning point evident. But it was there nonetheless, present in two front-page stories. The first detailed the sentencing of three Nakina, North Carolina men to two years on the road gang for “threatening to ‘klux’” a farmer if he did not evict an African American tenant farmer.¹⁷⁰ The offense happened on Christmas Day, 1951, said the news story.¹⁷¹ It was the first conviction since the Klan first appeared in Columbus County, North Carolina and Horry County, South Carolina. The Ku Klux Klan was not specifically mentioned, according to one witness quoted in the *News-Reporter* story, only that the word “klux” was used.¹⁷² One of the defendants’ eventual excuses for using the word was that it “had entered the language as a verb synonymous” with beating.¹⁷³ The threatened farmer chased off the trio with his shotgun.¹⁷⁴ Columbus County solicitor Robert S. Schulken called the incident “the most terrible thing that has ever happened in Columbus County,” declaring that “when it gets to the place that a man can’t say who is going to live on his place, it is a

matter of grave concern.”¹⁷⁵ The tenant farmer was not named in open court, the *News-Reporter* stated.¹⁷⁶

“Only six hours after three men had been sentenced to two years each for threatening to ‘klux’ a Nakina farmer, mob violence flared again,” the *News-Reporter* noted in a nearby column.¹⁷⁷ H. D. Best was “seized” from his home after being persuaded to look up a phone number for two men searching for a Whiteville car dealership.¹⁷⁸ He was accused of mistreating his wife by a “mob” of at least 15 men who flogged him until he was “almost numb,” requiring hospitalization.¹⁷⁹ Columbus County Sheriff Hugh Vance kept most details of the attack “confidential,” declining to confirm whether Best recognized any of his assailants.¹⁸⁰ The pattern of the attack was “almost identical” to other floggings, the sheriff reported.¹⁸¹ The *News-Reporter* writer noted in the article’s concluding paragraph that “the public has ignored the seriousness of the situation and unsuspecting victims are falling easy prey.”¹⁸²

On January 17, an exhaustive account of a Klan abduction took almost one column of the front page and

three columns on page two of a “graphic,” written as an almost blow-by-blow, minute-by-minute narrative of an attack on Lee and Louise Tyson with a “leather belt and boards as wide as my three fingers and just as thick,” said one of the victims.¹⁸³ “Hoodlums wearing regalia like that of the Ku Klux Klan committed” the “vicious” flogging.¹⁸⁴ The couple was snatched while walking in early December, accompanied by Sheriff Sasser, who was, evidently, not attacked.¹⁸⁵ The *News-Reporter*, though, implied involvement of the Horry county sheriff, who, for reasons never disclosed, drove the Tysons to Hallsboro to buy liquor.¹⁸⁶ “The Tysons made no mention of the seemingly remarkable coincidence that they had been carried by the same spot [by Sasser] twice during the course of the evening and that it was on the third trip that” their pick-up truck “was brought to a halt,” by another vehicle, although it did not block the road.¹⁸⁷ At least six men wrenched the Tysons from the truck. Details of the assault were not released until more than a month later.¹⁸⁸ The ostensible excuse for the beating was Mr. Tyson’s refusal to attend church or allow his family to attend.¹⁸⁹

Said the *News-Reporter*, “Tyson had heeded the mob’s warning” and had “gone regularly since he was flogged.”¹⁹⁰ It was the fifth reported flogging in recent weeks attributed to the Klan; two similar attacks could not be directly blamed on the KKK, although the details were similar.¹⁹¹

The coverage and the attacks had been coming so quickly that Cole and the *News-Reporter* considered it newsworthy to wonder in the January 17 edition that “a strange but welcome quiet, as if a ‘cease-fire’ had been ordered, reigned” on the Klan front during the previous weekend with no reported attacks.¹⁹² The newspaper speculated it might be the “proverbial calm before the storm.”¹⁹³ Vance “declined to speculate on the possibility” that Klan members had “temporarily or permanently” called off their campaign.¹⁹⁴ “In lay circles,” the *News-Reporter* observed, “it was regarded as unlikely that the mob had been frightened into hiding.”¹⁹⁵ Police officials would not comment on any possible resumption of the Klan “rampage.”¹⁹⁶

Reaction from the pulpit

Referring to the Klan in all but name, the Columbus County Ministerial Association in late January 1952 “lashed out at hooded lawlessness,” said Cole, beneath an eight-column, two-line banner headline.¹⁹⁷ The *News-Reporter* printed the text of a letter that would be read from the pulpits of churches of all denominations on January 27.¹⁹⁸ Ministers had been quiet up to this point, something the group alluded to in its public proclamation.¹⁹⁹ “The continued increase in instances of lawless[ness] has made it necessary that we, as ministers, declare ourselves opposed to such acts,” the group announced.²⁰⁰ The ministers declared, “We believe that the organization which inspired these acts to be destructive of law and order and conducive to individual fear, political corruption, and general anarchy.”²⁰¹ It would take “Christian citizens [to] stand against this evil” and urged cooperation with police.²⁰²

The *News-Reporter* described a threat against a Fair Bluff church for inviting an African American quartet to perform.²⁰³ The concert was cancelled in the wake of

threats reportedly from the Klan.²⁰⁴ The pregnant wife of the minister was particularly distressed and the minister complained of a recurrence of an old stomach ailment and hypertension. They left town very soon afterwards.²⁰⁵ There were numerous instances over three years of Klansmen marching down church aisles on Sundays, intimidating clergy and parishioners alike. Cole praised the ministers for their “daring that characterized the spiritual leaders of old ... the only position that men of God can take.” Cole urged that the ministers be protected. “If any pastor, who has spoken out in defense of freedom, is molested in any way, either by threats or by efforts to oust him, he must have the united backing of every God-fearing man.”²⁰⁶

In a “surprise” action, Hamilton disbanded the Fair Bluff Klavern for “un-Klannish” activities,” the *News-Reporter* stated on the front page of its January 28 edition.²⁰⁷ Officials “continued their silence on the possible meaning” of the action.²⁰⁸ Hamilton did not contact the *News-Reporter*, but notified the Associated Press instead.²⁰⁹ He accused some Fair Bluff Klansmen of the “wrong attitude”

and taking “the law in their own hands,” something the Klan did not approve of, according to the *News-Reporter* story.²¹⁰ “The viciousness of a threat to the church brought a shudder to outsiders as the news gradually leaked out,” Cole wrote.²¹¹ In a January 28 editorial, Cole noted, “[I]f the Fair Bluff Klavern became so rotten as to merit the disavowal of Grand Dragon Hamilton, it must be pretty bad.”²¹² Cole urged the Klan leader to release the membership list to authorities, so the guilty could be punished. Otherwise, Cole reasoned, Hamilton was “a rat deserting a sinking ship.”²¹³

