

## Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

A little more than two months later in the season of "blackberry winter" when the violets bloomed Sam Perryman made a bittersweet sojourn to Willington to settle his uncle's affairs. Sam found the house in an awful state of disrepair. The wood shingled roof had sagged and given way to extensive leaking causing major structural damage. Lush boxwoods and overgrown crape myrtle that once lined the stately walks prevailed. Abundant overgrowth consumed the flower garden where roses, hollyhocks, and sunflowers had once grown harmoniously together. Grass and weeds rendered the vegetable garden almost unrecognizable.

For four generations this persevering old house with its physical and emotional ties had sustained the family and sheltered all that sought its protection. The house had amassed meaning over time rather than being drained of it. Contrary to the modern custom, it had been occupied rather than used up. It was the home place of belonging, stability, and love, a place that bonded family through moments of triumph, grace, joy, and peace, and offered a refuge from weariness, frustration, and pain. It sustained a feeling connection to their lives, an abiding emotional support, which bore these people up in times of trouble. The house was always there; the family was always there, one and all. The magical whispers and touches of the old house revealed the character of generations of family lineage, their past and present, the living and the dead.

This home place with no electricity or running water opened a nostalgic door to memory for Sam Perryman – canning fruit and vegetables over a wood-burning stove, milking time, meals, friends, smells and sounds of various seasons, sleeping and waking, working in Sam Cowan's general store, catching the train to Bordeaux, Mt. Carmel or Augusta, butchering hogs, "Jug" Lawton's fighting cocks, picking cotton, plowing a mule, hunting and fishing, Grandmother Jennie Cowan's school, the smell of freshly plowed soil.

Just down the street, Sam found Rosa ("Daught") McClendon, family friend who baked the best biscuits and fried the best chicken and country ham in Willington on a wood burning stove. Daught still resided in a run-down cottage near now abandoned Willington Baptist Church. She skillfully carried a bucket of water or a large bundle of clothes on her head. Her husband was Mose. Their son "Bam" had lost a hand in a saw-mill accident.

As the harshness of winter gave way to spring the miracle of the carpets of wildflowers spread over the rolling hills and meadows and cloaked them with radiant softness.

A wailing train whistle in the distance reminded Sam that the same railroad, which brought prosperity to Willington a half century earlier also carried away much of the little town's population when the land refused to sustain them.

From *Destiny of the Scots-Irish*.



Rosa ("Daught") McClendon

## Kitty's Korner

By Kitty Craig - Jackson

Life is an endlessly creative experience, and we are making ourselves every moment by every decision we make. Creation truly is simply a matter of making a decision – or better, decisions. Sometimes these decisions are tough: should I keep my job or make a career change? Is it time to start a family and commit myself to another person through marriage? Do I take a risk and try something new, or do I stick with what I've known so far?

Each of these questions leads to a decision that's going to help us to be creative in our lives, or not. If today I decide to take a risk and talk to the person I've been wanting to talk to but avoiding, I'll be creating a different relationship with that person. If I decide to continue with the avoidance, then I'll be continuing to create a situation or relationship that's frustrating and unfulfilling. Sure, it's easy to say. But creativity is a risk.

People can and will criticize anything new in our lives. People will warn us of the risks involved. People will tell us to stick with what we know, to be satisfied with what we have and with the way things are. But your life is yours to create, not theirs.

What has happened so far is already in the past, where it belongs. It's time to look to the now and to the future, and start making decisions that will sparkle and shine with creativity, and bring that sparkle and that shine to our daily lives.



Correspondence and signatures. - Tom Poland photo

## Across the Savannah

### The emperor's hem

By Tom Poland  
A Southern Writer



In the late 1990s, a time that seems ancient, I touched the emperor's hem. That is I corresponded with a writer whose words revealed a style original and mesmerizing. Somehow, I hoped, might his gift rub onto me? I first read him in *Esquire* before modern, less genteel ways soiled it. That was in June 1986. His story, "The Captain's Wife, told how he fell in love with a friend's wife but did not pursue her.

