

SAXXONS IN WITHERSTON

A Witherston Murder Mystery



Betty Jean Craige

He was wanted for questioning in a hate crime, but it looked like someone got to him first...

Jake knocked on the door. "Are you here, Crockett Wood?"

"Sheesh," Mev said. "Smells like death!"

Jake knocked again. He tried to open the door, but it had been bolted. Then he peered through the crescent moon cut-out.

"Christ! There's a dead man sitting on the john!"

With a screwdriver Jake pried the wood door open. A thin man with unkempt white hair and grizzled beard, his jeans around his knees and his white T-shirt stained with blood, tumbled out.

"Oh, my god! He was shot!"

"Could be suicide. But who'd kill himself in an out-house?" Jake looked inside. "I don't see a gun."

"He may have been shot through the moon."

"Must have been."

"There are no tracks."

"So he was shot before the storm."

"Rigor mortis hasn't left his body," Mev said. "He died within the last thirty hours."

"From the looks of it I'd guess yesterday morning, maybe twenty-four hours ago, or around that."

"If this is Crockett Wood, he looks older than sixty-five."

In this tale of two intertwined crimes, the consequences of a 1968 Ku Klux Klan murder and rape in Witherston, Georgia, come back to haunt the town some fifty years later. The body of Crockett Wood, a member of a radical white supremacist group called Saxxons for America, is found in his dilapidated outhouse, shot in the heart. Then a local candidate for mayor turns up missing in the midst of rumors of a scandal in his youth. As Detective Mev Arroyo and her teenage twins, Jorge and Jaime, dig for the truth, they uncover a past filled with bigotry, betrayal, and deceit, revolving around the 1968 murder of a black man and the rape and disappearance of his pregnant white fiancée. Is Crockett Wood responsible for the murder and rape so long ago, or did he perhaps identify the guilty party and was shot to ensure his silence? After all, it's an election year in Witherston, and some people will do a lot more than commit murder to keep their dirty little secrets safe...

KUDOS for *Saxxons in Witherston*

In *Saxxons in Witherston* by Betty Jean Craige, Mev Arroyo and her two teenage twin sons, Jorge and Jaime, are involved in another murder investigation—Mev officially as a detective for the town of Witherston, and Jorge and Jaime unofficially as intrepid teenagers. What they uncover is bigotry and betrayal stemming from a 1968 murder and rape of a black teenager and his pregnant white fiancée. Then another man goes missing and they don't know if he is a guilty party or another victim, but white supremacy seems to be alive and well in Witherston...unless the good people of Witherston can stop it. Well written, fast paced, and intriguing, this one will keep you guessing until the very end. ~ *Taylor Jones, The Review Team of Taylor Jones & Regan Murphy*

Saxxons in Witherston by Betty Jean Craige is the fourth book in her clever and thought-provoking Witherston Murder Mysteries series. This time the town is peppered with white-supremacist flyers from a group called Saxxons for America. Then one of the group's leaders is murdered and a mayoral candidate turns up missing. The murder and disappearance seem to be linked to a cold case murder from 1968, when a local black teenager was murdered and his pregnant white girlfriend raped. The consequences of those crimes are now coming back to haunt the quiet little Southern town some fifty years later. Craige's character development is superb and her plots well thought out and intriguing, and *Saxxons in Witherston* is no exception—a first-class whodunit you won't be able to put down. ~ *Regan Murphy, The Review Team of Taylor Jones & Regan Murphy*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a generous act indeed for a friend to read a writer's manuscript when it needs help. I am very fortunate that Margaret Anderson critiqued my manuscript before I sent it to Black Opal Books and gave me invaluable advice. Thank you, Margaret, for reading my books, over many years, when they were still in the process of being created.

I thank Susan Tate for showing me the glorious mountains of north Georgia and inspiring me to set the Witherston Murder Mystery series there. Susan told me the story of an ancestor who, according to one family member, skirted prohibition laws by burying bottles of moonshine in the pasture and selling maps to the bottles. That story got me started writing *Saxxons in Witherston*.

I thank Sue Moore Manning for her cartoon *Good Guys whoosh Saxxons*. I have admired Sue's drawing skills and her sense of humor since we were classmates in first grade.

As always, I thank Terry Kay for urging me to write fiction.

And finally I thank my friends at Black Opal Books: acquisitions editor Lauri Wellington, for her confidence in me; artist Jack Jackson, for his imaginative book covers; and copyeditor Faith C., for her superb editing skills.

I learned late in life, after I had retired from the University of Georgia, that I loved writing fiction. So I thank my readers for encouraging me to keep telling stories.

SAXXONS IN WITHERSTON

BETTY JEAN CRAIGE

A Black Opal Books Publication



GENRE: COZY MYSTERY/WOMEN SLEUTHS

This is a work of fiction. Names, places, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to any actual persons, living or dead, businesses, organizations, events or locales is entirely coincidental. All trademarks, service marks, registered trademarks, and registered service marks are the property of their respective owners and are used herein for identification purposes only. The publisher does not have any control over or assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their contents.

SAXXONS IN WITHERSTON

Copyright © 2019 by Betty Jean Craige

Cover Design by Jackson Cover Designs

All cover art copyright © 2019

All Rights Reserved

eBOOK ISBN: 9781644371480

First Publication: JULY 6, 2019

All rights reserved under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

WARNING: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. Anyone pirating our ebooks will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and may be liable for each individual download resulting therefrom.

ABOUT THE E-BOOK VERSION: Your non-refundable purchase of this e-book allows you to one LEGAL copy for your own personal use. It is ILLEGAL to send your copy to someone who did not pay for it. Distribution of this e-book, in whole or in part, online, offline, in print or in any way or any other method currently known or yet to be invented, is forbidden without the prior written permission of both the publisher and the copyright owner of this book. Anyone pirating our ebooks will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and may be liable for each individual download resulting therefrom.

IF YOU FIND AN EBOOK OR PRINT VERSION OF THIS BOOK BEING SOLD OR SHARED ILLEGALLY, PLEASE REPORT IT TO: Bob at legal@blackopalbooks.com

Published by Black Opal Books <http://www.blackopalbooks.com>

Everyone leaves tracks.

~ Charlotte Byrd

WITHERSTON, GEORGIA

LOCATION: Lumpkin County, Georgia, USA. The town of Witherston, founded in 1860, is located in the southern Appalachian mountains twenty miles north of Dahlonega in Saloli Valley. The incorporated area includes Tayanita Village, a community of fifteen to twenty young men and women whose Cherokee ancestors occupied north Georgia, southern Tennessee, and western North Carolina for a thousand years.

POPULATION: 3,857 (2016)

AREA: 39.9 square miles

WITHERSTON CITY OFFICIALS as of July 1, 2018: Rich Rather, Mayor; Atsadi Moon, Chair of the Town Council; Alvin Autry, Dr. Charlotte (Lottie) Byrd, Jonathan Finley, Lydia Gray, Ruth Griggs, and Blanca Zamora, Members of the Town Council

TAYANITA VILLAGE OFFICIALS as of July 1, 2018: John Hicks, Chief; Amadahy Henderson, Treasurer; Atsadi Moon, Historian

WITHERSTON POLICE: Jake McCoy, Chief; Mev Arroyo, Detective; Ricky Hefner, Pete Senior Koslowsky, Pete Junior Koslowsky, Officers; John Hicks, IT specialist.

ONLINE NEW SOURCE: *Witherston on the Web*, sometimes called “Webby Witherston.” Publisher: Smithfield (“Smitty”) Green. Staff: Catherine Perry-Soto, editor; Ama-

dahy Henderson, photographer and reporter; Dr. Charlotte Byrd, columnist; Jorge Arroyo, columnist and cartoonist; Tony Lima, Weatherman.

SCHOOLS: Witherston Elementary School; Witherston Middle School; Witherston High School

CHURCHES: Witherston Baptist Church; Witherston Methodist Church; Frederick Douglass Baptist Church

ANNUAL FESTIVAL: Labor Day Moonshine Festival

POINTS OF PRIDE: In the early twentieth century during Georgia's twenty-seven years of statewide Prohibition Witherston became famous all over Georgia for the quality of its moonshine.

CITY HISTORY: Witherston, once a Cherokee village, took its name from the line of Hearty Withers, who made a fortune in the 1828 Dahlonega Gold Rush and then won forty acres in the 1832 Georgia Land Lottery. Hearty Withers was killed by a Cherokee in 1838. Hearty Withers was the great-great-grandfather of centenarian billionaire Francis Hearty Withers, who resided in the family mansion at the top of Withers Hill Road until his murder by Dr. George Folsom on Memorial Day weekend of 2015. Withers bequeathed \$1 billion to be divided evenly among the residents of Witherston—approximately \$250,000 to every man, woman, and child.

PROLOGUE

Friday, August 30, 1968:

Dear Diary:

Tonight I told Tyrone I was pregnant, two months pregnant. I cried. I told Tyrone my father would throw me out of the house if he found out I was pregnant, and that he might even kill him. I told Tyrone that I had to get an abortion and asked him if he knew of anybody who could do it. Tyrone said he didn't want me to have an abortion because abortions are so dangerous that some women die from them. He said he loves me and wants to marry me and have a family. I told him I love him too. And I do. He said it's no longer illegal for Negroes and white people to get married, not since last year. He said we could go to Atlanta and get married next week. He said he has almost \$2,000 saved up from working summers at the chicken plant and that since he has a scholarship to Morehouse College we would be okay financially if I worked till the baby came. He already has an apartment near Grant Park.

I love Tyrone. I want to marry him. I am not afraid of what people will say. I want to be his wife, and I want to have his baby. Tyrone will be a lawyer like Donald Hollowell, and nobody will look down on him. I will be a writer like

Lillian Smith, and nobody will look down on me. And nobody will look down on our baby.

I told Tyrone I would marry him. Tyrone was so happy he got tears in his eyes. We decided to elope on Monday. But we'll have to keep our marriage a secret from Father—for Tyrone's sake and for our baby's sake.

I am so scared of Father. He preaches against integration. He says that integration will lead to miscegenation and to an inferior race of brown people with kinky black hair. He keeps a gun on his bedside table in case "some Negro breaks into the house." No telling what he will do to Tyrone if he finds us. But he won't.

Tomorrow I won't get to see Tyrone. He's going to move out of his mother's house and take his things to his apartment in Atlanta. He'll return here Sunday morning. He wants to tell his sweet mamma so she can come to our wedding. I said that's fine since she won't tell.

I still miss my mother. She would have loved Tyrone. She would have come to my wedding..



Saturday, August 31, 1968:

Dear Diary:

I wish I could be totally happy. I love Tyrone. He loves me. We're going to get married. We're going to have a baby. We're going to be a family. What experience could be more wonderful than that? Yet we have to get married in secret as if we were committing an unspeakable crime. I wish we could celebrate our love the way other couples do, with friends sharing our joy on our wedding day, watching us cut a cake, drinking our champagne, and dancing late into the night in honor of us.

Well, I won't think of what cannot be. I will think of what can be, a life with Tyrone and our child.

This morning at breakfast I told Father I was going to postpone college for a year to work in Savannah. I mentioned Savannah because he knows I like the beach. He got furious, like he always does when he can't control me, but I said I'd been earning my own money as a waitress and I'd bought my own car so I didn't need him anymore. And I don't! I slammed the door and left the house. I went to the bank and emptied my savings account. I took the \$2,140.39 in cash, put it in my blue clutch bag, and locked the bag in my glove compartment.

Then I drove over to Mary Lou's house. I told Mary Lou that I was going to elope with Tyrone, and I swore her to secrecy. I trust her.

Tomorrow morning I'll go to church at 9:00 as usual. It will be the last time I'll ever hear Father preach!! I'll pack my suitcase while Father is at the second service and take it with me to Mary Lou's house. Tyrone will pick me up there to go to his mother's house. We'll finalize our plans with his mother. Then he'll bring me back to Mary Lou's house and I'll spend the night with Mary Lou. I'll leave Father a note.

On Monday, which is Labor Day, we'll go to Atlanta. I will follow Tyrone to his apartment. On Friday afternoon a probate judge will marry us. Tyrone will ask his father to be his best man. I met Mr. Lewis once. Lincoln Lewis. He is a bus driver in Atlanta and a friend of Hosea Williams. I can't ask anybody to be maid of honor. I wish I could ask Mary Lou, but I can't involve her.



Sunday, September 1, 1968:

Dear Mamma,

I write you this letter to tell you what I've never said to you out loud. Thank you for your blessing on my marriage, which is legal now. And thank you for your willingness to

attend my wedding. On Friday morning I will pick you up at 10:00 and bring you to my apartment.

More importantly, thank you for all the sacrifices you have made for me, from the time you dropped out of high school to marry my father and give me his name, through all the years of cleaning other people's homes to give us a home of our own, to sitting alone at my graduation as the only Negro mother in the bleachers. I will never understand why my white friends' parents wouldn't sit with you. You looked beautiful in your pink dress and hat, and I was so proud—and grateful—you were there.

Thank you for loving me, no matter what mistakes I made, and for teaching me to forgive others, no matter what mistakes they made.

Someday, I will buy a house for you near mine, so that you can be with your grandchildren.

*Your devoted son,
Tyrone*

CHAPTER 1

[WWW. ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM](http://WWW.ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM)

WITHERSTON ON THE WEB
Sunday, September 2, 2018

NEWS

Witherston Celebrates Labor Day Tomorrow

Tomorrow's Moonshine Festival marks Witherston's ninety-fourth Labor Day celebration. Sponsored by the Witherston Roundtable, the events will begin with a parade led by Mayor Rich Rather departing from Emmett and Lydia Gray's farm at 4:00 p.m. and following the route of the first Witherston Labor Day parade on September 1, 1924. The parade will go down Possum Road through town, turn west onto Black Fox Road, and stop at Slater Ball Park.

At the ball park Mayor Rich Rather will read a Labor Day Proclamation, and Witherstonians will enjoy a traditional Witherston picnic.