Blackville

Cole claimed in the same January 28 editorial that Whiteville’s reputation had sustained a black eye in the statewide and the national press and called the town “Blackville.” The racial parallel is both striking and uncomfortable, if not paternalistic and racist. “Columbus County is ... known as a place of floggings and mob violence” caused by Hamilton and his cronies.²¹⁴ “The development which substituted ‘black’ for ‘white’ in the name of Whiteville

was the hoodlumism which came out of the tirade of hate and pseudo-piety at the Klan rally,” Cole claimed.²¹⁵ “Only the extermination of this cancerous growth can restore” the reputation of Whiteville, Cole continued.²¹⁶ “And this is the time for all honest, decent believers in the future of Columbus County to stand up and be counted. This is the time for the disbanding of all Klaverns.”²¹⁷

Several incidents were mentioned in a front-page update in the January 31 issue. A motorist, apparently feigning car trouble, attempted to convince a Whiteville man to help him. The intended victim refused to leave his house and instead gave the man a “raking over” for trying to induce him to work on the car.²¹⁸ The next morning the Whiteville man received a warning note from the Klan.²¹⁹ A Brunswick County flogging was reported along with an attack by nightriders on an unnamed woman from several months earlier.²²⁰

On February 4, Cole revealed “newly disclosed” incidents involving a lawyer, flogged early in January, and two other men, one African American and the other white.²²¹ The

African American man was flogged for “cussing in front of a white woman” and for becoming drunk, the *News-Reporter* maintained.²²² The attorney was beaten for “not caring for his family.”²²³ A woman escaped a beating because she was pregnant; the Klansmen cut a cross into her hair instead.²²⁴ A widower was also beaten, though his purported crime was not revealed.²²⁵ Yet another man was convinced to leave his home on the pretense of a house-painting job and then flogged.²²⁶

In a further assault, a supposed Klansman knocked at a house, but a woman refused to come out, denying her husband was home.²²⁷ The Klansman replied he knew otherwise and made a motion as if to batter the door open with his shoulder.²²⁸ Inexplicably, he then left. “What the men didn’t know, but apparently sensed, was that the intended victim was standing in an unlighted hallway, directly in line with the front door, with a shotgun and was prepared to mow them down when they came through the screen” door, the *News-Reporter* explained.²²⁹ The newspaper would not “vouch for the accuracy of this story,” but it

seemed “typical of the armed readiness of many homes.”²³⁰

The *News-Reporter*’s campaign continued its two-front campaign through news coverage and editorials. Cole picked up on the theme: “[A]s we interpret citizenship, the citizen’s first obligation is to law and order.”²³¹ That obligation, Cole editorialized, implied “an oath of allegiance to his government.”²³² Those who keep an oath to the Klan “are aiding and abetting in mob violence and should welcome the opportunity to break the Klan oath.”²³³ Those who broke their pledge to the Klan should not be “suffering any pangs of conscience ... to a cause which is found to have no sacredness.”²³⁴

IV. AN “EXTRA”

“Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation today bagged ten alleged Columbus County floggers,” The *News-Reporter* told its readers in a special, extra edition on February 16, 1952, under a huge headline: “10 Floggers Nabbed.”²³⁵ The banner story continued, “Operating in the cloud-darkened dawn of Saturday morning, between 35 and 40 FBI agents swooped across the Flair Bluff countryside and picked up”

the 10 Klansmen “without difficulty.”²³⁶ The *News-Reporter’s* extra was published on Saturday, February 16, hours after the FBI raids were staged.²³⁷ The Klansmen were “marched, handcuffed, between at least two agents” to be “advised of the charges against” them.²³⁸ The 10 men, some of them “unshaven” and all of them “crestfallen,” did not appear to recognize each other, said the *News-Reporter*.²³⁹ Two of those arrested were former police officers: Early Brooks, former chief of police at Fair Bluff and Horace Strickland, a former Tabor City policeman.²⁴⁰ Brooks was grand kleagle of the Fair Bluff Klavern disbanded by Hamilton.

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover announced the arrests himself in Washington, DC. The Klansmen were charged in the case of North Carolinians Dorothy and Ben Grainger, flogged on October 6, 1951, a case that had been kept quiet by the FBI.²⁴¹ Ben Grainger was forced to remove his clothes and Klansmen in their robes and hoods beat him until he defecated, said the *News-Reporter* account.²⁴² The couple was taken across state lines into South Carolina, giving

the FBI jurisdiction.²⁴³

Thirteen flogging incidents were included in the indictments, according to the *News-Reporter*.²⁴⁴ The newspaper detailed, briefly, the incidents, starting with the Evergreen Flowers beating in January 1951.²⁴⁵ Cole also reported several incidents of “telephone-users” with “stalled automobiles” who were dissuaded when they saw potential victims display firearms. One potential victim let his bathrobe “accidentally” gap open, revealing a .38 in his belt.²⁴⁶ Whiteville, Cole wrote, was “shaken” when Dick Best was beaten and the town’s windows were “rattled” when Rev. Purcell was threatened.²⁴⁷ The *News-Reporter* also published details of a drive-by shooting of an African American family’s home.²⁴⁸ At least 18 bullets “rained” into the house; James Stevens and his family were instructed to leave town within 10 days by Klansmen.²⁴⁹ “Stevens’ testimony in a whiskey case one day earlier may have been a motive,” the newspaper reported.²⁵⁰

In the second of only two front-page editorials, and beneath a photo of a Klan sign, Cole warned that just “the cessation of violence . . . is not the answer to

the county's present predicament."²⁵¹ He added that it does not mark the goal which must be obtained . . . to [vaccinate] against this cancerous growth upon the body of society." Rather, all those "guilty of these atrocities must be ferreted out . . . and punished."²⁵² Cole concluded, "Over the platform at the great Klan rally last August and on the stickers, which this gang of nightriders plastered on cars and store windows, were the words, "Yesterday, Today and Forever." Only when "Yesterday is left and "Today and Forever" have been deleted permanently from the Ku Klux Klan activities in this county will the task of our citizenry be accomplished."²⁵³

Three days later, in the *News-Reporter's* banner story of its regular Monday edition, the U.S. district attorney announced he would not be seeking the death penalty in the cases.²⁵⁴ Work was progressing on another 11 cases, the article related.²⁵⁵ A photo of some of the 10 men arrested in the first wave of arrests was spread across half the front page: "No longer hooded," the caption read.²⁵⁶