The story's subtitle told you all you needed know, "Once Upon A Time There Was Honor In Love."

His style of writing and his life view made you want to read more. And so I found his book, *Burning The Days, Recollection* in 1997. I had lost my way in the Sea of Life, and his book became my compass. I took his book wherever I traveled. I read it in hotels, at my parents' home, wherever I ended up. I bought other books of his, and the idea came to me I should get him to sign them. But how?

I contacted a writers' organization in New York. "Ship the books to us and we'll send them to him and he can sign them for you. Some money was involved. I waited and waited. Then day-of-days my books came directly to me from Salter. Now I had his address. I wrote him a thank you letter, not expecting a reply, but he wrote me back speaking of the difficulty of getting published. He wrote some more.

Later he sent me a beautiful card, "Blue Nude III," a 1952 cut and pasted paper print by Henri Matisse. On its back he told me he had just come back from Chamonix, France, where he had been shooting a documentary, largely based on his novel, *Solo Faces*, for German TV. "Oddly enough," he wrote, "my biggest sales are in Germany." He mentioned two new books coming out and something called the Internet. "I've never looked myself up on the Internet, must be frightening." He closed his note, saying, "Am very grateful to you – embarrassing to talk about myself. Sincerely, James Salter."

In *Burning The Days* you'll read about Hemingway, Balzac, Roman Polanski, Irwin Shaw, Leonard Bernstein, and Robert Redford. No name appears more than Phil "Casey" Colman's, a Georgian, a fighter pilot in Korea alongside Salter. I crossed paths with Colman at a family reunion in Lincoln County, Georgia. Many pilots attended the reunion, Colman among them. He lived in Augusta. I had my book with me, of course, and showed him he was in it. He had no idea Salter had become a writer of high merit.

In his book Salter wrote much about Phil "Casey" Colman, who was an ace. Here's a bit. "It was May when Colman flew what no one except him knew would be his last mission. Colman left that day. He was lighthearted and self-promoting. Day-to-day truth was probably not in him but a higher kind of integrity was, a kind not wasted on trivial matters. He had an infectious spirit. We were unlike. I adored him."

I handed my book to Colman. "Look how many times you are in this book."

For an hour or more he read the book. By now he was old and frail, but I knew exactly who and where he was at the moment. He was back in Korea and his youth had returned as he held an F-100 high above the Yalu River. In Salter's words, "He and a MIG roared across mud flats wide open, needles crossed, the MIG like a beast of legend fleeing ahead. The controls were unyielding. The ground rushed beneath him. Destiny itself, unrehearsed, shimmered before his eyes."

Writers, well this one at least, worship the divine works of writers whose talent takes them to rarified heights. I admire these: James Dickey, Harry Crews, and James Salter. Salter's alone at the top.

## Another view of Openness and transparency in county government - slouching toward redistricting V

By Chuck Cook

The outcome of the McCormick County Council meeting on Jan. 18 was pretty much what I predicted that it would be in my article for the Jan. 20 issue of the *Messenger*. Council voted 4 to 1 (with mine the dissenting vote) to waive its existing rules of procedure, and consider and approve the second reading of the redistricting ordinance without specifying a preferred option.

In effect, this means – as I feared – that there is likely to be less focus on one specific option at the public hearing to be conducted on Feb. 7; that none of the three available options will be identified for inclusion in the proposed ordinance until Feb. 11 (when the agenda for council's Feb. 15 meeting is issued); and that the deadline for the public to sign up to speak on the matter at the Feb. 15 meeting will have passed before citizens know which option is being placed on the table for the third and final reading. In addition, the delay in identifying the preferred option, and the lack of openness and transparency regarding this issue, will preclude the development of any minor adjustments to the proposed boundary lines that may have reduced or eliminated objections raised at the public hearing. The only thing that could be worse at this point in time would be the submission of a 4th option at the Feb. 15 meeting that no one – with the exception of the council chair – has seen and for which no public comments have been solicited.