Tony Lima's Mountain Band, composed of Dan Soto on the harmonica, Jaime Arroyo on the guitar, Pete Koslowsky III ("Pete Three") on the snare drum, and Tony Lima on the

banjo, with Annie Jerden singing, will play music popular in 1924. Songs will include the old favorite "Does the Spearmint Lose Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight?"

Red Wilker will bring legal moonshine. Ernesto and Blanca Zamora, of Zamora Wines, will bring wine for those not caring to drink the moonshine. Gretchen Green, of Gretchen Green's Green Grocery, will provide apple juice, kombucha, and lemon ginger iced tea. Atsadi Moon and Pa-co Arroyo will grill hot dogs, tofu burgers, and corn on the cob, all courtesy of Witherston Inn.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

Rich Rather and Red Wilker Launch Campaigns

At tomorrow's Labor Day picnic Mayor Rich Rather will launch his campaign for representative to the Georgia General Assembly. Mayor Rather, owner of Rather Pre-Owned Vehicles in Dahlonega, is stepping down as Witherston's mayor in the middle of his second term to run in the November election. His Democratic opponent in the General Assembly election is Juanita Madrugada-Reyes, a thirty-year old accountant in Dahlonega.

At the picnic Red Wilker, owner of Wilker's Gun Shop, will launch his campaign for mayor. As of today, Wilker has no opposition.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

Witherston Gets Senator's Attention as a Sanctuary City

Last Wednesday the Witherston Town Council approved Dr. Charlotte Byrd's proposal to designate Witherston a "sanctuary city." The vote was four to three, with Atsadi Moon, chair, and Dr. Byrd, Jonathan Finley, and Blanca Zamora saying Aye, and Alvin Autry, Lydia Gray, and Ruth Griggs saying Nay. Mayor Rich Rather, who showed little enthusiasm for the project, did not oppose the action.

As a sanctuary city, Witherston will not cooperate with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) in enforcing federal immigration laws.

On Friday state legislator Comer Clydesdale called Witherston "an outlaw city" for defiance of Georgia's 2009 law prohibiting sanctuary cities.

In response, Dr. Byrd said, "Witherston will provide refuge for individuals less fortunate than the politicians who want to deport them."

On Friday night Council chair Atsadi Moon, in an interview on Channel 2, announced that the designation ceremony would take place on Sunday, September 9, at 4:00 p.m. in front of the courthouse.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

ANNOUNCEMENT

Labor Day floats will be assembled this afternoon, beginning at 2:00 p.m., at Emmett and Lydia Gray's farm on Possum Road.

Photographs will be taken at 3:30 p.m.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

NORTH GEORGIA IN HISTORY

By Charlotte Byrd

Ninety-four years ago, on the afternoon of Sunday, August 31, 1924, twenty-five-year-old Obadiah Wilker was making moonshine on Tayanita Creek in a heavily forested area a mile south of Witherston when Sheriff Caleb McCoy rode into his camp. "Obie," the sheriff said, "you gotta get outta here tonight. Load up your mule with your whiskey and anything else valuable to you. Your corn, your sugar, whatever you can grab. My boys and I are fixin' to raid your still tomorrow morning about ten o'clock. I can't arrest you if you ain't here. So be gone."

I imagined Sheriff McCoy's visit to Obadiah's still after reading the diary of Gertrude Harper Wilker which I found in the University of Georgia Library. I photocopied it. On that Sunday night Gertrude Wilker had written:

Our friend Caleb rescued us today from certain ruin. He warned my dear husband that him and his deputies would have to raid our still tomorrow morning. There being a full moon Obie and Pappy went out at midnight and loaded Azalea with all the shine, mash, corn, and sugar she could carry. Enough to get us back in business before winter. Thank the Lord. We would have no way to feed baby Buehler if we couldnt sell our whiskey. Caleb is a fine and decent man. Last May he saved our neighbors Fred and Mamie from the revenuers.

To understand life in 1924, you need to know that since the War Between the States, when Congress established the Internal Revenue Service to collect taxes on "luxuries" like liquor and tobacco, poor north Georgia farmers had been forced to make their whiskey where the revenuers couldn't easily find them. They could make a living if they converted

part of their cash crop of corn, apples, or peaches into alcohol, but only if they avoided taxes. So the “moonshiners” set up their copper stills alongside creeks deep in the woods and worked under the light of the moon.

They thrived during Prohibition, which lasted nationally from 1920 to 1933 and statewide, in Georgia, from 1915 to 1935.

By the way: Obadiah and Gertrude Wilker were the parents of Buehler Wilker, nicknamed “Bullet” at the age of four, who served as mayor of Witherston from 1984 to 1988 and bequeathed his gun shop to his son Red Wilker upon his death in 1999.

Caleb McCoy was the grandfather of Witherston’s police chief Jake McCoy.

This week, at the request of my great nephews Jaime and Jorge Arroyo, I will dedicate my column to north Georgia’s moonshiners.

WHAT’S NATURAL

By Jorge Arroyo

Did you know that African Grey Parrots in the wild spend the whole first year of their lives with their immediate families learning how to chirp from their parrot parents?

And they learn to chirp just exactly like their parents, and not exactly like their friends. They hatch in need of chirp instruction.

They are home-schooled.

So when African Grey chicks are taken away from their parents and sent to human homes before their intense learning period is up, the chicks turn to their human for instruction. Thus, they learn to chirp—I mean, talk—like their human.

My great aunt Lottie, whom you all know as Dr. Charlotte Byrd, has a young African Grey named Doolittle.

Doolittle speaks in Lottie's voice, and he speaks intelligently. Doolittle declares, "Doolittle wanna go to kitchen," "Doolittle wanna cuddle," "Telephone for Lottie," and "Doolittle saw a squirrel," when he's seen a squirrel. And Doolittle asks, "Lottie gonna go in a car?" and "We're gonna have company?"

Aunt Lottie is Doolittle's significant other.

My twin brother Jaime and I are Doolittle's extended family, even though we don't look like him. Jaime and I don't have feathers and a beak, and Doolittle doesn't have hairy skin and ears that stick out. Doolittle is six inches tall, and Jaime and I are six feet tall, almost. Doolittle can fly, Jaime and I can't.

Doolittle is different from us, but we communicate, and we love each other.

Doolittle can teach us a lesson on how to get along with folks who don't look like us or act like us. He did not come into this world able to love only his own kind. And neither did we humans.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Yesterday I saw a black truck parked at that ramshackle log cabin on Saloli Stream about a mile north of Withers Fork. I thought the cabin was deserted.

The cabin is an eyesore. You can see it if you're fishing near there. It should be torn down. And so should its prehistoric outhouse.

Could you please tell me who owns that property? The man could be making bombs up there. Somebody needs to check.

The door of the outhouse has a cut-out crescent moon. Could you also please tell me why outhouses have cut-out crescent moons on the door?

Alvin Autry

Witherston

From the Editor:

Mr. Autry, you are probably referring to a fifteen-acre wooded property at 4200 West Bank Road that is owned by Harper B. Wood of Heron Brook, Georgia. Mr. Wood inherited it from his uncle, Edward Harper, in 1968.

A cut-out crescent moon on an outhouse door lets in light and air, necessary to the comfort of anybody inside. The cut-out also allows people to peek in to determine whether the outhouse is occupied. In times past the crescent moon signified the women's outhouse, and the sun signified the men's. In the absence of separate outhouses, the crescent-moon outhouse became uni-sex.

By the way, evidence from waste pits has shown that the men's outhouses were frequently used for drinking and smoking.

Let me know, Mr. Autry, if you would like more information.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

To the Editor:

This weekend is the fiftieth anniversary of an unsolved racial murder. On the evening of Sunday, September 1, 1968, in Witherston, Tyrone Lincoln Lewis was stabbed to death on Orchard Road. Allie Marie Camhurst was with him. Tyrone was eighteen and black, and Allie was eighteen and white. Later that night the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on the lawn of Tyrone's mother's house. Allie Camhurst was never seen again. The crime was never solved.

I got interested in the KKK in my Georgia history class last spring, and now I want to write my senior thesis on the Tyrone Lincoln Lewis murder. I am working with Dr. Charlotte Byrd, who is an historian, to solve the mystery. I ask anybody with information to contact me (beaulodge2001@gmail.com, 419 South Pine Cone Road) or Dr. Byrd (lottiebyrdwitherston@gmail.com, 301 North Witherston Highway).

By the way, my father is black and my mother is white. They got married in 1998. I go out with a girl who is white. We are lucky to be living in 2018, when nobody cares.

Beau Lodge

Witherston

From the Editor:

Beau, you and Dr. Byrd may look through the archives of "The Witherston Weekly" in the courthouse basement. There is an article about the murder in the September 6, 1968, issue, on page 2.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

WEATHER

Today's high will be in the upper eighties. Today's low will be in the upper sixties.

Skies will be clear. Creeks will be high. Grass will be green. Trees will be tall. Squirrels will be squirrely.

Tony Lima, Weatherman and Director of Tony Lima's Mountain Band



Sitting on the porch of an old hunting cabin on Saloli Stream, Crockett Boone Wood finished reading the morning's news on *Witherston on the Web*. He put out his cigarette, sent a text message, read the reply, and made a phone call. Then he launched a Phantom Four Pro hobby drone equipped with a video camera.



Lottie Byrd spotted the small black drone, a quadcopter, while she washed her lunch dishes. It first appeared over the tall red maples on the banks of Founding Father's Creek. Now it hovered fifty feet above the two-story house next door to hers where her niece Mev Arroyo lived with her husband Paco and their seventeen-year-old identical twin sons Jaime and Jorge.

Nobody was home. Paco and the boys had gone to Emmett and Lydia Gray's farm to transform Gregory Bozeman's pick-up truck into a "Moonshiners" float. They had taken with them the ninety-year-old moonshine still Lottie had uncovered in the thicket along creek. Mev had gone to the grocery store.

Lottie grabbed her binoculars and went outside. This was the first time she had seen a hobby drone, which differed significantly in size from the combat drones that had been used by the United States for three decades. She was well acquainted with combat drones, unfortunately. She suspected that collateral damage from a US drone strike was responsible for Brian's death in Iraq in 2009. But what did it matter how he had died? He was gone, her only son. Like her husband Rem, one minute alive and healthy, the next minute dead.

Lottie had moved to Witherston to be close to her niece's family after her retirement from Hickory Mountain College. She had grown to love the small mountain commu-

nity twenty miles north of Dahlonega and sixty miles northeast of Atlanta.

Here she quickly established herself as a local historian, a wine connoisseur, a gourmet cook, a social activist, an aficionada of folk music, the companion of Doolittle, a talkative African Grey parrot she had bought in an auction, and a writer of public letters to the president of the United States.

Lottie had a coterie of friends who loved her for her wit and wisdom, and she had innumerable fans who followed her column in *Witherston on the Web*.

Lottie scrutinized the drone through her binoculars as it drifted over her house. She could see its camera. Why would someone be photographing our houses, she wondered. The drone flew off to the southeast.

Lottie put away the dishes, got into her lavender Smart Car, and drove to the Grays' farm.



“Come here, Lauren!” Jim Lodge called to his wife. He was sweeping the driveway of their contemporary cedar home on South Pine Cone Road. “Is that a toy helicopter?” He pointed to a small object floating forty feet above the house.

Lauren came out on the deck. “That’s a drone,” she said. “It’s got a camera, and it’s recording us. The red light is on. Come inside, Jim. Now!”

Lauren and Jim had made their home in Witherston for the past twenty years, and they had earned the respect and affection of Witherston’s diverse community. Yet Lauren never forgot the anonymous letter they had received when their wedding picture had appeared in the *Augusta Chronicle*: “You are violating God’s order, and you will be punished for it.”

They had hoped to shield their son Beau from such cruel bigotry, but they could not. As a first-grader at Witherston

Elementary School, Beau had asked them one evening at dinner, “What’s a pickaninny? Billy called me a pickaninny.”

From that day forward, they educated their young son about the ideologies of race.

A decade later, when he was studying Reconstruction for Atsadi Moon’s history class, Beau found an 1867 pamphlet arguing that the Negro had entered Noah’s Ark as a beast. He wrote his term paper on it. At the end of the semester he read his paper aloud to his white classmates without embarrassment and provoked what he told his parents was a “heavy discussion” about prejudice.

“Why would a drone be recording us, Lauren?”

“I hope it’s because somebody wants a video of our tin roof, Jim, but I think it’s because somebody wants a video of us. I’m glad Beau is not here.”



When the drone descended over Tayanita Village, the chickens scattered, the goats Grass and Weed ran to the far side of the pasture, and Franny the mule bucked. Amadahy Henderson was trying to hitch Franny to the Village’s antique delivery wagon.

“Franny, hold still!” Amadahy said. Then she too heard the drone.

“Atsadi, come here!” Amadahy shouted to Atsadi Moon, her husband.

Atsadi came out of the large green canvas yurt that served as the Tayanita Village Council House.

“Look! What’s that?” Amadahy said, pointing to the approaching drone.

“That’s a miniature drone,” Atsadi said. “It has a camera. See that little red light? It’s taking our picture.”

“I’m taking its picture,” Amadahy said. She pulled her smart phone out of her pocket and aimed it at the drone. “Gotcha.”

The drone flew off to the north and disappeared.

“Why would somebody send a drone to spy on us?” Atsadi asked. “The drone is invading our privacy. We need to respond.”

“Bring it up on Wednesday for villagers to decide what to do.”

Tayanita Village, situated on Tayanita Creek off Possum Road, was the home of sixteen young people between the ages of twenty and thirty who honored their Cherokee ancestry by their lifestyle. They had built their commune in 2015 with their inheritance from Francis Hearty Withers. Witherston’s reclusive billionaire had left a quarter of a million dollars to every resident of the town named by his great-grandfather Harry Withers.