The task ahead

"The unmasking of 10 former Klansmen," Cole wrote in a February 21 editorial, was "merely the first step along the road back to security and orderly existence for Columbus County."²⁵⁷ He urged readers to "take a second look at any denials" from Hamilton about Klan complicity in the violence.²⁵⁸ "There is one thing he cannot deny," Cole wrote. "12 people were not flogged with ropes and pieces of machine belting in the six months before he spat, with pseudo-piety, his doctrine of hate and prejudice in a dusty field . . . [and] that such floggings did occur in the following six months."²⁵⁹

Cole looked deeper at the cause of the Klansman's enmity, wondering whether "education and religion" had failed them.²⁶⁰ "Have members of this movement and their sympathizers been neglected by society in such a way as to cause a perverted sense of human values?" he wondered.²⁶¹ "Has any agency really tried to help these people in the proper manner?"²⁶² Cole urged establishing a "council on family relations" and bringing the parents of juvenile delinquents into court, something that California was

experimenting with at the time.²⁶³ He felt it worthwhile to employ an investigator to look into the “cause of the unwholesome atmosphere which the Klan claimed it sought to correct.”²⁶⁴

“Maybe our answer will be that we can’t afford this sort of program, that we haven’t time to attempt more than enforcing the letter of the law,” Cole added.²⁶⁵ “But it won’t be an adequate answer.²⁶⁶ It won’t alter the fact that we haven’t hesitated to ask the Federal Government, the State Government, and the county to spend many, many thousands of dollars” tracking down the nightriders.²⁶⁷ He concluded:

Mob violence must go. The contemptible cowards who hide behind a hood and robe to deprive men of their liberties, even if only for an hour, must be caught and punished. But an enlightened citizenry must do more than rest easy when that task is accomplished. With the dawn of another day of orderly existence must come a program, intelligently planned and efficiently executed, to encourage slum-dwellers among our rural population to develop a sense of responsibility as to their duties

as parents and citizens. Failing that, little will have been learned from this horrible experience with hoodlumism.²⁶⁸

Arrests keep coming

A floodgate of arrests and indictments seemed to have opened. On February 28, 1952, another dozen men were arrested, this time in Chadbourn, North Carolina in connection with an attack on Esther Lee Floyd.²⁶⁹ Cole called it a “curtain-raiser” to the unfolding drama” of the Klan’s dismantling.²⁷⁰ Police officials “smiled broadly” when asked whether more arrests were expected.²⁷¹ Cole reported “the Ku Klux Klan nightmare in Columbus County appeared certain to be bared in minutest detail.”²⁷² Police had followed supposed Klansmen, the *News-Reporter* related, and cases had been built carefully as “positive proof” was sought, rather than “the unsupported identification of a frightened victim.”²⁷³ Four days later, the *News-Reporter* stated a federal grand jury in Raleigh had indicted 10 ex-members of the Klan on kidnapping and conspiracy charges.²⁷⁴ Several of them had been charged earlier after the first FBI round-up, while others were

newly-indicted Klansmen.²⁷⁵ Three days after that another half dozen men – three of them from Whiteville and one a second former Fair Bluff police chief – were arrested, some of them hauled out of their beds.²⁷⁶ Warrants for an additional four were being temporarily withheld.²⁷⁷ A semi-pro baseball player, Floyd Rogers, was arrested. He was also a sergeant first class in the Fair Bluff Battery of the National Guard, said the article.²⁷⁸

Reeling from the arrests, Hamilton lashed out at the nation's newspapers at a rally in South Carolina, according to the *News-Reporter's* March 6, 1952 issue.²⁷⁹ It was self-promoted Imperial Wizard Hamilton's first public appearance since the mass arrests.²⁸⁰ "When the truth is out on those floggings in North Carolina, you'll find few Klansmen connected with them," Hamilton claimed. "I have personally tossed out ... and disbanded Klansmen because they didn't live up to the ideals of the Klan."²⁸¹ Hamilton then added, "I will protect God's House to the last drop of my blood and that isn't true of some of our preachers. See them on Sunday wearing robes in church and then watch their actions on

the other six days of the week."²⁸² Solicitor Malcolm Seawell of Robeson County declared that no one could belong to the Klan in his county after digging "up an old carpetbagger and scalawag law to clamp down on the Klan."²⁸³ Hamilton responded, "But nowhere in the constitution of North Carolina does it say that the Klan is banned. And the attorney general of that state has proven me correct in this argument."²⁸⁴

The third straight Fair Bluff, North Carolina police chief, Jack Ashley, was indicted in connection with two floggings on April 1, perhaps appropriately, and removed from office the next day, said the *News-Reporter* in an April 3 front-page article.²⁸⁵ Legal maneuvers commenced, *News-Reporter* readers learned in another front-page article, something they should have expected if they had kept the editorial clipping from January 21 predicting such an eventuality.²⁸⁶ While the case would likely be tried in Columbus County, the jury would be selected from an adjoining county.²⁸⁷

Turning on each other

The *News-Reporter's* front-page columns, once filled with accounts of mob violence, were

now filled instead with stories of the trials of those involved in the floggings. And, cornered, the Klansmen began to break ranks and turn on each other. Former police chief and grand kleagle Brooks changed his plea to “no contest” in a “dramatic” courtroom development just as his victim prepared to testify.²⁸⁸ “A murmur swept the courtroom and Brooks immediately left the seat he had occupied as one of the defendants,” the *News-Reporter* related.²⁸⁹ The victim, Woodrow Johnson, “pointed his finger” at another defendant, identifying him along with Brooks, as the two men who had “lured him into the hands of the nightriders.”²⁹⁰ Johnson testified that Barfield “grabbed him around the neck” and warned him not to “holler” or be killed.²⁹¹

“Six days and two evenings of toil in a hot courtroom came to an end shortly after 9 o’clock Saturday night [May 10, 1952],” the *News-Reporter* stated on May 12.²⁹² Eleven of thirteen men were convicted after almost four hours of deliberation.²⁹³ The jurors returned to the courtroom, “tired but unruffled,” to find the defendants guilty of conspiracy to assault and assault.²⁹⁴ They

dismissed two kidnapping charges and acquitted two of the Klansmen.²⁹⁵ Four road-gang sentences were immediately handed down, while seven men were only fined by Judge Williams, who called them all “organized outlaws and hoodlums.”²⁹⁶ A “flurry of excitement swept the courtroom” when Ray Kelly’s sentence was imposed.²⁹⁷ There were “frenzied sobs” from family and friends and one called out, “That’s what you get for trying to do right.”²⁹⁸

The *News-Reporter* chastised one of the defense lawyers, J. R. Nance of Fayetteville, in his statement to the jury. Nance remarked, “If the good people of Whiteville knew Woodrow Johnson [one of the victims] as you and I now know him, there wouldn’t have been 40 [Klansmen] out there; there would have been hundreds, and I’d have been one of them.”²⁹⁹ The *News-Reporter* called it a “scurrilous attack,” but not just against Johnson; it also besmirched Whiteville. “We contend that there aren’t ‘hundreds’ of people in this community who would participate in or go out to see any mob take the law into its own hands at a lonely cemetery or anywhere else