Over the past year I have written 22 separate articles on openness and transparency in our county's governance that have appeared in the *Messenger*. These have covered a variety of issues of fundamental importance to the public, but the issue of county council redistricting has been and is of particular significance. It also transcends local county ordinances and practices, including both Federal and state requirements that have a direct impact on our decision-making.

First, state and Federal laws and regulations directly limit flexibility in redistricting decisions. In addition to balancing numbers in Congressional, state house and local districts, maintaining communities of interest and protecting minority representation, they tie the movement of populations between districts to established census blocks established by the U.S. Census Bureau. They are seldom, if ever, changed – presumably to maintain continuity from one decennial census to another. The problem is that major population shifts may radically alter the economies, demographics and numbers of people within these blocks, greatly complicating the equitable development of redistricting options.

Second, local land-use planners and developers are unlikely to recognize established census blocks as a major factor in their decision-making. Consequently, census blocks originally drawn to protect communities of interest may ultimately serve to divide them as economic and other circumstances change over time.

Third, local voting precincts in South Carolina are established by the state and changes require legislative approval. Precincts originally established to cover a portion of one county council district may eventually – through the redistricting process – cover parts of multiple districts, creating difficulties for election workers who may have to choose between two or three available ballots to hand to voters at the polls. The evidence in our county has shown that voters do not always receive the correct ballots, denying them opportunity to vote for candidates in their district or allowing them to vote for candidates in other districts.

Fourth, the proper development of voting districts requires the precise overlay of individual maps showing census blocks and population counts, voting precincts and existing district boundary lines. This is extraordinarily difficult using physical maps, but may be simplified when the process is automated using sophisticated cartographic hardware and software. Moving census blocks then becomes a simple matter, and population counts and demographics by district are tabulated automatically as changes are made. Unfortunately, most small counties, like ours, do not have the hardware and software necessary to do this and must, therefore, rely on the state's Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office to assist them. Based on the demand for their assistance this year, McCormick County officials were allocated only one hour with RFA in Columbia to develop options for redistricting. Although additional time in Columbia to tweak them to reduce or eliminate public objections may have been possible, this option has been eliminated by council's decision on Jan. 18.

Finally, given the complexities and difficulties involved, an open and transparent process in redistricting decisions would have been very helpful in assuring full and proper public input. Regrettably, our current council procedures delegate to the chair the total responsibility for setting the council's agenda; do not provide for open public comments at council meetings or the opportunity to request to speak after the agendas for meetings are issued; and may be waived by majority vote if they become an inconvenient impediment to arbitrary decision-making.

More on this in Part VI.

BROWN'S

MECHANICAL SERVICE, LLC

Perry Brown

183 Price Mill Rd. • Parksville  
Home: 864-333-2591 • Cell: 706-825-2032

It's  
Heat  
Time!

AN INDEPENDENT LENNOX DEALER

Smith's

366-9663  
1-800-773-1464  
FAX: 366-9664  
CASEY SMITH, OWNER

Pest Control Service

TERMITE and MOISTURE CONTROL

- Roaches
- Ants
- Spiders
- Fleas

- Real Estate Inspection Letters (CL 100)
- Fully Licensed and Insured
- FREE INSPECTIONS

Lou Pesano

Wildlife  
Control Operator

NUISANCE WILDLIFE CALL LOU

845-249-3383

McCormick Messenger

(USPS-335-040) is published weekly by McCormick Media, Inc. Subscription rates are \$29 in McCormick County and \$35 elsewhere, annually. Periodicals postage paid at McCormick, S.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: P.O. Box 1807, 120 S. Main St., McCormick, SC 29835. Email: mcmess@wctel.net