The villagers took Cherokee names, slept in small green yurts, grew vegetables, fished in the creek, and kept chickens, goats, cats, and a mule. They wove baskets using traditional Cherokee techniques, and sold them online. They cooked in a log-sided kitchen, bathed in a log-sided bathhouse, and warmed themselves in the winter by the wood stove in the large yurt that served as their council house.

But they also had running water and electricity produced by solar panels. They had smart phones, computers, cars, bank accounts, and day jobs. And like Atsadi and Amadahy, most of them had graduated from college.

Atsadi was the village historian. On Wednesday nights in the council house he instructed villagers in Cherokee language and culture. He also taught history at Witherston High School and chaired the Witherston Town Council.

Amadahy was photographer and reporter for *Witherston on the Web*, the town’s online source of news. She and Atsadi had gotten married in June and had moved to an A-frame log house on Tayanita Creek adjacent to the village. They still considered themselves villagers.

She was two-months pregnant.

“Time to go, Franny,” Amadahy said, as she adjusted Franny’s harness. “Look pretty for your picture!”

Atsadi mounted the wagon. “I’ll see you at the Grays’ farm,” he said.

Amadahy climbed into their red pickup.



The Labor Day paraders had just gotten into place for picture taking when dozens of four-by-six-inch flyers floated out of the sky.

“Look!” shouted John Hicks, grabbing one. “A fiery cross!”

John Hicks, always called by his full name, leaned his *TAYANITA VILLAGE* flag against the fire engine and grabbed a flyer.

“Gracious,” Lottie exclaimed, grabbing another one. “I’ve seen this image too many times.”

Chief Jake McCoy picked another one up off the ground. “It’s white supremacist garbage! From ‘Saxxons for America.’ Never heard of them.”

“I have,” John Hicks said. “They’re Ku Klux Klan wannabes. We must have caught their attention. Yea, us!”

Lottie saw Red Wilker stand up in the 1933 Packard convertible that displayed a *BOOTLEGGERS* banner. Red pointed his shotgun thirty feet above the Grays’ farmhouse and pulled the trigger.

“Jeepers! What was that?” Jaime Arroyo exclaimed.

Mighty jumped out of the *MOONSHINERS* parade float.

“Mr. Wilker shot something,” Jorge said.

“Mr. Wilker hit a hawk,” Jaime said, jumping out after Mighty. Mighty raced toward the farmhouse.

Beau Lodge’s dog Sequoyah leaped out of the *KEEP NATURE NATURAL* float and followed Mighty. John Hicks’s dog Bear joined them.

So did Jorge and Beau.

“Wait, you all! Please. Amadahy hasn’t finishing taking pictures,” Catherine Perry-Soto shouted.

Catherine was editor and manager of *Witherston on the Web*. She had grown up in Dahlonega, graduated with a journalism degree from Brenau College in nearby Gainesville, Georgia, and obtained her first full-time job with Webby Witherston. In December of 2015, she had met Dan Soto when his eighteen-wheeler stalled in a blizzard and she interviewed him about his work hauling chickens to the poultry plant. Dan quit the job he hated, they moved out to a farm that Rhonda bought as a sanctuary for barnyard animals, and they married the following May. Catherine gave birth to Alex two years later.

“Not a hawk,” Lottie called out. “A drone. The drone that dropped these flyers.”

“That’s the drone that flew over Tayanita Village this morning,” Atsadi said.

Mayor Rich Rather seized a flyer that floated over his red Cadillac convertible.

“Must be the Ku Klux Klan,” Mayor Rather said. “The Klan left a load of them in Centerville a couple of years ago on Martin Luther King Day. The fiery cross is their signature.”

“If this flyer came from the KKK, it would say so,” Lottie said. “The Saxxons for America must be another organization using the fiery cross to intimidate Muslims, Jews, gays, and people of color. And so-called foreigners,” Lottie said.

“What’s the fiery cross mean?” Atsadi Moon asked.

“War, basically,” Lottie said. “War against non-Christians. The Scots used the fiery cross as a declaration of war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, long before the KKK adopted the image to symbolize white supremacy.

The KKK got the idea of burning a cross in 1915 from the movie *Birth of a Nation*.

Jake read aloud:

“When immigrants invade the USA
And foreigners steal your jobs
When blacks marry whites and whites marry blacks
When men marry men and women marry women
When white Christians are a minority
You have lost your country to cultural genocide.”

“Whose country?” Gregory Bozeman said. “Who do they think the country belongs to?”

“The straight, white, and uneducated,” Jonathan Finley said.

“Clearly not us,” Gregory said.

“Not us because you’re Cherokee,” Jonathan said. “And educated.”

Gregory Bozeman, PhD, was a retired Environmental Protection Agency ecologist. Jonathan Finley, with a BA in English, was a hair-dresser. The two of them owned Scissors Hair Salon.

“Half-Cherokee,” Gregory said.

“Why would anyone drop these flyers on Witherston?” the mayor said. “We don’t have any problems.”

“Dear husband, the Saxxons, whoever they are, think we do,” Rhonda said. “Jonathan is married to Gregory. Jim Lodge, who is black, is married to Lauren, who is not. Paco Arroyo, who is brown, is married to Mev. We think that’s fine. The Saxxons don’t.”

“Lots of us are brown,” Yolanda said. “I’m brown, and so are Jorge and Jaime, who look like their father.”

“I’m brown too,” said Tony Lima, weatherman and musician. “And I’m an immigrant. I was born in Mexico.”

“Dan is brown,” Catherine Perry-Soto said. “And our baby Alex is brown.” She carried four-month-old Alex in a baby sling.

“Brownish,” Jonathan said.

“Beau is black,” Sally said. “And he dates me.”

“Blackish,” Jonathan said. “Beau’s mother Lauren is white. More accurately, pink.”

“I’m half-Cherokee,” Atsadi Moon said. “So is Amadahy. And we’re going to have a half-Cherokee baby.”

“Do two half-Cherokee parents make a whole Cherokee baby?” Jonathan asked.

“The dogs found the drone!” Jaime shouted from Lydia Gray’s vegetable garden. “It looks like a toy helicopter.”

“It’s a quadcopter,” Beau said, taking the drone from Sequoyah’s mouth. “Sally’s father has one just like it. It’s fancy.”

“Mr. Wilker is a good shot,” Jaime said. “This phantom is full of holes.”

Beau carried the drone back to the parade.

Red Wilker approached them. “I’ll take that, boys,” he said.

Jorge, Jaime, and Beau were actually no longer boys. They were entering their senior year at Witherston High and preparing their college applications. Jorge was editor of the student newspaper *The Bobcats’ Purr* and contributor of cartoons and essays to *Witherston on the Web*. He already had a weekly column titled “What’s Natural” and a weekly fifteen-minute local radio program. He intended to study journalism at the University of Georgia. Jaime was president of the environmentalist club Keep Nature Natural and a guitarist in Tony Lima’s Mountain Band.

He intended to study ecology at UGA. Beau, KNN’s ex-president, intended to study history at UGA and get a PhD in African American studies.

Jorge, Jaime, and Beau were well known and well liked in the community, as were their parents. Mev Arroyo was a detective on Witherston’s police force, and Paco Arroyo, whom Mev had met in Madrid on her junior year abroad, was a biology teacher at Witherston High. Lauren Lodge was a probate judge in Dahlonega, and Jim Lodge was a gynecologist in Witherston.

Beau looked at Chief McCoy.

“Shouldn’t the police have it?” Beau asked.

“Give it to the police if you like,” Red said. “But you might want to turn off the drone’s camera. No telling who is surveilling us.”

“*Huy!* The recording light is on!” Jorge exclaimed. “You’re on TV, Beau.”

Beau found the switch and flipped it. He handed the drone to Jake.

“Now we’re no longer under surveillance,” Jorge said. “The GBI will have to investigate us by other means.”

“You’ll look into this, Chief. Right?” Catherine asked. “And you’ll let me know what you find?”

“I’ll call the Georgia Bureau of Investigation this evening, Catherine.”

“Could we please finish getting pictures?” Amadahy implored.

The participants returned to the parade line-up. After five minutes of posing, they abandoned their floats and vehicles and gathered around Lottie.

“The Saxxons didn’t just now notice Witherston’s diversity,” Lottie said. “There’s a logic to their timing. Next Sunday Witherston becomes a sanctuary city.”

“Thanks to you, Dr. Byrd,” Amadahy said. “Your proposal convinced the council.”

“Well, four out of the seven members of the council.”

Rhonda Rather came over holding Coco Chanel. The blond Pomeranian wore a red ribbon. Rhonda wore a red silk shirt with a *RHONDA RATHER, SANCTUARY COORDINATOR* name tag.

“I’ve confirmed that the Ortegas will be staying with your family, Beau. They’ll arrive on Monday with our other guests. And Diego Amado will arrive at the Arroyos’ house on Saturday.”

“Woohoo,” Jorge cheered.

“I’ll ask Diego to take part in the Sanctuary City dedication on Sunday afternoon,” Atsadi Moon said.

“What are these white supremacists so afraid of?” Lottie said, reading the flyer.

“They must think that people who don’t look like them will get their stuff and they’ll lose out,” Jorge said, “as if whoever has the most stuff wins.”

“They must think that people who don’t look like them are inferior,” Jaime said. “They’re afraid we’ll procreate with their children.”



Crockett Wood watched the video his drone had fed to his monitor before the drone stopped recording. He sent an email. Then he fed Bedford, took a pill, and lay down on the cot for a nap.

CHAPTER 2

Sunday Evening:

I can't imagine Red Wilker as Witherston's mayor, Aunt Lottie," Mev said. "He thinks that because his father was mayor he deserves it. That's why he's already announced that he's running."

"The Wilker dynasty," Paco said.

"Red announced early to scare off competition," Lottie said.

Mev was putting anchovies and croutons on the Caesar salad she had brought to Lottie's house for Lottie's regular Sunday night dinner party. Paco arranged the mussels on the seafood paella he had brought. Lottie got out the wine.

"Red Wilker will make us all carry guns," Paco said as he uncorked one of Lottie's Riojas.

"Maybe I should oppose Red for mayor," Lottie said. "There's still time."

"Excellent idea," Paco said. "You'd get my vote."

"You'd get the vote of anybody who ever came to one of your parties, Aunt Lottie," Mev said.

"That's probably fifty votes, right off," Lottie said. "And Jorge and Jaime could manage my campaign!"

“Good idea, Aunt Lottie!” Jaime exclaimed as he came through the kitchen door followed by his girlfriend Annie Jerden, Jorge, Jorge’s girlfriend Yolanda Gallo, and Mighty. Jaime, Jorge, and Annie wore black T-shirts with *KEEP NATURE NATURAL* on the back and *I BRAKE FOR TREES* on the front. Yolanda wore a red *WITHERSTON BOBCAT* T-shirt.

“I’ll make your signs. One will say ‘Drop your gun. Vote for Charlotte Byrd,’” Jaime said.

“And the other will say ‘Do no harm. Elect Dr. Byrd,’” Jorge said.

“You’re sure to win, Aunt Lottie!”

Lottie was sure not to win, despite the popularity of her column. She had encountered resistance to her proposal to make Witherston a sanctuary city, as well as to her long-time advocacy for social justice, which for her included the rights of humans, animals, and trees. Nor would she want to win. She much preferred writing history to making it.

She expressed her views in her Smart Car’s bumper stickers: *THE EARTH DOES NOT BELONG TO US—WE BELONG TO THE EARTH* and *SUPPORT THE RIGHT TO ARM BEARS*. “I have a better idea. How about getting Mayor Rather’s wife to run? She’d actually enjoy it,” Lottie said.

“Rhonda would have no more chance of winning than you would, Aunt Lottie,” Mev said. “She would advocate outlawing guns, allowing dogs in restaurants, and requiring every house to have solar panels,” Mev said.

“And she wants to help undocumented aliens,” Paco said.

“Like Yolanda,” Jorge said.

“I’m undocumented,” Yolanda said, “but I’ve lived in the United States since I was nine months old. I’m a Dreamer, at least in President Obama’s eyes.”

“Would Rhonda have any chance of winning?”

“No, Jaime, but she could make Red Wilker spend his precious money to win,” Lottie said.

“Mom, Dad. Look at this flyer,” Jaime said, pulling it out of his back pocket and handing it to his father.

“¡Caramba, hijos!” Paco exclaimed.

“A drone dropped a bunch of them on the Grays’ farm this afternoon,” Jorge said. “It’s from a group that calls itself ‘Saxxons for America.’”

“The distributor could be someone who doesn’t like sanctuary cities,” Lottie said.

“Or someone who doesn’t like *us*,” Jaime said.

“By the way, a drone—probably that same drone—hovered over our houses today about noon,” Lottie said. “I saw it through my binoculars. It had a camera, and the red light was on.”

“Why would a Saxxon want a video of our houses?” Paco said.

“The Saxxon probably wanted a video of you, sweet Paco,” Lottie said. “You’re a Spaniard who has an American job.”

“And you’re brown, *querido*,” Mev said. “¡Y muy guapo!”

“So that’s why you fell in love with me!” Paco said. “I fell in love with you because of your beautiful American accent. And your beautiful brain, of course, and your sweet smile.”

Lottie cared for Paco as much as she cared for Mev. She and her son had traveled to Spain to meet Paco when Paco and Mev were students at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and the four of them had spent a week in Barcelona together. Lottie was matron of honor at their wedding in Gainesville in 1997.

“I just visited the Saxxons’ website,” Yolanda said. “It’s very scary. The Saxxons want to send undocumented aliens back to Mexico. Look.” She handed her phone to Jorge.

“The Saxxons are afraid that undocumented aliens will take their jobs,” Jaime said.

“Undocumented aliens who aren’t white,” Annie said.

“They’re afraid that documented aliens like me will become their bosses,” Paco said.

“Documented aliens who aren’t white,” Annie said.

“It’s a power thing,” Jorge said. “White supremacists don’t want to lose power to people they consider inferior. So they don’t want brown or black bosses.”