. . . [or] countenance or condone the brutal beating of any man, no matter how sorry or how low-down.”³⁰⁰ In the same editorial, The *News-Reporter* disagreed with the sheriff who felt an impartial jury could be obtained in Columbus County, calling such a thing “distant from the truth.”³⁰¹

The arithmetic is simple. There were 1,562 members of the organization, if reports are approximately correct. Add the wives of these members and the total is 3,124. Most couples have at least two out of their four parents living, and you have another 3,124, making a total of 6,248. You can add another 3,124 from the brothers and sisters of these KKK members, raising the total to 9,372. A man who doesn’t have at least two personal friends, who would be embarrassed to return a verdict against him, is pretty friendless, so you can increase the total to 12,496.³⁰²

“The chain of friendships, kinship and organization connections could even be carried beyond this point,” the editorial continued. “However this should be sufficient to convince anybody,

who seeks the truth . . .”³⁰³

The imperial wizard falls

Imperial Wizard Thomas Hamilton returned to Columbus County, Cole told his readers on May 26, only this time it was “through the persuasive powers of the law.”³⁰⁴ Hamilton led police on a hunt before his arrest, the *News-Reporter* related, apparently having “gotten wind” of warrants about to be brought against him. He “had flown the coop deliberately,” said the *News-Reporter*.³⁰⁵ Initially, Hamilton went to Augusta, Georgia from his Leesville, South Carolina home.³⁰⁶ Evidently, North Carolina journalists had accompanied police attempting to apprehend the fleeing imperial wizard. “North Carolina newsmen,” the *News-Reporter* observed, “were on the scene as the sometimes comical and sometimes frantic search progressed.”³⁰⁷ They were “shocked by the indifference of South Carolina newsmen to the story and amazed by the sympathetic attitude” of regular South Carolinians.³⁰⁸ Eventually, Hamilton agreed to surrender to authorities at his attorney’s office.³⁰⁹

In the *News-Reporter's* July 10 edition, readers learned the SBI had brought charges against three Hallsboro men and one Whiteville man in cases involving Clayton Sellers and Lee Tyson.³¹⁰ Several other victims were mentioned for the first time, though without elaboration: J. Melton Russ, Lawyer Jernigan, and Greer P. Wright. Seventy defendants were involved in 178 cases brought by various law enforcement agencies up to that point, according to the *News-Reporter*.³¹¹

A mammoth trial

Through July 1952, the drumbeat of indictments kept coming, culminating in a mammoth trial of 163 cases against 84 defendants.³¹² The drama was somewhat diminished as the “Klan’s house of cards kept tumbling” with the “most resounding crash” coming with Hamilton’s decision to plead guilty to assault and conspiracy to assault, a “complete reversal from his claim of innocence.”³¹³ Other Klansmen began changing their pleas as well, mainly to no contest.³¹⁴ There was fall-out from the trial. The Whiteville police chief resigned after it came out during testimony that he had been

a Klan member in the early stages of its organization in the area, although before he became chief.³¹⁵ He claimed to have attended only one meeting.³¹⁶

In another front-page article on the Klan, Cole described Hamilton’s dreams of a “Klan empire powerful enough to control the state.”³¹⁷ One witness quoted Hamilton saying, “If you get enough Klansmen, no Klansmen will be convicted.”³¹⁸ Hamilton’s dream evaporated as witness after witness chronicled his instructions to assault “helpless victims.”³¹⁹

The *News-Reporter* noted in a July 28 article that there were 22 FBI cases and 187 SBI cases against Klansmen.³²⁰ The Klan trial spurred the *News-Reporter* to a flurry of editorials in late July and early August. Writing just before Hamilton’s sentencing, Cole termed him a “pitiful figure, [n]o longer arrogant and abusive, no longer defiant and denunciatory, no longer shouting hate while uttering pious and hypocritical prayers.”³²¹ Alluding to one of the Klan’s preferred means of terror, lynching, Cole noted that Hamilton appeared to have come to the end of his rope. There was always a societal “price for

listening to the preaching of [a] disciple of hate,” Cole concluded. “The scars will remain, even after the wound has healed. It is ever thus when a cancerous growth is removed.”³²²

Hamilton was sentenced to four years at hard labor, starting October 1, 1952 said the *News-Reporter’s* July 31 front-page article.³²³ Fifteen other Klansmen were given prison sentences varying from 18 months to six years.³²⁴ Forty-six others drew fines. Judge Williams applauded the generosity of Solicitor Moore and told the convicted defendants “the law is not vindictive. It does not seek revenge. It is not bloodthirsty.”³²⁵ The *News-Reporter* noted that a maximum of 536 years of prison time could have been imposed.³²⁶

In an editorial in the same issue, Cole laid most of the blame at the feet of Hamilton, letting some of his fellow citizens off the hook. He drew an artful parallel to the horseback riding Klansmen of the Reconstruction era, but with a twist ... this time Klansmen rode to jail.

Some of the men who rode under the banner of the Klan were honestly misguided. They got into the organization for

various reasons. A few carried a Bible in one hand and a pistol in the other. Some sought political power. Others hoped for business gain. Some wanted to control the courts. Others felt they were “lifting” up erring humanity. Some entered for adventure ... Others sought to [prevent] the consolidation of Negro children with white children.

Back of it all, however, was a grasping hand, linked to a man whose mind was filled with beastly thoughts of brutality. “Do a good job or you’ll have to do it all over again” was one view he took of the flogging of Mrs. Evergreen Flowers ...

Yesterday, the Klan rode again. This time the brains of the Ku Klux Klan, minus his satin-looking robe, went on a ride to a prison road gang where he will have four years to form new Klaverns and perhaps elevate himself anew to Imperial Wizard ... Most of the people in Columbus County prefer that he ride there instead of in their midst ...³²⁷

IV. THE PULITZER PRIZE

“Cole was seated at his desk chatting with a visitor about the city elections,” a May 7, 1953 *News-Reporter* article related, “when George Munger of the *Greensboro Daily News* broke the [Pulitzer] news by telephone.”³²⁸ In quick succession, others called, including Jonathan Daniels of the *News and Observer*.³²⁹ Cole gave “a major share of the credit to Sheriff H. Hugh Nance and Solicitor Clifton L. Moore,” the *News-Reporter* observed, noting “without honest, upright men in the key positions . . . no crusade against crime can be successful.”³³⁰

A recollection of Cole and his times written by James Saxon Childers, former editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, was published in the *News-Reporter*'s centennial edition.³³¹

I was expecting to meet a stalwart man, one of the blunt, rugged kind they breed in the hills of North Carolina. This fellow was rather short and he was soft spoken. He had an easy smile . . . In Cole's 8-by-10 office, the plaster was chipped and the chairs battered.