“White supremacists believe in a divinely ordained hierarchy of humans in which whites rank higher than browns and blacks, and white Christians rank higher than Jews and Muslims. To them, working for a black or brown boss is unnatural,” Lottie said. “They think that whites are more intelligent and more virtuous than non-whites and that miscegenation weakens the white race.”

“White supremacists must spend a lot of time being afraid of us,” Paco said.

“They think we have genetic cooties,” Jorge said, giggling.

Jaime poked Annie, who giggled. Annie was blonde and blue eyed. Annie had been Jaime’s girlfriend all through high school.

“Gotcha!”

Paco poked Mev.

“The Saxxons must think Jonathan and Gregory have genetic cooties too,” Yolanda said.

“The fear of contamination motivates hate crimes,” Mev said.

“There’s no membership list on the Saxxons’ website, but there is an application form,” Jorge said after a moment. “Maybe I’ll join them undercover to find out who they are. Then I can write about them in Webby Witherston.”

“You’re brown, bro,” Jaime said. “They won’t let you join.”

“I’ll shave my head. Then I won’t look brown.”

“You’d better change your name.”

“I’ll be George Gully.”

“You won’t pass the DNA pedigree test,” Jaime said, reading the application form over Jorge’s shoulder. “And you’re not eighteen.”

“I’m eighteen,” Annie said. “I’ll apply.”

“You’re not getting close to those guys,” Paco said. “They could kill you.”

“I’m here!” Doolittle called out from his T-perch in the dining room. “Doolittle wanna kiss feathers.”

“Okay, Doolittle. I’m coming. Jaime wanna kiss feathers,” Jaime said to the parrot. Jaime picked him up and kissed his back, Doolittle’s preferred place to be kissed.

“Doolittle wanna cuddle,” Doolittle said. Jaime sat down on a kitchen stool, put the bird on his lap, and gently stroked his neck.

The front door opened.

“Hey, there! Anybody home?”

“Hey, Jim! Come in,” Mev called out.

“Welcome, welcome!” Lottie greeted Jim and Lauren Lodge, their son Beau, Beau’s girlfriend Sally, and his dog Sequoyah.

Sequoyah barked.

“Woof,” Doolittle said. “That’s doggy bark.”

Mighty and Sequoyah began their wrestling ritual.

“Here’s enough green beans to feed a baseball team,” Lauren said, handing Mev a casserole dish.

“I have something to read to you all,” Beau said. He pulled his phone out of his pocket. “After Jorge and Jaime left the Grays’ farm this afternoon, I got an email from a person named Crockett Wood. This is the message.” He showed it to them.

From: Crockett Wood crockettbwood@gmail.com

To: Beau Lodge <beaulodge2001@gmail.com>

BEQUEST

Sun 09/02/2018 4:36 p.m.

Dear Beau Lodge:

I am sixty-five years old and I would like to leave land to your environmentalist club Keep Nature Natural. I invite you to visit me tomorrow night at 8:30 after the Labor Day picnic. Come to 4200 West Bank Road.

Crockett Wood

Sent from my phone

“Who is Crockett Wood?” Jaime asked, coming into the living room with Doolittle perched on his hand.

“I don’t know,” Beau said. “Sally and I read this email to everybody, and nobody said they’d heard of him.”

“We wondered how Mr. Wood knew Beau,” Sally said. “And how he got Beau’s email address.”

“Beau put it in his letter to the editor this morning,” Pa-co said.

“Crockett Wood may be the son of Harper B. Wood, who owns that piece of land on Saloli Stream,” Mev said. “Mr. Autry complained about the outhouse in Webby With-erston today.”

“Old Mr. Autry is always complaining.”

“He’s adamantly opposed to immigration,” Lottie said. “He voted against the sanctuary city motion.”

“Why did Mr. Wood contact you, Beau?” Jorge asked. “Jaime is president of KNN now.”

“Beau was president until July,” Jaime said.

“I don’t think you should go there alone, honey,” Lauren said. “We don’t know anything about him.”

“Except that he doesn’t flush,” Jorge said. “And he’s old.”

“He is not old, Jorge,” Lottie said. “He’s sixty-five, three years younger than I am.”

“Jorge and I will go with Beau, Mrs. Lodge,” Jaime said. “We can go in our car.”

“And we’ll take the dogs,” Jorge said. “They’ll be with us at the picnic anyway.”

“We’ll leave the ball park tomorrow night at eight fifteen,” Jaime said.

“You can reply to Mr. Wood and just say, ‘Okay, thanks,’” Jorge said.



By eight thirty the Lodges had departed with Beau, Sally, and Sequoyah, and Paco had gone home with Jorge, Jaime, Yolanda, Annie, and Mighty. Lottie and Mev cleaned up the kitchen.

“Doolittle wanna peanut.”

Lottie handed Doolittle a pistachio nut and handed Mev a cup of chamomile tea. They moved into the living room.

“You’ve seen my column this morning,” Lottie said. “I promised to give a history of moonshine in Witherston starting in 1924, the year of our first Labor Day Parade. I got hold of Gertrude Wilker’s diary of that year. It’s a treasure trove of true stories. You could call it ‘the life and times of Gertrude Wilker.’ I tell you, a diary like Gertrude’s makes an historian high.”

“Will it make Red Wilker high?”

“Not likely. Wait till you see tomorrow’s column. Miss Gertrude records for posterity the fact that her husband Obie and her brother-in-law Boone Wood were joining the Ku Klux Klan. I sent the week’s columns to Catherine last Friday before I knew that Boone Wood’s grandson Crockett had moved up here.”

“So Red Wilker and Crockett Wood are related.”

“They’re second cousins.”

“I wonder whether Crockett moved to Witherston to be close to Red. Strange that Red has never mentioned him.”

“Here’s an ethical dilemma, Mev. Do I publish the rest of my columns, for which I used Gertrude Wilker’s diary as the basis of my history of Witherston’s moonshiners in 1924? Or do I cancel their publication and keep what I have learned to myself because Red wants to get elected mayor?”

“Like his father.”

“If I don’t publish them, I’ll be suppressing information and, in effect, colluding with Red to hide his background.”

“Is an historian dishonest when she refrains from disclosing something that might cause unhappiness?”

“Mev, I’ve always believed that the historian should tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, insofar as she can figure it out.”

“So should a detective. A detective should disclose whatever she, or he, can figure out, so long as it’s relevant to the case, though not during the investigation. Is Gertrude Wilker’s diary relevant to today?”

“If I hadn’t discovered the diary, it wouldn’t be relevant. But I did discover it, so it’s suddenly become relevant.”

“Publish what you have learned, Aunt Lottie.”

“I will.”

“Time to go to bed,” Doolittle said. “Goodbye.”

Mev’s cell phone rang.

“Hi, Jake.”

“I just heard back from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. The GBI has had no reports of other Saxxon flyer drops in Georgia. Looks like the flyers were meant to be a special treat for Witherston, Mev.”

“So now we have to find a connection between the Saxxons and Witherston. After all these years, someone has decided that Witherston needs to change.”

“See you tomorrow, Mev.”

“Good-bye, Jake.”

“Good-bye,” Doolittle said.

Mev updated Lottie.

“I think that my sanctuary city project provoked the drop,” Lottie said.

“I’ll ask Jake for police presence at the opening ceremony Sunday.”

“Good night, dear.”

“Good night, Aunt Lottie.”

“Good night,” Doolittle said.

Mev left.



Jaime, Jorge, Yolanda, and Annie sat on the floor in the boys’ bedroom. Jaime strummed his guitar softly while Jorge, Yolanda, and Annie stared at Annie’s phone.

“I’m going to fill out this Saxxons application,” Annie said, “just to see what happens.”

“Go, Annie! We’ll help you,” Jorge said.

“How much truth will you tell them, Annie?” Jaime asked, putting down his guitar.

“Enough truth to make them think I’m for real.”

“But not too much,” Jaime said.

“What if they discover Annie’s a spy?” Yolanda asked. “They could hurt her.”

“We’ll be her bodyguards,” Jorge said.

Within thirty minutes they had completed the form.

NAME: Ann Josephine Jerden

EMAIL ADDRESS: anniejerden@gmail.com

CHURCH: Witherston Baptist Church

AGE: 18

DATE OF BIRTH: August 30, 2000

HEIGHT AND WEIGHT: 5’8” and 125 lbs

HAIR COLOR: Blond

EYE COLOR: Blue

POLITICAL PARTY: Republican

ANCESTRY: British, Scottish, Irish

ADDRESS: 2019 Daksi Circle, Witherston, Georgia 30533

SPOUSE: Not applicable

CHILDREN: Not applicable

RELATIVES:

FATHER AND PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

James Dodd Jerden, father

Reverend Harold Dodd Jerden, grandfather

Mrs. Emily Peters Jerden, grandmother

CHURCH(ES):

St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, Augusta, Georgia

Witherston Baptist Church, Witherston, Georgia

POLITICAL PARTY: Republican

MOTHER AND MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

Mrs. Josephine Quinn Jerden, mother

Arthur Laurence Quinn, grandfather

Mrs. Ann Josephine Quinn, grandmother

CHURCH(ES):

St. Gregory's Episcopal Church, Augusta, Georgia

POLITICAL PARTY: Republican

REASON FOR JOINING THE SAXXONS FOR AMERI-

CA:

I take pride in my ancestry, which includes Captain William Quinn and Colonel Bartholomew Bates of the Confederate Army who fought and died in the War Between the States, Major Archibald Bates who fought and died in World War I, and Nathaniel Peters, who fought and was wounded in World War II. I ask myself, What did they sacrifice themselves for? They thought they were fighting for a country of God-fearing white Christians like themselves who obeyed the Ten Commandments and believed in the truth of the Holy Bible. But the country they fought for has disappeared into a stew of brown people—Muslims, Jews, and dark immigrants who can't speak English—and others who hate American values. I am proud to be white. I want to carry on my family's tradition of fighting for the America of our forefathers, not this sordid assortment of people from elsewhere.

I am applying to join the Saxxons today because my home town of Witherston is about to let in caravans of illegal immigrants. I want to help stop them.

AFFIRM (by initialing):

"I am at least eighteen years old, native-born, white, and Christian; I believe in the literal truth of the Bible; I support the right to bear arms as guaranteed by Second Amendment of the Constitution; I acknowledge the supremacy of the white race; I oppose interracial marriage and same-sex marriage." INITIAL: AJJ

ATTACH RECENT PHOTOGRAPH.

"Wow, you guys, this is good!" Yolanda exclaimed. "Jorge, you wrote a great reason for Annie to join the Saxxons!"

"Thank you, thank you!" Jorge said. "Now do you all think I'm good enough to write fiction?"

"You'll write the great American novel, Jorge," Yolanda said. "You can write about the new American civil war, between the alt-right and everybody else."

"Why did they want my height and weight?"

"So that nobody can come in your place, Annie," Jorge said.

"That's why they want your picture," Yolanda said.

"If you send them a picture of yourself they can come get you," Jaime said.

"I say you just forget to attach the photograph," Jaime said.

"Yes. And see what the Saxxons say," Yolanda said.

"Do you think you should have given your real address?" Jaime asked Annie.

"Sure. No problem. Anyway, I had to give my parents' real names. They can always find out where I live."

"Okay. Should I press SEND?"

"Go ahead, Jorge," Annie said. "I'm in."

"We can't tell anybody," Jorge said.

“And especially not my parents,” Annie said. “Let’s investigate the Saxxons on our own.”

CHAPTER 3

WWW.ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM

WITHERSTON ON THE WEB

Monday, September 3, 2018

NEWS

Hate Flyers Land on Grays' Farm

A hobby drone (a small “unmanned aerial vehicle” for individual use) dropped dozens of four-by-six-inch flyers yesterday afternoon on Labor Day parade participants who were preparing their floats at Emmett and Lydia Gray’s farm. The flyers, depicting a burning cross, urged “white Christians” to “take back your country” and join the “Saxxons for America,” an organization opposed to “cultural genocide.”

Police Chief Jake McCoy took possession of the drone.

The Saxxons for America website includes an application form requiring applicants to declare that they are at least eighteen years old, native-born, white, and Christian, that they believe in the literal truth of the Bible, that they support the right to bear arms, that they acknowledge the supremacy of the white race, and that they oppose interra-

cial marriage and same-sex marriage. Applicants must agree to be interviewed and, if accepted as members, must swear loyalty to the Saxxons and must not disclose their membership in the organization. Apparently, Saxxons for America is a secret organization. The term “Saxxons” probably alludes to the “Saxons,” a Germanic people who invaded and populated England in the fifth and sixth centuries. The “Angles” already inhabiting the island and the “Saxons” became the Anglo-Saxons. The website gives no geographical address.

If you have any information regarding the Saxxons for America, please contact the police immediately.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

TAKE BACK YOUR COUNTRY!



When immigrants invade the USA
 And foreigners steal your jobs
 When blacks marry whites and whites marry blacks
 When men marry men and women marry women
 When white Christians are a minority
 You have lost your country to cultural genocide

**Say NO to cultural genocide!
 Fight back!**

Saxxons for America
www.saxxonsforamerica.com

Join now!

Drone Spies on Tayanita Village

The same miniature drone that dropped Saxxons leaflets on Emmett and Lydia Gray’s farm yesterday at 3:30 p.m.

had flown over Witherston earlier in the afternoon. It was spotted over Tayanita Village at 1:15 p.m. with its red recording light was on.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

ANNOUNCEMENT

Labor Day paraders will line up at Emmett and Lydia Gray's farm at 3:30 p.m. today. Departure time is 4:00 p.m. Festivities at Slater Ball Park will begin upon the parade's arrival there. Dogs, cats, and children are welcome.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

NORTH GEORGIA IN HISTORY

By Charlotte Byrd

Sheriff Caleb McCoy was appreciated in Lumpkin County. On Friday, September 5, 1924, the Witherston Weekly carried the following front-page story:

Moonshine Still Destroyed

On Monday, September 1, at 10:00 a.m. Sheriff Caleb McCoy and deputies Benjie Parson and Archie Statham destroyed a still on the bank of Tayanita Creek. Although they failed to catch the moonshiner, they received praise from Witherston's chapter of the Anti-Saloon League at the league's monthly luncheon at the Withers mansion. President Maud Olive Withers said, "The Anti-Saloon League gives gracious thanks to Sheriff McCoy. Every still he destroys means a hundred families he restores."

Obie Wilker's brother-in-law, Boone Wood, was not so lucky. On Saturday, September 6, Gertrude Wilker wrote the following:

Sister Geraldine came to visit today with her and Boone's three-week old baby, Harper B Wood. She said that revenuers found Boone's still on Tuesday, destroyed the still, took his mule, and confiscated his whiskey. She said the Lord watched over Boone when Boone hid in the woods. She said Boone wants to leave Dawson County and could they move here near us and Boone go into business with Obie. I said why not. Obie said that was fine. Our son Buehler and his cousin Harper B could grow up together. Obie said that he would help Boone build a house right next to ours. After Buehler and Harper B went to sleep tonight Obie and Geraldine and I played canasta.

The next day, September 7, Gertrude Wilker wrote:

Boone came and told us he joined the Nights of the Ku Klux Klan. Boone said he wants to protect our race from misegenation with Negroes and foreigners. He said he found out about the Klan from Hiram Wesley Evans who is a wizard from Alabama. Boone wants Obie to join. Obie said the Klan don't like moonshiners but since Governer Walker is in the Klan he would join anyway. Boone said the Klan don't need to know what him and Obie do for a living.

Note: William Joseph Simmons founded the second Ku Klux Klan in Georgia in 1915, when he and some sixteen like-minded men burned a cross on Stone Mountain on Thanksgiving night. Simmons declared himself the Klan's Imperial Wizard. He was succeeded in 1922 by Hiram Wes-

ley Evans. In the 1920s KKK membership increased significantly in reaction to the immigration of Jews and Catholics from southern Europe. Clifford Mitchell Walker was aligned with the KKK when he ran for governor of Georgia in 1922. The Klan spread quickly across the country and by 1924 numbered six million Americans.

WEATHER

Today's high will be in the mid-eighties, but dropping quickly in the afternoon. Today's low will be in the low sixties.

The record-setting storm system that has drenched Arkansas, spawned three tornados, and left 100,000 homes and businesses without electricity will reach our valley this evening.

Lord willing and the creek don't rise, Witherston will stay lit. But likely the creeks will rise. If you live alongside Saloli Stream or Founding Father's Creek or Tayanita Creek, get out your boat. If you don't have a boat make reservations with Noah.

Tony Lima, Prophet

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Don't I get veto power over Dr. Byrd's publication of the contents of my grandmother's diary?

How did my grandmother's diary get into the University of Georgia Library anyway?

Red Wilker

Witherston

From the Editor:

Mr. Wilker: According to the librarian of UGA's Rare Book Room, your grandmother, Gertrude Wilker, specified in her will that her diary and a bound manuscript of her poetry go to the University of Georgia upon her death in 1954. The unpublished manuscript, which included only 11 poems, was titled "Widowed."

As you know, your grandfather, Obadiah Wilker, was shot to death on August 15, 1930, supposedly by agents of the Internal Revenue Service.

You do not have veto power over the publication of the diary's contents, Mr. Wilker, because you do not own it. The diary belongs to the public now. It is part of history and as such it is available for scrutiny to anyone interested in it.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor



At eight thirty on Labor Day morning Crockett Wood sat in the outhouse reading Witherston's online news on his smartphone. He made a call.

Crockett heard Bedford bark suddenly. Then he heard a shot.

Crockett leaned up and bolted the door. Moments later he saw a gun barrel enter the crescent moon.

A bullet penetrated his heart.



Witherston's ninety-fourth Labor Day parade went as scheduled. Dozens of Witherstonians, many of them accompanied by their dogs, swelled the procession as it made its way down Possum Road onto Black Fox Road to Slater Ball Park.

By five o'clock the parade had disbanded, and the paraders had joined the several hundred Witherstonians already enjoying the refreshments.

"Hey, folks," Lottie called out, making her way through the crowd to Mev and Chief Jake McCoy by the Slater Ball Park bandstand. She carried a plastic glass of red wine.

"Hi, Aunt Lottie. Come join us," Mev called out.

On the bandstand Annie Jerden was singing "John Henry," accompanied by Jaime on the guitar, Tony Lima on the banjo, Dan Soto on the harmonica, and Pete Three on the snare drum.

"Hammer's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord.
Hammer's gonna be the death of me."

"Hey, there, Lottie," Jake said, giving her a hug. "You look beautiful as always."

Lottie was wearing white jeans with a purple cotton tunic and a purple cross-over purse that matched her purple cane.

Jake wore his uniform, as did Mev. Jake and Mev were on duty to make sure all went well for the Labor Day parties. They had found no more flyers. The parade had gone without incident.

"Have you all seen what Grace Wilker is handing out?" Lottie put the crook of her cane on her wrist and pulled a red squirt gun out of her purse. "Guns! Look! 'Red Wilker for Mayor' is stamped on the barrel and 'Wilker's Gun Shop' is stamped on the handle. Good God!"

"This is a squirt gun, Lottie," Jake said.

"But squirt guns are symbolic, Chief. They are symbolic of Red Wilker's values. Mayor Rather Rotund is no intellectual leader for Witherston, but at least he doesn't sell guns."

Annie began singing "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More." Fifty rowdy Witherstonians, many of them waving half-empty plastic cups of moonshine, joined the chorus.

““Oh, it ain’t gonna rain no more, no more
 It ain’t gonna rain no more
 How in the heck can I wash my neck
 if it ain’t gonna rain no more””

Rhonda Rather, wearing a red silk blouse, black silk pants, and a floppy straw hat, ascended the steps to the platform. She handed Coco Chanel to Annie, and Annie handed her the microphone. Rhonda belted out the last verse.

““We had a cat down on our farm
 It had a ball of yarn
 When her kittens were born
 They all had sweaters on

““Oh, it ain’t gonna rain no more, no more
 It ain’t gonna rain no more—””

“Enough, Rhonda! Enough, enough!” Mayor Rich Rather, huffing and puffing, climbed up the steps and took the mic. “It’s time for my proclamation. These folks are waiting for my Labor Day proclamation.”

“Oh, that must be why everyone’s here,” Rhonda said.

“Keep on singing!” Jorge yelled from the foot of the steps.

“Don’t stop singing!” Tony Lima shouted.

“Go, Rhonda,” someone else yelled.

Rhonda gave the mic to her husband and retrieved Coco Chanel from Annie.

Rich Rather, proud owner of Rather Pre-owned Vehicles in Dahlonga and now the outgoing mayor of Witherston, placed his plastic tumbler of clear liquid on the podium. Although he had been reelected for a second term in November of 2016, Rich was an object of fun. His constituents called him “Rather Rotund” and his dealership “Rather Used Cars.”

“Thank you, thank you,” the mayor said after the light applause. “Today, the first Monday in September, Wither-

ston follows our country's longstanding tradition of honoring our fellow workers with a parade and a picnic. Although the government made Labor Day a federal holiday in 1894, Witherston did not celebrate the holiday until 1924, when Mayor Jethro Sullivan on his horse led a convoy of automobiles and mule-drawn wagons down Possum Road to Black Fox Road turning right toward Founding Father's Creek."

"To Rosa's Cantina?"

"May I continue, Rhonda?" Rich asked. "Rosa's Cantina was established in 1964, long after the first Labor Day parade. Now let me read my proclamation."

"Speed it up, Rich," Rhonda said.

Rich did. "Whereas in Witherston we all have a right to work, and whereas in Witherston, we all have a right to enjoy spirits after work, and whereas in Witherston we traditionally observe our national holiday of Labor Day, and whereas in Witherston we remember our history with moonshine, I, Rich Rather, your mayor and soon to be your representative to the Georgia General Assembly, hereby proclaim Labor Day of 2018 to be a celebration of the hardworking moonshiners who toiled in these mountains to earn a living and bring pleasure to others. Now let our Labor Day moonshine party begin! Let it begin!"

"It's already begun!"

The crowd cheered.

"Hic, hic, hooray!"

"Is everybody happy?" Rich roared. "Is everybody happy?"

"Hic, hic hooray!"

"Your moonshine's good, Red," the mayor said, after taking a long sip. "But not as good as Old Forester."

Red Wilker waved his straw hat. "I'd like to speak, Rich," he called out from the front of the crowd.

"After me, Red," the mayor said.

Rich held up a white cardboard fan with red lettering under his picture: *YOU'D RATHER HAVE RATHER FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE.*

“As you all know, I am running for representative from our district to the Georgia General Assembly. My opponent is a woman from Dahlonga nobody’s ever heard of. So vote for me in November!”

He pulled out of his back pocket a white baseball cap with similar red lettering across the front: *RATHER FOR REPRESENTATIVE*. His picture was stamped on the back. He put it on his balding head.

“Will you all support me?” he yelled through the microphone.

“Yes, yes!” Some of the crowd roared.

“Go, Rather!”

“No go, Rather!”

“Thank you, thank you, those who told me to go. I’ll remember you all. Now, folks, Mr. Red Wilker, who has brought us our moonshine, wants to speak.”

“So do I,” Rhonda said.

“Let Red speak, dear wife,” Rich said.

Red ascended the stairs with his German Shepherds Smith and Wesson eagerly following him. He took the mic.

“First, I want you all to know that Wilker’s Mountain Moonshine is concocted from a recipe my grandfather Obadiah Wilker developed not far from this very spot where I’m standing. My esteemed friend Dr. Charlotte Byrd wrote about him in Webby Witherston this morning.”

“Did Obie go to jail, Red?”

“He did not, Rhonda! He went to heaven.”

“Is this stuff legal, Red?”

“Wilker’s Mountain Moonshine is legal. I pay my taxes.”

“Sure, sure.”

“Second, I announced a month ago that I’m running for mayor of our historical town. I promise to continue Mayor Rather’s policies. I seek your vote, even though I have no opposition.”

“Oh but you do, Red,” Rhonda said from behind him. “I am running too!”

“What?” Red exclaimed, turning to face her.

“What?” Rich echoed. “Are you kidding, Rhonda? You? You for mayor?”

“Not kidding, dear husband. Now it’s my turn.” She took the mic from Red and spoke to the crowd. “And I promise not to continue Mayor Rather’s policies.”

“Jesus, Rhonda! Now I’ll have to support Red,” Rich groaned.

“I’ll seek everybody else’s vote.”

“What’s your platform, Rhonda?”

“I will make all of Witherston’s municipal services available to all of the undocumented immigrants seeking sanctuary in our lovely town.”

“I will help you win,” Yolanda Gallo shouted.

“So will I,” Jorge shouted.

“Then we have a contest,” Red said, “because I say Witherston must obey federal law. Sanctuary cities violate federal law. Who is with me?”

A few applauded.

“So everybody who breaks the law goes to jail?” Rhonda asked Red.

“Everybody who breaks the law gets punished, that’s what I say.”

“Have you never broken the law, Red?”

The mayor reclaimed the microphone. “I say we’ll have plenty of time later for campaigning. We need to party now before the storm comes.”

Rhonda took the microphone. “You all are invited to next Sunday’s ceremony to designate Witherston a sanctuary city. Four o’clock in front of the courthouse. My esteemed husband will preside.”

Mayor Rather grimaced.

Rhonda continued. “The ceremony is getting publicity. CNN interviewed John Hicks last Friday.”

John Hicks jumped up on stage. “And you know what I told them,” he shouted. “I told them that Witherstonians

were too kind to perpetuate the racist policies of our federal government.”

“Wait, where does that leave me?” Mayor Rather asked.

“You’re about to climb aboard the kindness train, dear,” Rhonda said. “Anyway, folks, we Witherstonians will welcome undocumented immigrants from Latin America who need work and shelter. Some of us have already opened our homes to them. The Lodges, the Arroyos, Jonathan and Gregory, and Tayanita Village will all take in immigrants seeking sanctuary. So will Rich and I. We’ll be taking in a single mother and her three young children.”

“We will? Why didn’t I know that?” the mayor exclaimed.

“You didn’t ask, sweetie,” Rhonda replied to her husband. “And Pastor Paul Clement will provide sanctuary in the Witherston Baptist Church for the few who have yet to find homes.”

“So what do you say about undocumented immigrants, Mayor Rather?”

“Time to party, folks!”

“Mr. Mayor,” Lottie called out. “What are you going to do about the Saxxons for America?” She reached up and handed him a flyer.

“The police will handle this,” Rich said. “Witherstonians don’t need to worry. Now it’s moonshine time!”

Annie went up on stage and took the mic from Rich. Tony Lima’s Mountain Band struck up another century-old tune, to which Annie sang:

“Does the spearmint lose its flavor
 on the bedpost overnight?
 If you pull it out like rubber
 Will it snap right back and bite?
 If you paste it on the left side
 Will you find it on the right?
 Does your chewing gum lose its flavor
 on the bedpost overnight?”



Annie showed Jaime and Jorge the email she had just read. It had been sent to her at four o'clock.

From: Ace Barnett pacebarnett@gmail.com

To: Ann Jerden <anniejerden@gmail.com>

APPLICATION TO JOIN SAXXONS

Mon 09/03/2018 4:00 p.m.

Dear Miss Ann Jerden:

Thank you for your application to join the Saxxons. You forgot to include a picture of yourself, but never mind. Just meet me on Sunday at 3:15 p.m. in front of Kroger. Wear white. I will find you. Come alone. Tell nobody.

Ace Barnett, Saxxon

Sent from my phone

“And here I am telling you all,” Annie said.

“We won’t tell anybody,” Jaime said.

“We’ll tell nobody,” Jorge said.

“Should I reply to this email?” Annie asked.

“Sure. Just say, ‘Will do.’ And then we’ll figure out what to do between now and Sunday,” Jorge said.

“Will do,” Annie said. She typed in the message and sent it.