Cobwebs drooped from the ceiling, and newspapers and

books were splattered on an old metal frame. Cigarette ashes, tapped toward the tray, had skidded across the desk. Sometimes Cole would sit with one foot on a chair, sometimes with both feet on the desk. However he sat, he looked straight at you.

Cole uses his Pulitzer Prize for a paper weight.³³²

In an editorial, Cole did not think the “greatest reward” was the Pulitzer. “Rather, we believe the richest harvest from this experience is a renewal of our faith in the soundness of an awakened citizenry and a restoration of full confidence that right and justice can triumph in any community and on any level if good men united in the cause of righteousness.”³³³ Headlines in type larger than the newspaper's nameplate on May 7, 1953 proclaimed: “News Reporter Wins Top Pulitzer Prize.”³³⁴ The Pulitzer Prize for Meritorious Public Service was awarded on May 4, 1953 by Columbia University and shared with the *Tabor City Tribune* of Horace Carter.³³⁵

Dénouement.

In a successful bid to be released from prison, Hamilton repudiated the Klan in an October 1953 letter addressed to Cole.³³⁶ He urged his “friends” to disband the Klan “wherever it exists and work wholly out in the open for the causes in which they believe.”³³⁷ Two days later, the *News-Reporter* reacted to Hamilton’s personal rehabilitation in an editorial, “Hamilton’s Manly Apology,” that was generous and forgiving in tone.³³⁸ “While Columbus County will not soon forget the heartaches and suffering which Thomas L. Hamilton brought to its people,” the editorial began, “it will applaud his forthright declaration that he is through with the organization he once headed.”³³⁹

While the scars will remain on the hearts of the misguided followers, both they and the casual, uninvolved citizenry are Christian enough in their thinking to accept his manly apology. Expressed in such words of humility, only an unforgiving people could do otherwise.

He is no small man who, after years of activity and fanatical

devotion to the Klan, can come to the point of publicly admitting that he was “misguided and wrong” in his thinking.

In late February 1954, the former imperial wizard was released after serving 17 months of his four-year sentence.³⁴⁰ In an editorial in the *News-Reporter’s* February 25, 1953 issue, Cole praised the parole board’s decision. Perhaps fittingly, but certainly in a sense drawing the saga to a neatly packaged close, Cole announced he was leaving the *News-Reporter* in the same edition.³⁴¹ He described “an indelible moment when the flames of duty leaped madly into action” and noted that “not always could one be certain that justice and right and humanity would triumph.”³⁴² He repeated the words he had used nearly seven years earlier on May 26, 1947 in his first issue as editor.³⁴³ “Your newspaper is more than a builder of cities ... It is, and must continue to be, the lamp which lights the pathway of humanity to higher cultural values, to better living, and to God.”³⁴⁴

Willard Cole’s death warranted an obituary in *The New*

York Times. He died after a stroke in the early morning of May 28, 1965, a few hours after returning home at 11 p.m. from working at the desk of the newspaper he founded, the semi-weekly *Robeson County Enterprise* in Lumberton, North Carolina. Cole was survived by his wife, a son and daughter, and four grandchildren.³⁴⁵

Former Imperial Wizard Thomas L. Hamilton died September 30, 1976 in Augusta, Georgia. He had been a pastor at several Baptist churches and was a member of the North Augusta First Baptist Church at his death at age 69. He and his wife, who survived him, had one child, a daughter. There was no mention of his Klan affiliation in his obituary.³⁴⁶

V. CONCLUSIONS

Why does consideration of the coverage of the *News-Reporter* matter? It matters because Cole and the others stood up to the forces of history, tradition, and the status quo and refused to be complicit with continuing injustice. It is important because the Civil Rights era culminated in the destruction of segregation – a quasi-slavery – and the acknowledgement and

enforcement of the rights of a significant section of African American citizens. Cole and Carter and their two newspapers played a part in that. That it was a minor part in a backwards, nearly forgotten corner of the country, does not diminish the part the drama played in weaving the successful tapestry of the civil rights movement. In fact, the bravery required in a small town among neighbors and without the klieg lights of celebrity and visibility is far greater and more dangerous than in large urban areas of major media.

Cole's stand shows to everyone who reads the story something of the human spirit and the courage that makes the American system work its best when people of conscience and courage *make* it work as intended. As Edmund Burke remarked, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Carter summed it up best, noting in his memoirs his feelings after witnessing the first Klan parade through Tabor City. "My duty as the only newspaperman in Tabor City stared me squarely in the face. I could not compromise my conscience," he wrote.³⁴⁷

One expected result of this

study was that liberalism would be evident in the *News-Reporter* coverage, because of the tradition of liberal southern journalists. Race, central to southern life for nearly four centuries, was also anticipated to be obvious. But liberalism was scarcely in evidence, if at all. And race, while the subtext and the “Invisible Man” in the room, to borrow the title from Ralph Ellison’s book, was also not as visible as expected. Religion was the overriding theme of the newspapers’ campaigns against the Klan and was also key to much of the Klan’s own justifications for its actions. The Pulitzer acknowledged the transcendence of religious tolerance and core moral value over religious zealotry and the false idols of white supremacy.

Like Germany, the South carries an unavoidable stain it may never completely erase and must constantly confront. The legacy and reminders of slavery will scar the region far into the future. It will be more than removing or defending statues in town squares and on college campuses, something other than gauzy nostalgia for a Lost Cause that was not noble, but benighted, much more than Civil War reenactments, something beyond

marble tablets of honor and small Confederate battle flags next to weathered gravestones. It is in the land and the mountains. The sound of the slave auction and the smell of sweat and blood of men and women crowded together in chains, the image of human beings, one after the other being pulled off the deck of slave ships, shackled together in a daisy chain of death, plummeting into the deep to avoid detection by British men-of-war trying to stop the slave trade. The sting of the whip and the cry of the slave hunter will always be heard.

When the Klan exerted its force in the early 1950s in Whiteville and Tabor City, the editors and publishers of the *Tabor City Tribune* and the *Whiteville News-Reporter* were willing to express disapproval and resistance. In the face of seeming community support or acceptance or apathy, the editors risked public opprobrium and isolation.³⁴⁸

While hundreds of Klan murders, lynchings, and beatings went unreported for decades after the Civil War, by the late 1950s the group’s violence was on the front pages of the press of the South and the nation. At least a few newspapers, editors, and

journalists confronted the Klan, stalling or at least slowing down the group while the rest of the country caught up and caught on. It took courage. That is the lesson and the legacy of Willard Cole, not just for historians, but for Americans.