CHAPTER 4

Monday Evening:

The storm was in full force when Jorge, Jaime, Beau, Mighty, and Sequoyah turned onto the long muddy driveway at 4200 West Bank Road. Halfway down, the driveway forked.

“Go right,” Jaime said.

Jorge pulled up to the dilapidated cabin’s front door.

“I don’t think Mr. Wood is home,” Jorge said. “The cabin is dark.”

“Totally,” Beau said.

“We have a couple of flashlights,” Jaime said, extracting them from the glove compartment.

“I have a hood on my jacket, so I’ll go,” Beau said. “You all stay in the car. Give me a flashlight.”

Beau ran up the front steps onto the decaying porch and knocked on the door. He waited a moment and knocked again. He turned the knob. The door swung open. Beau looked back at Jorge and Jaime.

“Nobody’s here,” he hollered. Lightning struck nearby. Thunder obliterated the rest of his words.

“Turn on some lights,” Jaime hollered back.

Beau flipped a switch. “No electricity.”

“Look inside.”

Beau stepped inside and scanned the interior with the flashlight.

“Yikes!” he exclaimed. He returned to the porch and signaled for his friends to join him.

“Dogs stay here,” Jaime commanded Mighty and Sequoyah as he closed the car doors.

The twins ran through the rain into the cabin. In the beam of Jaime’s flashlight they saw an assault rifle, a hunting rifle, and a stack of Saxxon flyers on the table in the center of the room.

“That’s a semi-automatic assault rifle.” Jorge picked it up. “I’ve seen it in movies. Look. It’s loaded.” He carefully set it back down on the table.

Jaime picked up the hunting rifle. “This is a fancy rifle,” he said. “A Winchester. It’s loaded too.”

“Does he keep all his guns loaded?”

“Was Mr. Wood going to shoot me?” Beau said. “I thought he wanted to talk about giving his land to KNN.”

“Maybe he didn’t plan to invite you in, Beau,” Jaime said.

“Let’s see what other stuff he has,” Jorge said.

Beau panned the room with his flashlight.

“He doesn’t have much stuff,” Jaime said. “Cot, wood-burning stove, basin, and bathtub.”

“The bathtub looks about a hundred years old,” Jorge said. “It has feet. Creepy.”

“No privacy,” Beau said.

“The man lives alone, Beau! This is his living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom,” Jaime said.

“And foyer, parlor, dining room, and dance hall,” Jorge said.

“He eats a lot of rice,” Beau said, pointing his flashlight into the pantry. “And he smokes.”

“What’s under his bed?” Jaime squatted down and yanked open the storage drawer. “Mostly blankets and old clothes. Here are a couple of LED lanterns. Holy moly! And

three tear gas grenades. What does Mr. Wood need grenades for?"

"For tear gassing crowds of people, bro. This is one crazy dude."

Jorge took a picture with his iPhone.

"Let's get out of here," Jaime said. "If Mr. Wood finds us here, he might shoot us."

"Yeah. He might have a gun on him," Beau said. "I wonder if he went to the picnic."

"I'm taking more pictures," Jorge said. "Point the flashlight beam on the table, Beau."

"Come on, Jorge! This is dangerous!"

"Got it. Okay, Jaime. One more picture. Come here, Beau."

Beau aimed the flashlight at the grenades, and Jorge clicked.

Mighty and Sequoyah began barking inside the Jetta.

"Somebody is coming!" Jaime yelled. "Turn off the flashlights!"

The boys heard a vehicle come the driveway from West Bank Road and turn into the woods. They glimpsed the tail-lights through the trees. The vehicle disappeared.

"Sounds like a truck!"

"Maybe it's Crockett Wood!"

"Why didn't he stop?"

"He's gone now."

"Let's go."

Jorge grabbed a flyer.

As Jaime opened the back door of the Jetta, Mighty and Sequoyah pushed past him and escaped into the rain. With Jaime chasing them the dogs ran around the cabin to the back where they started barking. A bolt of lightning illuminated a big truck parked under the trees.

"Mighty! Sequoyah! Come," Jaime shouted.

Jorge and Beau helped Jaime catch them.

"Now let's get out of here," Jaime said. "No telling where Crockett Wood could be."



Mev and Paco were sitting on Lottie's screened porch listening to the rain when the three boys arrived with the dogs.

All were soaked.

Mev called Jake as soon as she heard their story.

"Jorge is emailing us the pictures he took," she told the chief. "They found a stack of Saxxons flyers, Jake. Now we know who dropped them on the parade. Mr. Crockett Boone Wood."

"Crockett Boone Wood may be a white supremacist, but he didn't do anything illegal."

"They also found a loaded hunting rifle, a loaded semi-automatic rifle, and three tear gas grenades. Crockett must have expected to use them."

"Jesus! Wood could have shot the boys as burglars. Where the hell was he?"

"Can we pay him a visit, Jake? We'd say we're checking on him since he wasn't home to meet Beau."

"Sure. Let's leave the station at nine in the morning. We go armed. And we take Tracker." Tracker was Jake's hundred-pound bloodhound.

"See you then." Mev disconnected. "Time to go to bed, Paco. We have to get up early tomorrow. Boys, will one of you take Beau home?"

"Okay, Mom."

"In ten minutes, Mom."

Mev and Paco left.

"Why do people join white supremacist organizations?" Beau asked.

"To protect our race from miscegenation, Beau," Jaime replied. "Didn't you read Aunt Lottie's column this morning?"

"To protect our race from folks like your parents, Beau, who miscegenated and made you," Jorge said.

“Whoopee,” Beau said.

“They’re stuck in the past. The Civil War was over a hundred and fifty years ago.”

“Racism got stuck in Western mentality from the time the concept of race was invented,” Lottie said. “And in a percentage of our population it never got unstuck.”

“The concept of race was invented?”

“Yes, Beau. Invented. The modern concept of race was invented in Europe in the sixteenth century, when European explorers discovered humans in other parts of the world with astonishingly different appearances, and European scholars classified these strange humans by their skin color, hair texture, and the like. The scholars used the term ‘race’ to refer to the strange humans’ physical appearance. The concept stuck.”

“And the Europeans decided that blacks were the worst?”

“The Europeans understood nature in terms of a hierarchy—as in God, humans, gorillas, monkeys, dogs, fish, and roaches—so they ranked the races. Naturally, they ranked whites the highest because they themselves were white and they considered Europeans the most civilized, and they ranked blacks the lowest because they considered Africans the least civilized.”

“Christians didn’t feel guilty about importing Africans as slaves?”

“I suspect most did not, Beau. The American slave traders and slave owners considered the African slaves sub-human, so they treated them as animals. Even otherwise enlightened people in the South thought of their slaves as incapable of learning. Of course, on the plantation the slave owners deprived the slaves of education to keep them subordinate and then viewed them as their intellectual inferiors because they couldn’t read.”

“Not fair.”

“Nothing in the history of race is fair. Many slave owners assumed that God made black people to serve white people.”

“And that God made women to serve men,” Jorge added.

“My father did some research and found the name Lodge in the records of the Calhoun gold mine slaves. Tom Lodge and Zeke Lodge,” Beau said. “And he found his mother’s name, Hogg, in the records of a plantation near Charleston. May Hogg, Tom Hogg, John Hogg, and Monday Hogg, probably all Gullah. Their ancestors must have come over from West Africa. Lots of Hoggs still live in Charleston.”

“Maybe May and Tom and John and Monday got their name from tending hogs,” Jaime said.

“Or their parents did,” Beau said. “Somebody tended the hogs, and that somebody would not have been the white plantation owner.”

“The plantation owner made the Hoggs tend hogs and then said they smelled bad,” Jaime said. “He made the Hoggs tend hogs and then called them stupid.”

“Hogs are not stupid,” Jorge said.

“He made the Hoggs tend hogs and then considered them inferior.”

“You asked why people join white supremacist organizations, Beau,” Lottie said. “After President Lincoln freed the slaves and the slave-owners lost the source of their wealth, the poor white Southerners still considered themselves superior to the uneducated blacks, such as the Hoggs, who were probably illiterate. The white Southerners viewed egalitarianism as an affront to God’s order. The Ku Klux Klan sought to re-impose white supremacy, which they believed was God’s plan for mankind.”

“The Klansmen and the Saxxons must still believe this.”

“Obviously. Racism did not disappear with the end of slavery. The concept of divinely ordered racial relations has

lived on in the mentality of the uninformed and uneducated, passed down from one generation of bigots to another.”

“If the concept of races was invented, then racism is unnatural,” Beau said.

“It’s complicated, Beau. It may be natural for people to fear others who are different. That’s an aspect of tribalism. Education overcomes tribalism. But racism is embedded in prejudice against poor people, and the blacks were poor for a century after they were freed from slavery.”

“They were kept poor, because of prejudice,” Beau said.

“The blacks were caught in a vicious cycle,” Lottie said. “Whites considered them inferior, so they didn’t provide them the same opportunities for education they established for whites. Since the blacks were less educated, whites gave them low-paying jobs. Since the blacks had low-paying jobs, the blacks couldn’t give their children good education, and their children got low-paying jobs.”

“And the whites became white supremacists.”

“A few whites, Jaime,” Lottie said.

“A few whites joined the Klan to enforce white supremacy.”

“I’m going to write about this in my column,” Jorge said. “I’ll do some research.”

CHAPTER 5

[WWW. ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM](http://WWW.ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM)

WITHERSTON ON THE WEB
Tuesday, September 4, 2018

NEWS

Rhonda Rather Will Oppose Red Wilker for Mayor

R*honda Rather surprised attendees at yesterday's Labor Day picnic by announcing her candidacy for mayor of Witherston. Rhonda Rather is the spouse of outgoing mayor Rich Rather. She will oppose Red Wilker in the November election.*

Redford Arnold Wilker, age sixty-five, is the son of Buehler ("Bullet") Wilker, who served as Witherston's mayor from 1984 to 1988, and Nelly Redford Wilker. He is the grandson of legendary moonshiner Obadiah ("Obie") Wilker and Gertrude Harper Wilker of Witherston. He graduated from Witherston High School in 1971, served two years in the Air Force, graduated from North Georgia College in 1977, married Grace Eggington, and went into the

firearms business with his father. He owns and operates Wilker's Gun Shop.

Rhonda Rather, age sixty, is the daughter of Shanahan and Betsy Barnes O'Leary, founders of the Shanahan's Restaurant chain, and wife of Mayor Rich Rather. She graduated from the University of Georgia in 1980 with a major in journalism. She is currently president of the Witherston Humane Society.

Rhonda Rather supports the proposal adopted by the Town Council to make Witherston "a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants." On this issue she is aligned with her husband's opponent for representative to the Georgia General Assembly, Juanita Madrugada-Reyes of Dahlonga, who advocates amnesty for undocumented immigrants. Red Wilker promises to uphold federal law.

The issue of undocumented immigrants may divide our community this fall.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

NORTH GEORGIA IN HISTORY

By Charlotte Byrd

Gertrude Harper Wilker's diary ought to be published for the stories it tells of life among the rural poor before electricity and indoor plumbing came to Witherston.

She did not complete high school, having to drop out in the tenth grade after her mother died to take care of her younger brother and her three younger sisters, but she was a remarkably good writer.

On September 10, 1924, Gertrude wrote about her brother Eddie Harper who lived not far north of here in Saloli Valley.

Eddie has devised a plan to not go back to jail for distributing our whiskey. He buries jars all over his land and then sells maps with an X on the spot where his customer can dig one up. Eddie says it's not illegal to sell maps. Eddie told Obie that in August he sold 2 maps to Mister HaHa Withers, the snooty millionaire in the mansion on the hill. Mister Withers does his drinking in his fancy outhouse to keep his snooty wife Maud Olive from finding out. Mister and Missus Snooty I call them. Missus Snooty is president of the snooty Anti-Saloon League. She says drinking is a sin against God. I say Missus Snooty is guilty of the sin of Pride, and I look forward to seeing her in Hell.

Lumpkin County records show that in 1924 Edward Harper owned fifteen acres of land that included a 464-square foot hunting shack on the west bank of Saloli Stream that had been in the Harper family since 1881.

Upon his death in 1968 Edward Harper bequeathed the property to his nephews Harper B. Wood and Bullet Wilker. In 1971 Bullet Wilker sold his half to Harper B. Wood for \$3,000.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Jorge Arroyo will interview mayoral candidates Rhonda Rich and Red Wilker on his radio show "Fifteen Minutes of Fame" on WITH-AM at 12:00 noon today.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

WEATHER

Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy. After last night's storm the sun will be out today. High will be in the high seventies. Low will be in the high sixties.

But watch out! There's a full moon rising at 3:04 a.m. tomorrow.

Tony Lima, Weather Bard



Jake and Mev, with Tracker in the patrol car's back seat, stopped at 4200 West Bank Road where a *PRIVATE PROPERTY ~ KEEP OUT* sign had been nailed to the mailbox post. They turned right onto the steep driveway that took them down to the cabin.

Jake got out of the car.

"Stay here till I signal you, Mev," Jake said. "Tracker, come with me."

Tracker accompanied Jake up the porch steps to the front door, which swung open when Jake touched the knob.

"Anybody home?" Mev heard Jake called out. "This is Chief McCoy."

Jake and Tracker disappeared into the cabin.

Then Jake reappeared and beckoned to Mev. "Nobody's here. Let's look around back."

Tracker, with his nose to the ground, led them past a battered black Dodge Ram with a Confederate flag bumper sticker, past the bloodied body of a large male puppy, to the outhouse, where he pawed the door and commenced to howl.

Jake knocked on the door. "Are you here, Crockett Wood?"

"Sheesh," Mev said. "Smells like death!"

Jake knocked again. He tried to open the door, but it had been bolted. Then he peered through the crescent moon cut-out.

“Christ! There’s a dead man sitting on the john!”

With a screwdriver, Jake pried the wood door open. A thin man with unkempt white hair and grizzled beard, his jeans around his knees and his white T-shirt stained with blood, tumbled out.