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The years have been good to Whiteville. The *News Reporter* has moved to larger quarters, the town has grown, and there are many

more businesses now than in the 1950s. The streets are swept clean of dust and the bigotry of the past. Children of many races sit together in the reading room of the town's modern public library. It is a scene Willard Cole could not have imagined but helped create. And where KKK stickers were once plastered, there are ribbons honoring American soldiers – African American and white – serving overseas.

Notes

¹ Early L. Brooks. *Crucifixion of the South*, 84 (privately printed by Brooks), 1958. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation as originally published.

² G. Michael Bush, "Partners in Crime: Southern Newspaper Editors and the Ku Klux Klan (paper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n.d.): 12.

³ Ibid. *Selma Times and Messenger*, July 31, 1868; and the Athens (Ala.) *Post*, August 6, 1868 (quoting the *Mobile Register*).

⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

⁵ Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 397.

⁶ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 60.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bush, "Partners in Crime," 12. Oxford (Miss.) *Falcon*, June 28, 1868.

¹⁰ William Faulkner, "American Segregation and the World Crisis," *Three Views of the Segregation Decisions* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1956), 10-12; quoted in Sellers, *The South and Christian Ethics*, 20.

¹¹ Punctuation and spelling in all quotations are as originally published.

¹² David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: the History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York and London: New Viewpoints, 1981), 2.

¹³ J.C. Lester and D. L. Wilson, *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment*, 1905 reprint with an introduction by W. L. Fleming (New York: AMS Press), 19-21. The Ku Klux Klan may have taken its name from that of the Kuklos Adelpheon fraternity, founded in 1812 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "Some authorities believe that the unusual Klan rituals were copied from the Kuklos Adelpheon rules and procedural manual," Chester Quarles noted. The English words circle and cycle are derived from the Greek word Kuklos and which can also be interpreted as a circle of friends. Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and*, 32.

¹⁴ Trelease, *White Terror*, xi.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Lester and Wilson, *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin*, 18.

¹⁷ Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*, Harvard Historical Studies 138 (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 200.

¹⁸ Ibid., 207.

¹⁹ These laws would be applied again during the 1960s.

²⁰ Patsy Sims, *The Klan* (Lexington, Kentucky: the University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 85. In the last quarter of the 19th Century, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Enforcement Acts and the Klan Acts almost entirely unconstitutional and laying the judicial groundwork for its separate but equal decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* 63 US 537 (1896). Daryl Davis, *Klan-Destine Relationships: A Black Man's Odyssey in the Ku Klux Klan* (Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press, 1998), xix-xx.

²¹ Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and Related*, 28.

²² Fleming introduction, Lester and Wilson, *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin*, 25.

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- ²³ Ibid., 30. Forrest estimated there were 550,000 members of various Klan-style organizations throughout the South during Reconstruction, a number Fleming considered plausible if the numbers of all similar groups were counted. Ibid., 30.
- ²⁴ Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and Related*, 53. President Woodrow Wilson considered this one of his favorite movies and screened it for friends numerous times in the White House.
- ²⁵ Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1962), 1.
- ²⁶ Davis, *Klan-Destine Relationships*, xx.
- ²⁷ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 3.
- ²⁸ Ibid. According to one unsubstantiated source, President Warren G. Harding took his Klan oath in the White House. *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, David A. Horowitz, ed. (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 4.
- ²⁹ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 3-4.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Rice, *Ku Klux Klan in American Politics*, 92.
- ³³ Davis, *Klan-Destine Relationships*, xxi.
- ³⁴ William Vincent Moore, "A Sheet and a Cross: A Symbolic Analysis of the Ku Klux Klan" (PhD diss, Tulane University, 1975), 4. The Internal Revenue Service played an important part in the suppression of the national Klan in the 1940s. Since Simmons's revival of the Klan in 1915, all affiliated Klans owed at least nominal allegiance to a national imperial wizard. According to Rice, the IRS "hounded" the national Klan, which formally disbanded to avoid paying past taxes of nearly \$700,000. This did not mean the suspension of Klan activities, but it did play a role in reducing its organizational efficiency and public image. However, the IRS action also allowed locally and regionally autonomous leaders to emerge without the interference of any national authority. A "Klonvokation" was held in Atlanta on April 23, 1944 when all Klan charters were voided and all offices were vacated. Ibid., 114, 108.
- ³⁵ Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 70-71.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 70.
- ³⁷ Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 309.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 117.
- ⁴⁰ Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: Traditions and Cultures* (London and New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1990), 267.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Simeon T. Enser, interview by Martin Clark and Walter Campbell, tape recording, Tabor City, North Carolina, October 27, 2003.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.

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- ⁴⁵ J. C. Phipps, interview by Clark and Campbell, October 27, 2003.
- ⁴⁶ Davis, *Klan-Destine Relationships*, 6.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.
- ⁴⁸ Horace Carter, *Virus of Fear* (Tabor City, North Carolina: Atlantic Publishing, 1991), 14-15.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.
- ⁵⁰ Walter Campbell and Martin Clark, "Thomas Lemuel Hamilton and the Ku Klux Klan," Carter-Klan Documentary Project, Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, at <http://www.bluehorseink.com/hcarter/Hamilton.html>, accessed January 10, 2007.
- ⁵¹ Southern Poverty Law Center, "Hate Groups, State Totals" at <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>, accessed March 9, 2017.
- ⁵² Sims, *The Klan*, xi.
- ⁵³ Southern Poverty Law Center, "Intelligence Project: Active U.S. Hate Groups in 2006," at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/map/hate.jsp>, accessed January 10, 2007.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Mary Jo Burnette, interview by author, telephone conversation, Raleigh, North Carolina, July 17, 2007.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ "Willard Cole, 58, Crusading Editor: 1952 Pulitzer Prize Winner Dies – Fought the Klan," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1965, 27.
- ⁶⁰ Burnette interview, July 17, 2007.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid. The *Enterprise* was eventually absorbed by the *Post*, which was later merged with several other newspapers.
- ⁶⁶ Donald L. Shaw, "At the Crossroads: Change and Continuity in American Press News 1820-1860" (*Journalism History*, 8:2, 1981): 53.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 53.
- ⁶⁸ Klan activities in Whiteville had been "performed for the most part in secretiveness" for many years," said the *Carolinian* of Raleigh, an African American newspaper, after interviewing some of the "most frightened of the citizens of both races" in the area. According to the story, Whiteville was the focal point of Klan activity. "KKK Is 'Taking Over' Town: Whiteville is Site of Klan's Boldest Moves: Hooded Order Giving Ultimatum Pointing out Klan's History," *Carolinian*, 5 May 1951, A1+.
- ⁶⁹ "Unwanted," editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 31, 1950, 4.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “Wrong Uniform,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 31, 1950, 2. Cole did extend “[o]ur sympathy . . . to his family he left behind [though] it would be difficult to eke out a tear for the victim of this act of violence.”