“Oh, my god! He was shot!”

“Could be suicide. But who’d kill himself in an out-house?” Jake looked inside. “I don’t see a gun.”

“He may have been shot through the moon.”

“Must have been.”

“There are no tracks.”

“So he was shot before the storm.”

“Rigor mortis hasn’t left his body,” Mev said. “He died within the last thirty hours.”

“From the looks of it I’d guess yesterday morning, maybe twenty-four hours ago, or around that.”

“If this is Crockett Wood, he looks older than sixty-five.”

“Could have had a hard life.”

Mev took pictures of the deceased from several different angles.

“See if he’s got ID on him,” Mev said.

Jake removed a wallet from his jeans and flipped it open.

“Driver’s license issued to Crockett Boone Wood, date of birth August eighth, 1953, male, blue eyes, height six feet one, weight one seventy, address Ten Split Road, Heron Brook, Dawson County, Georgia.”

He showed the license to Mev. “He’s a veteran.”

“The picture looks like him but without long hair and beard.”

“He’s got no credit cards in his wallet,” Jake said. “He carries cash. A couple hundred dollars here.”

“So he wasn’t robbed. He was murdered for another reason.”

“Here are three keys. One must be for this place and another for his Heron Brook place. The third could be for a desk.” Jake pocketed the keys.

“How about a phone?”

Jake checked the dead man’s jeans. “None on him. He might have been holding it. There it is. On the floor.” Jake picked it up. “I’ll give it to John Hicks. He may be able to tell what secrets this phone holds.”

“There must be a shell casing around here, Jake” Mev looked at the ground. “Here it is. Crockett Wood was shot with a nine millimeter NATO bullet.”

“I’ve got the bullet,” Jake said. “It was lodged in the wood behind the hole.”

Mev walked over to the body of the puppy. She took a picture with her phone.

“Poor puppy. Shot through the head. Let’s see what his tags say. Oh, his name must be ‘Bedford.’ Poor Bedford.”

“Rigor mortis?”

“Yes. Here’s the casing. Also nine millimeter.”

“He would have been killed at the same time Wood was killed,” Jake said. “Someone sure wanted Crockett Wood dead. I’ll call the Petes.” Jake phoned his deputies Pete Koslowsky Senior and Pete Koslowsky Junior, known to all as Pete Senior and Pete Junior, or “the Petes.”

“I’ll call Dirk.” Mev phoned Dirk Wales, the Lumpkin County coroner in Dahlonega.

While Jake secured the area with yellow *CRIME SCENE ~ DO NOT CROSS* tape and Tracker explored the woods, Mev put on latex gloves and looked inside the log cabin. The century-old building was basically a wooden box, with pine plank floors, walls, and ceiling. Against the north wall was a fireplace. Against the south wall was a built-in rectangular table with a freestanding porcelain washbasin and a rack with a plate, a mug, and stainless steel knife, fork, and spoon. Beside it was a pantry and an old small refrigerator. Shelves above the washbasin held a kerosene lantern and two military flashlights. A worn porcelain bathtub with lion feet

stood beside it. An old square table occupied the center of the room. On it were the two rifles and the stack of flyers.

Mev opened the storage drawer and found the clothes and the lanterns, but not the tear gas grenades her sons had discovered. She took a picture.

She found a carton of milk, two bottles of water, and two Marie Callender's pot pies in the refrigerator, and a box of white rice and two packs of Marlboros in the pantry.

And a green Drone Trekker backpack on the pantry floor. The backpack contained a Phantom 4 Pro kit minus the drone. She took another picture.

Mev turned her attention to the two guns on the card table: a Bushmaster assault rifle and a Winchester hunting rifle. "Both loaded," she said to herself. She took a picture of the table.

As Mev took pictures, Jake entered.

"The Petes are here, and an ambulance is on its way. The ambulance will take Wood's body to Dahlonga for an autopsy. What have you found?"

"A loaded assault rifle and a loaded hunting rifle. Take a look."

"Both high end," Jake said.

"And a fancy drone kit minus the drone."

She showed him the backpack, which included a small monitor.

"So Crockett Wood was operating the drone that Mr. Wilker shot down," Jake said. "I'm taking this kit to John Hicks." John Hicks was the police department's information technology specialist.

"I don't think Crockett Wood lived here. He might have used this cabin only on weekends."

"Probably for hunting. Deer season opens September eighth, this coming weekend."

"What do you suppose he did with the tear gas grenades, between last night and this morning?"

"You told me the boys heard a car. Maybe the driver returned for the grenades."

“It was a truck.”

“Whoever the person was, he saw the boys. He could have shot Crockett that morning and returned that night to collect the grenades.”

“And not the two guns? That’s strange. I think we should investigate Crockett’s house in Heron Brook, Jake.”

“I’ll get a search warrant for his house and his cell phone. We can go to Heron Brook this afternoon.”

Jake locked the cabin door with one of the keys from Crockett’s wallet.

“I’ll check Dawson County tax records to make sure Crockett still owns the house,” Mev said.



BREAKING NEWS

Crockett Wood Is Dead

Crockett Boone Wood, resident of Heron Brook, Georgia, was found shot to death on his father’s property at 4200 West Bank Road this morning by Chief Jake McCoy and Detective Mev Arroyo. So was his dog.

Police have no suspects.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor



Lottie taped a note to Mev’s back door and then returned home to hear her nephew’s show. Earlier that summer Jorge had persuaded the local radio station to give him fifteen minutes at noon on Tuesdays to interview local Witherstonians involved in local issues.

“And...it’s twelve o’clock noon! This is Jorge Arroyo, on WITH-AM, Five-Seventy on your AM dial, welcoming mountain listeners to my Tuesday interview program ‘Fif-

teen Minutes of Fame.’ Today we have with us our two candidates for mayor of Witherston, Mrs. Rhonda Rather and Mr. Red Wilker. Hello, Mrs. Rather, Mr. Wilker.”

“Thank you for having us, Jorge,” Red said.

“I’m honored to be on your show again, Jorge,” Rhonda said. “I enjoyed talking with your listeners last month about the Witherston Humane Society, which is still in need of donations.”

“If you can plug your pet project, Rhonda, I can plug mine. I urge listeners to join the Witherston Bear Hunting Club, and to buy the best bear rifle on the market at Wilker’s Gun Shop.”

“Most good people prefer saving bears to slaying them, Red. Bears have thoughts and feelings just like us humans. Would you kill a human?”

“Whoa,” Jorge said. “I invited you all here to discuss your platforms, not to advertise. Mrs. Rather, would you tell us what you stand for?”

“I stand for caring for others, including non-human animals, and for creating a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants, because we all need each other.”

“Who’s *we*, Rhonda?” Red asked.

“*We* is everybody, Red. White persons, black persons, brown persons, red persons, and everybody in between. Americans, Mexicans, Haitians, Christians, Muslims, Jews, and the poor and the maimed and the lame, the halt and the blind, and others not as lucky as you are.”

“And *our* taxes will pay for them all? You can’t take care of everybody, Rhonda. If you try, you’ll leave nothing for the legitimate residents of Witherston.”

“So who are the legitimate residents of Witherston?”

“I’ll tell you who are not. Illegal aliens are not, like the Mexicans who will come here to hide from Homeland Security. They will bleed our coffers dry. And they’ll marry real Witherstonians and—”

“Real Witherstonians? Holy smokes, Red! Are you a Saxxon! Do you agree with those flyers?”

“Stop, Rhonda. You are way out of line!” Red exclaimed. “I am not a Saxxon!”

“Please, Mr. Wilker. Please, Mrs. Rather,” Jorge interjected. “Let’s just have a conversation. Mr. Wilker, would you tell us what you stand for in the mayoral race?”

“I stand for preserving Witherston’s traditional values and taking pride in our accomplishments. Our ancestors built our prosperous community with hard work. In the nineteenth century, they had to fight off Indians and bears to survive in these mountains. In the twentieth century they had to fight off revenuers.” Red laughed. “I like Witherston the way it is. Rhonda wants to change it.”

“In the early nineteenth century, Hearty Withers stole the Cherokees’ gold in the Georgia Gold Rush, took the Cherokees’ land in the Georgia Land Lottery, and then sent the Cherokees westward on the Trail of Tears, leaving only white settlers to call themselves Georgians,” Rhonda said. “The Withers built Witherston on top of an abandoned Cherokee village.”

“So who are your people, Rhonda? The whites or the Indians? Or the illegal immigrants you’ve invited to your sanctuary city? You choose.”

“I don’t have to choose, Red. If I choose one group, I make an enemy of the other. I don’t want enemies. Apparently you do.”

“Enough,” Jorge said.

Rhonda continued. “Choosing sides makes war. If you get elected mayor, which is highly unlikely, you will—”

“Enough, thank you. Time’s running out. You each have thirty seconds to remind our listeners why we should vote for you. Mr. Wilker?”

“I will remind you all why you should vote against Rhonda Rather. Rhonda Rather will take away our guns, raise our local taxes, and flout our national laws on immigration.”

“Your turn, Mrs. Rather.”

“Thank you, Jorge. I will remind you all why you should vote against Red Wilker. He supported Roy Moore last year when that aging child predator was running for the US Senate. Look up Red’s letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on the subject. It was in November.”

“That’s it. We’ve come to the end of our ‘Fifteen Minutes of Fame.’”

“Wait! Don’t I get a chance to explain?” Red exclaimed.

“We are out of time, unfortunately. So I thank you, Mrs. Rather and Mr. Wilker, for coming on my show. And thank you, listeners, too, for staying with us. Tune in next Tuesday to WITH-AM to hear my interview with Mayor Rich Rather and Juanita Madrugada-Reyes, opponents for representative to the Georgia General Assembly. They will each have their fifteen minutes of fame. Good-bye.”

Lottie turned off the radio and went to her computer. She found a letter to the editor from November thirtieth of 2017.

To the Editor:

I want to speak out against this “Me Too” movement of women exposing everybody’s sexual past. Nothing good will come of it, for either the men or their accusers. And their accusers may be lying. Nobody can prove they are not.

If Roy Moore sexually harassed a few women forty years ago—if he actually did—he should be forgiven. He has led an admirable life since then. Shouldn’t forty years of good behavior cancel out whatever bad mistakes he may have made in his youth?

I say, let the past stay buried. And let us all be judged by the good we have done in our adult life. I don’t know anybody who didn’t make a few bad mistakes that he regrets. God forgives. So we should too.

Red Wilker

Witherston

“But opposing sanctuary for illegal immigrants is not doing good,” Lottie muttered. “I wonder whether this letter generated any response.”

She looked at the next day’s letters. “Aha!”

“Aha!” Doolittle said. “Doolittle wanna cuddle!”

Lottie put Doolittle on her lap and caressed her while she read the response to Red’s letter.

To the Editor:

Mr. Red Wilker’s condemnation of the “Me Too” movement is based on the millennia-old patriarchal assumption that the man is to be believed and the woman is not. The “Me Too” movement overturns that assumption. In 2017, the woman is believed and the man is not. It’s about time!

If a man ruined a woman’s life forty years ago, whatever good behavior he may claim thereafter does not cancel out whatever hardships she endured over forty years.

I ask you, Red Wilker, what are you saying about your own past?

Janet Ullmann

Atlanta

“Hellooo, Aunt Lottie! I’m here.” Mev let herself in the back door.

Lottie walked into the kitchen with Doolittle perched on her hand.

“Hello, Mev. I’m glad you saw my note before you had lunch. You just missed Jorge’s radio program, but you’re in time for pimento cheese sandwiches.”

“Hi,” Doolittle said. “Wanna whistle?” Doolittle commenced his unique version of “On Top of Old Smoky.”

“Did you see that Crockett Wood has been murdered, Aunt Lottie? He was shot in his outhouse.”

“By that lunatic Alvin Autry?”

“No, Aunt Lottie! I’m serious! Jake and I found his body this morning.”

“Oh, Lordy,” Lottie said. “I wonder what Mr. Crockett Boone Wood did to deserve this.”

Mev describe the crime scene.

“Now tell me about Jorge’s show, Aunt Lottie.”

“Rhonda and Red went after each other. She brought up his support of Roy Moore in last year’s Alabama Senate election. I think Rhonda poked a hole in Red’s campaign. Let’s eat. I want you to see what I found in the *Witherston Weekly* archives.”

Lottie put Doolittle on his perch and brought out the sandwiches and iced tea.

“I’ve been doing some research for Beau on the 1968 murder. Look at this article from Friday, September sixth, of that year, a time I can actually recall.” She turned the computer screen so that Mev could read the article.

*Negro Teenager Is Murdered
White Girl is Missing*

Witherston entered Georgia’s sad racial history last Sunday when a young Negro was murdered, presumably for having a white girl in his car.

Tyrone Lincoln Lewis, age eighteen, a 1968 graduate of Witherston High School and an entering freshman at Atlanta’s Morehouse College, was apparently with Allie Marie Camhurst, age eighteen, a 1968 graduate of Witherston High and an entering freshman at Gainesville Junior College, when he was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan.

At 6:45 p.m., Witherston police officers on routine patrol discovered a ‘57 turquoise Chevy belonging to Tyrone Lewis parked on the shoulder of Orchard Road a quarter of a mile past the bridge over Tayanita Creek. After a brief search they found Tyrone Lewis’s body half hidden in the rhododendron bushes that cover the creek’s east bank. He had been stabbed multiple times in the chest and throat.

The police found blood on three separate sites: the sandy shoulder of the road where Lewis was likely killed; the

path leading into the rhododendron bushes, which showed evidence of a bleeding body being dragged; and a grassy area ten yards away, where a second person might have been killed or wounded.

At 7:30 p.m. Reverend Wade Camhurst of 120 Myrtle Circle called the police to report his daughter missing. He said that when she didn't show up for supper he called her friend Mary Lou Reynolds to see whether Allie was there, but nobody was home.

At the time the police made no connection between Tyrone Lewis's murder and Allie Camhurst's disappearance.