⁷² “Time for Action,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, September 21, 1950, 4.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Negro Woman Is Beaten By White Mob Near Chadbourn,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 22, 1951, 1+.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “SBI Men Here To Assist With Violence Probe,” the *Whiteville-News Reporter*, January 25, 1951, 1+.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Unwanted Here,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 29, 1951, 4.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “House Once Occupied By Mob Victims Burns,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 26, 1951, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid. In the *News-Reporter*’s January 29 issue, Cole agreed with Carter’s comment in the *Tribune* after a white taxi operator slapped a black school teacher. One “wonders what public reaction would have been had a Negro taxi operator slapped a white school teacher,” Cole wrote. “Tabor Incident,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 29, 1951, 4.

⁹³ “KKK Stickers Put on Store Windows Here,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, April 30, 1951, 1.

⁹⁴ Brooks, *Crucifixion*, 43.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁹⁶ “Unwanted,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 5, 1951, 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lee Hinnant, “Brave editor Willard Cole took on the Ku Klux Klan,” *100 Years Serving Columbus County and Her People: The News-Reporter Centennial Edition* (Whiteville, North Carolina: The News-Reporter Co., October 1996), 8.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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- ¹⁰³ James High, interview by author, tape recording, Whiteville, North Carolina, March 28, 2007.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Both High and Carolyn Thompson High were only children.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Hinnant, "Brave editor Willard Cole," 8.
- ¹⁰⁷ High interview, March 28, 2007.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁰ "Klan Plans Saturday Nite Meet In County," the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 13, 1951, 1.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹¹² "Klan Meet To Go On As Scheduled," the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 20, 1951, 1. A solicitor was the equivalent of a district attorney.
- ¹¹³ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴ "Klan Leaders Declare Intention to Push Membership in North Carolina," *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 20, 1951, 1.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid. Communists, labor unions, newspapers, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were also attacked.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid. Hamilton invited the press to cover the rally.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Willard G. Cole, "Klan Meeting Sidelights," the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 20, 1951, 4.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Ibid.
- ¹²² Ibid.
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ "The Doctrine of Love," editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 23, 1951, 1+.
- ¹²⁵ Peter 2:13.
- ¹²⁶ "The Doctrine of Love," 1.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., 1-2.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., 2.
- ¹³² "Newspaper Gets Warning Letter," the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, August 27, 1951, 1. Original grammar and spelling retained.
- ¹³³ Ibid.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Horace Carter, interview by author, tape recording, Tabor City, North Carolina, September 27, 2002.

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- 137 “Klan Abundant With Hate But Crowd Is Thin,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 1, 1951, 1.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Ibid.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 “What’s Underneath,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 4, 1951, 4.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 “They Departed Quickly,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, November 5, 1951, 4.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 “Fear Rode Along,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, November 19, 1951, 1.
- 148 Ibid.
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 Ibid.
- 151 Ibid.
- 152 “Fear Rode,” 1.
- 153 “Masked Mobsters Seize Resident of New Hope Section in Latest Outbreak of Terrorism in County, Night Riders Also Beat Olyphic [sic] Man,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, November 19, 1951, 1.
- 154 Ibid. Flogging was the contemporary term for a beating. It did, however, usually involve some sort of instrument or weapon being used in the attack, such as a broom or axe handle, a baseball bat, whip, and/or leather strap.
- 155 Ibid., 2.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 “Masked Mobsters,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, November 19, 1951, 1.
- 158 “A Court Dream,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, November 26, 1951, 4.
- 159 Ibid.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Ibid.
- 162 “Mob Violence Invades Whiteville – 40-Year-Old Mechanic is Flogged,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, December 10, 1951, 1.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Ibid., 2.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 “Letter to Santa,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, December 24, 1951, 4.
- 167 Ibid.
- 168 Ibid.
- 169 Ibid.
- 170 “Trio Sentenced for Threats to ‘Klux’ Neighbor,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 10, 1952, 1.
- 171 Ibid.
- 172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid., 2.

176 Ibid.

177 “Another Victim of Mob Action Reported Here,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 10, 1952, 1.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid., 2.

182 Ibid.

183 “Hooded, Robed Mob In Action Near Hallsboro In December,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 17, 1952, 1. Mrs. Tyson was not beaten because she showed the nightriders her bandaged thigh from severe burns of three weeks earlier.

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid., 2.

187 Ibid.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

192 “Mob Inactive As Probe Continues in This County; No Serious Incident Reported Since Dick Best Was Flogged Nearly 2 Weeks Ago,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 21, 1952, 1.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

197 “Columbus Ministers Denounce Wave of Hooded Lawlessness,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 24, 1952, 1.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.

203 “Mob Violence Ran Rampant,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 4, 1952, 1.

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid.

206 “Truth Emerges,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 28, 1952, 4.

207 “Hamilton Disbands Fair Bluff Klavern After Denying Threat Incident There,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 28, 1952, 1.

208 Ibid.

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid.

212 “Truth Emerges,” 4.

213 Ibid.

214 Ibid.

215 Ibid.

216 On January 31, Cole published his only political cartoon of the Klan campaign (“What a Ku Kluxer Really Thinks!”); four panels on the front page. A bed-sheeted Klansman holds an argument with himself. Ultimately, he feels ashamed of himself and “anything but American” and “pretty low.” He condemns himself for “taking the law in my own hand.” In the final panel, he hangs up his Klan outfit, promising to bury it the next day.

217 “Truth Emerges,” 4.

218 “Car Trouble Tale Told Once More,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, January 31, 1952. 1.

219 Ibid.

220 Ibid.

221 “Mob Violence,” 1.

222 Ibid., 2.

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 Ibid.

231 “Is An Oath Sacred?,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 6, 1952, 4.

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid.

235 “10 Floggers Nabbed,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, Extra, February 16, 1952, 1.

236 Ibid.

237 Ibid.

238 Ibid.

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid.

243 Ibid.

244 Ibid.

245 Ibid.

246 Ibid.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid.

249 Ibid.

250 Ibid.

251 “Delete Three Words,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 16, 1952, 1. Elsewhere on the front page, the newspaper reported on the arrest of Grand Dragon Bill Hendrix of Florida for “sending defamatory material through” the U.S. Mail.

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid.

254 “Death Penalty Will Not Be Asked For Floggers,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 18, 1952, 1. The major stories from the February 16 Extra were reprinted in this issue as well, since rural subscribers had not received a copy of the special edition.

255 Ibid.

256 Ibid.

257 “The Task Ahead,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 21, 1952. In a second editorial, Cole took to task a letter writer who signed himself unashamed to be a Klansman, but who “forgot to exercise his duty as a good citizen, unafraid and unlashd, to say where he stands, by signing his name.”

258 Ibid.

259 Ibid.

260 Ibid.

261 Ibid.

262 Ibid.

263 Ibid.

264 Ibid.

265 Ibid.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid. Klansmen did not get the message, it seemed. Warning notes – “Beware of the KKK. Join or Else” – were scattered about Whiteville later in the week. “KKK Or Pranksters Take Time To Scatter Warning Notes About City,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 25, 1952, 1.

269 “Twelve Men Accused in Chadbourn Flogging Case,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 28, 1952, 1.

270 Ibid.

271 Ibid.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

274 “Federal Grand Jury At Raleigh Indicts 10 Ex-Members of Klan,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, March 3, 1952, 1.

275 Ibid.

276 “Crackdown Nets Six More Alleged Ku Klux Members,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, March 6, 1952, 1.

277 Ibid.

278 Ibid.

279 “Klan Leader Attacks Nation’s Newspapers For Stories On KKK,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, March 6, 1952, 4.

280 Ibid.

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid.

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.

285 “Duncan Succeeds Ashley As Chief,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, April 3, 1952, 1. Night officer L. D. Duncan was appointed as Fair Bluff’s fourth and latest police chief. Early Brooks and Frank Lewis were the other two Fair Bluff police chiefs indicted for Klan activities.

286 “Trial Date, Place And Jury Unsettled In Ku Klux Case,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, April 3, 1952, 1.

287 Ibid.

288 “Early Brooks Changes Plea to Nolo Contendere,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 8, 1952, 1.

289 Ibid.

290 Ibid.

291 Ibid. At a session earlier in the week, another seven men pleaded no contest.

292 “11 Sentenced In Klan Cases; Investigation To Continue,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 12, 1952, 1.

293 Ibid.

294 Ibid.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

297 Ibid.

298 Ibid.

299 “Malicious Slander,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 15, 1952, 4.

300 Ibid.

301 Ibid.

302 Ibid.

303 Ibid.

304 “Imperial Wizard Hamilton Posts Bond,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 26, 1952, 1.

305 Ibid.

306 Ibid.

307 Ibid.

308 Ibid.

309 Ibid.

310 “Four New Men Are Accused In Klan Mob Violence Cases,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 10, 1952, 1.

311 Ibid.

312 “Hamilton Pleads Guilty In Court Here,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 24, 1952, 1.

313 Ibid.

314 Ibid.

315 “Chief Of Police Resigns Position,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 24, 1952, 1. His resignation – and the reason for it – may explain why Klan literature could have been distributed repeatedly without detection throughout Whiteville.

316 Ibid. In another story, the grand jury that acted on 96 indictments in two days recommended an all-night patrol of the county to help guard against night riding activities. “Grand Jury Recommends All-Night County Patrol,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 24, 1952, 1.

317 “Klan Leader’s Dream Of Political Empire Fades Away,” *The Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 24, 1952, 1.

318 Ibid.

319 Ibid.

320 Ibid.

321 Ibid.

322 Ibid.

323 “Hamilton Draws Four Years,” *The Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 31, 1952, 1. The *News-Reporter* ran a list, taking up a fifth of the front page, detailing all the sentences handed down by the court. “Sentences In Ku Klux Cases,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, July 31, 1952, 1. Seven men appealed their sentences, which were ultimately upheld. “Circuit Court Denies Appeal Of Klansmen,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 16, 1952, 1.

324 Ibid.

325 Ibid.

326 Ibid. 2.

327 “The Klan Rides Again,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 2, 1952, Sec. B, 1.

328 “Congratulations Pour Into Local Editorial Desks,” *The Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 7, 1953, 1. Daniels nominated Cole and Carter for the Pulitzer. Ibid., 2. A few days later, Edward R. Murrow featured the two editors and their fight against the Klan on his CBS “See It Now” television show. The *News-Reporter* account quoted Murrow praising Cole and Carter, assuring his audience “that the future of the nation rests in the hands of an awakened citizenry on the local level.” “Columbus Put in ‘Good’ Light In television Show,” the *Whiteville-News Reporter*, May 11, 1953, 1.

329 Ibid.

330 Ibid.

331 James Saxon Childers, *100 Years Serving Columbus County*, 11.

332 Hinnant, “Brave editor Willard Cole,” 9.

333 “Acknowledgement Of Gratitude,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 7, 1953, Sec. B, 1.

334 “News Reporter Wins Top Pulitzer Prize: Cole And Carter Receive Highest Honors In Field,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, May 7, 1953, 1. Besides the medallions, a \$500 check accompanied the award. The *News-Reporter* used the hyphen erratically throughout the study period. For consistency, the hyphen was used through the text of this study.

335 Ibid.

³³⁶ “Hamilton Repubiatcs [sic] Klan,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 22, 1953, 1.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ “Hamilton’s Manly Apology,” editorial, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, October 24, 1953, 4.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ “Former Leader Of Klan Group Granted Parole,” the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 25, 1954, 1.

³⁴¹ After leaving Whiteville, Cole suffered several strokes in the early 1960s. James High recalled the stroke scarcely slowed him down. “He had his manual typewriter set up and had a way so that he could use his foot to bring the carriage forward, and he would basically . . . type [that way] much of the time . . . with basically one finger. Maybe a lot of this typing was one finger way back before that, but his level of writing is what, I think brought him back into newspapering.” High interview, March 28, 2007.

³⁴² “A Personal Valedictory,” editorial by Willard Cole, the *Whiteville News-Reporter*, February 25, 1954, Sec. B, 1.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ “Willard Cole,” *The New York Times*, May 29, 1965, 27.

³⁴⁶ Campbell and Clark, “Thomas Lemuel Hamilton.”

³⁴⁷ Carter, *Virus of Fear*, 13.

³⁴⁸ See: *Thomas C. Terry*, “W. Horace Carter – The Life Outside: A Weekly Newspaperman’s Campaign Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1950-1953,” *Grassroots Editor*, Vol. 44, No. 3: Fall 2003, 10-16. Legends sometimes spring up about certain events. One was that Willard Cole was an alcoholic, something Carter believed in a September 27, 2002 interview with the author. High disagreed. “He liked to take a sip, but that ended it,” High observed. Perhaps taking a job with the Wine and Beer Association in North Carolina added fuel to that claim, High felt. High described Cole’s news writing style as more like commentary, “more of a column rather than just straight news” and quite descriptive. High interview, March 28, 2007.