Shortly after 10:00 p.m., Roberta Lewis, Tyrone's mother, of 189 Salt Road, called the police to report a burning cross on her front lawn. The burning cross is the signature of the Ku Klux Klan. The police told her then that her son had been murdered.

Mrs. Lewis told the police that Tyrone and Allie Marie Camhurst had spent the afternoon at her house.

On Monday, after news of the murder had circulated, a resident of Orchard Road called the police to report that he had seen a turquoise Chevy speed by his house toward town about 6:00 p.m. when he was out mowing his lawn. He said that a black man was driving and a white woman was riding in the front seat beside him. A black car was chasing them. He said that four Klansmen wearing hoods were in the black car.

Monday afternoon police combed the Orchard Road Bridge area but did not find Allie's body.

Police located Allie's car parked in front of the Reynolds' home. Mary Lou said she had no idea why Allie would abandon her car. She was distraught.

Reverend Camhurst said that he had never met Tyrone Lewis and that he had not given his daughter permission to go out with Lewis. "What was a Negro man doing with a white girl?" he asked. "That's the question police should answer."

Reverend Camhurst, a widower, has invited the Witherston Methodist Church congregation to join him Saturday at 9:00 a.m. at Orchard Road Bridge to search for his daughter's body.

“I wonder who wrote the article. There's no byline.”

“Newspapers didn't carry bylines in 1968. Now I'm giving you Tyrone Lewis's obituary.”

*Tyrone Lincoln Lewis
1950-1968*

Tyrone Lincoln Lewis, age eighteen, died on Sunday, September 1, 1968, presumably murdered by the Ku Klux Klan.

Tyrone Lewis was born in Hall County on April 15, 1950, to Lincoln and Roberta Lewis. He is predeceased by his younger brother Rook Lewis.

Tyrone graduated from Witherston High School on Friday, May 24. He was the only Negro in the class of 1968.

The funeral took place at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 3, at the Frederick Douglass Baptist Church in Witherston.

“Does anything strike you as unusual, from our 2018 perspective, Mev?”

“Tyrone's parents lost both their children. I don't know how they could survive such a tragedy.”

“His mother didn't. She died on Christmas day. I wonder whether she committed suicide. What else?”

“There's nothing about who Tyrone was.”

“Right. Heart-breaking, isn't it? He was just a local black boy. Now here's an article the *Witherston Weekly* published nine months later on May thirtieth.”

*Witherston High School Valedictorian
Honors Tyrone Lewis*

The Ku Klux Klan's murder of Tyrone Lincoln Lewis, age eighteen, remains unsolved after nine months.

On Sunday, September 1, 1968, four Klansmen attacked and killed young Lewis, a Negro, who had Allie Marie Camhurst with him in his car. Allie Camhurst remains missing.

Tyrone's mother, Roberta Lewis, died unexpectedly on December 25. Allie's father, Reverend Wade Camhurst, died unexpectedly on January 31.

At Witherston High School's graduation ceremony last Friday, valedictorian Hal Tucker spoke of Tyrone.

Tucker said, "Last September Witherston High lost a distinguished alum, Tyrone Lincoln Lewis. Tyrone's obituary mentioned that he was a Negro but said nothing about his profound impact on his fellow students. So I will dedicate my valedictorian's speech to him.

"Not only was Tyrone senior class president and a varsity basketball player but he was also an intellectual who made intellectuals out of many of us. Tyrone co-founded the Movie Club with Allie Camhurst and became its first president. Every Sunday at four o'clock in the Bobcat Conference Room Tyrone led an exciting discussion of whatever movie was showing at Black Fox Theater. We learned to analyze plots, directorial styles, screen writing, and cinematography. One Sunday we spent four hours talking about 'In the Heat of the Night' with Sidney Poitier and Rod Steiger. Tyrone was not afraid for us to bring up racial issues.

"And for all four years of high school Tyrone worked nights and summers at the chicken plant.

"So, fellow Bobcats, let us each pledge to do what we can to overcome the racial bigotry that killed Tyrone."

The graduation program concluded with the song selected by the class of 1969, 'This Little Light of Mine.'"

"Their idealism is beautiful," Mev said.

"Yes, dear. And where did it go?" Lottie said. "That was my generation."

"Anything else?"

“One last article, a short one published a year after Tyrone’s death on September fifth.”

Witherston Marks First Anniversary of KKK Murder

One year ago, on the Sunday before Labor Day, four Klansmen murdered eighteen-year old Tyrone Lincoln Lewis, just days before he was to begin his freshman year at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Police have not solved the case.

Asked whether the police had any suspects, Chief Conn Kelly said, “No. Our only clue is that the killers drove an old black sedan. These mountains are full of old black sedans. They were used for hauling moonshine. The Klansmen could be from anywhere, from here in the mountains or from out of state. We don’t have KKK membership lists, so we don’t have a starting place for our search.”

Allie Marie Camhurst, who was with Tyrone Lewis that evening and was probably a witness to the killing, disappeared.

“Most probably, the Klansmen killed Allie and either hid her body or took her body with them,” Chief Kelly said. “They could not leave her alive to identify them.” He added, “We’ve stopped looking.”

“So do you want me to open up this cold case, Aunt Lottie?”

“I will work on it with you, dear.”

“Where will you start?”

“I will start with this question. If Allie Camhurst was killed that evening, why was her body never found? If she survived, where did she go? She witnessed the murder so she would have had good reason to hide.”

“And Tyrone Lewis’s murderers would have had good reason to kill her.”

“Right.”

“Do you remember the case, Aunt Lottie?” Mev asked. “It must have been in the Atlanta papers. How old were you then?”

“Almost the same age as Tyrone and Allie. Seventeen, going on eighteen. I was about to enter my freshman year at the University of Georgia. My new boyfriend Remington Byrd had an African American friend named Alonzo who told us about the murder. Alonzo was upset that the police didn’t consider the murder a big deal. We had a segregationist governor then, Lester Maddox, who made white supremacists feel justified in, as he put it, keeping blacks in their place.”

“Do you recall much about the Klan in those days?”

“I recall that the Klan threatened the life of my father, who was your father’s father. He was my high school’s principal, and he promoted integration. So he was a KKK target. By the way, your grandmother desegregated our town’s book club later that fall when she invited Alfreda Wright, an African American elementary school teacher, to join. Your grandmother was ahead of her time. The book club read *Black in White America*. So did I.”

CHAPTER 6

Tuesday Afternoon:

It looks like Crockett Wood hadn't put his Split Road house on the market," Mev said as Jake turned south onto Witherston Highway. "It's not listed in the Heron Brook real estate ads."

During the hour-long drive from Witherston to Heron Brook Mev browsed the Dawson County Tax Assessor's website, real estate ads, and arrest records. She found much of interest.

"Jake, the owner of the property on Split Road is listed as Harper B. Wood, not Crockett Wood."

"So Crockett lived with his father. When did Harper B. Wood buy it?"

"Nineteen seventy-two. The house is described as a single family residence, fifteen hundred square feet, with two bedrooms and one bath, on twenty and a half acres. Built in nineteen forty-eight. It's now assessed at seventy-five thousand dollars."

"Must be run down. What else can you find?"

"I'm looking at Dawson County arrests for 2010 to 2018. Crockett has run afoul of the law a few times. DUI in 2011 with a Resisting Arrest charge. Another DUI in 2014.

Assault Resulting in Bodily Injury in 2017. Let's see. That was in a local bar, Heron's Watering Hole."

"Nice guy."

"Here we are, Mev, at Ten Split Road. Crockett's got a pecan orchard."

As they got out of the vehicle Mev and Jake were greeted by four huge dogs, all barking fiercely, all racing back and forth behind the chain link fence that enclosed a large back yard behind an old farmhouse in need of paint. The porch held two wooden rocking chairs.

"Those dogs look like Bedford," Mev said. Maybe one of them is his mother."

Jake turned the key in the lock, and opened the door.

"This is where Crockett lived," Mev said. "Smells like the dogs lived here too. Leave the door open, Jake."

She took pictures.

They looked around. An old sofa, two old easy chairs, a small television, a coffee table, and a couple of end tables occupied the small living room. A dozen issues of *Recoil Magazine* and one issue of *American Rifleman* lay on the coffee table. Three gun cabinets lined the wall. An oak and glass gun cabinet held rifles and handguns. A steel and glass gun cabinet held an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and ammunition. A gun locker held three high-powered pistols and ammunition.

"Crockett Wood had enough fire power here for a brigade," Mev said, opening the ammunition drawer." She took more pictures.

"I want to see what he locked up," Jake said, approaching a four-foot-tall safe that stood beside the hearth. "Maybe this key will work. Great. It does."

Jake brought out a file of papers and a manila envelope marked "Cash."

"Let's look at the papers first, Mev."

Mev removed the magazines from the coffee table and spread out the papers.

"I'll take pictures," she said.

In the next few minutes Mev photographed Crockett Boone Wood's certificate of Honorable Discharge from the United States Army for twenty years of service, dated June thirtieth, 1992; Medicare and Social Security documents; a July 2018 statement from a bank in Heron Brook indicating a savings account of approximately thirteen thousand dollars and a checking account of six hundred; a 2017 Georgia kennel license; a Georgia weapons carry license card renewed in 2014, when Wood was clean-shaven; a Georgia lifetime sportsman license; and divorce papers from 1993. And a will.

"Here's his will, Jake. It's homemade, in longhand. Look."

I, Crockett Boone Wood, of Ten Split Road, Heron Brook, Georgia, being of sound mind, write this last will and testament.

I bequeath \$4,980 to Ace Melton Barnett (80 Wylie's Road, Heron Brook, Georgia).

I bequeath \$1,000 to my twin sister Trudy Lee (Gertrude Lee) Wood (address unknown). If she can't be found in one year's time or if she dies before I die, I bequeath that \$1,000 to the Saxxons for America (c/o Ace Melton Barnett, 80 Wylie's Road, Heron Brook, Georgia).

I bequeath \$4,000 to my father, Harper B. Wood (Heron Brook Veterans Home, Heron Brook, Georgia). If he dies before I die, I bequeath that \$4,000 to the Saxxons for America (c/o Ace Melton Barnett, 80 Wylie's Road, Heron Brook, Georgia).

I bequeath \$10 to my ex-wife, Pina Mae Marston Wood (219 Musket Road, Azalea, Georgia). If she dies before I die, I bequeath that \$10 to my cousin, Red Wilker (3950 Black Fox Road, Witherston, Georgia).

I bequeath the rest of my estate, including whatever property I may own, to the Saxxons for America (c/o Ace Melton Barnett, 80 Wylie's Road, Heron Brook, Georgia).

I want my body to be cremated and my ashes to be scattered on the farm at Ten Split Road, Heron Brook, Georgia. I don't want any funeral.

“He signed his will ‘Crockett Boone Wood’ and dated it July tenth, 2018. He had two witnesses, Carl Everett Tomson and Lula G. Tomson of six Split Road, Heron Brook. The Tomsons must be his neighbors,” Mev said. She took a picture of the will.

“So who’s this Ace Melton Barnett? Why don’t you google him?”

Mev did. “Here we go, Jake. Ace Melton Barnett does not shun publicity. He wrote letters to the editor of the *Heron Brook Weekly* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.”

“Why did Crockett will him almost five thousand dollars?”

“Four thousand nine hundred and eighty dollars. That’s a strange bequest. Ace Barnett stood to benefit from Crockett’s death.”

“Let’s focus on Crockett for now, Mev. Why do you suppose Crockett moved to Heron Brook after getting out of the army?”

“He got divorced. So he moved in with his father,” Mev said.

“Let’s see what else he saved for posterity.”

The manila envelope marked “Cash” held a US Army Marksman badge and nearly one thousand dollars in fifties.

Jake put the envelope and the file into his briefcase.

“We need to find Trudy Lee Wood, Jake.”

“I’ll ask the GBI to locate her.”

“Let’s check out the bedrooms,” Mev said.

One bedroom had nothing but a twin bed and mattress. No sheets. The other bedroom had an unmade double bed, a bedside table with a well-thumbed copy of Jared Taylor’s book *White Identity*, and a lamp. Mev opened the closet and found plaid shirts, jeans, baseball caps, and a white KKK-style hood and robe. On the robe’s red sash was an ironed-on

patch of a square white cross with the image of a drop of blood on a circular red background.

Mev pointed to the emblem. "That's a Blood Drop Cross," she said. "It's an insignia of the Klan."

"Somebody's coming," Jake said. "Hear that?"

"It's Catherine," Mev said, looking at the front door.

Catherine Perry-Soto walked in. "Hey, Chief. Hey, Detective Arroyo. I heard you all were here. What's happening?"

"You probably already know, Catherine. You always do," Jake said.

"I'd like to hear your story. Then I'll do some research on my own."



After dinner, Lottie brought a pitcher of lemonade over to her niece's porch to get her briefing from Mev. She sat in the rocker, and Mev and Paco sat in the swing. Jaime, Jorge, and Beau sat on the steps tossing tennis balls to the dogs. Mev spoke over the sound of crickets and tree frogs. She told them about Crockett's will.

"Have you ever heard of Ace Melton Barnett, Aunt Lottie?" Mev asked.

"No, I haven't, dear. But I'll investigate."

"Maybe you could check the letters he wrote to the *Heron Brook Weekly* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His letters may tell us something about the Saxxons."

"Do you think Crockett Wood was killed because he was a Saxxon, Mom?" Jaime asked.

"We don't know yet. Our first step is to see what's on his cell phone. We'll look at his contacts."

"You and Jake investigate Crockett Wood's murder, Mev. And Beau, Jaime, Jorge, and I will investigate Tyrone Lewis's murder," Lottie said.

“A friend loaned me Witherston High School’s yearbook for 1968. It belongs to her grandmother,” Beau said. “It has five pictures of Tyrone and seven pictures of Allie. The Movie Club photo shows them together. They were both on the yearbook staff and on the student council.”

Beau went inside and came out with the yearbook. He opened it to a photograph of graduating seniors.

“Tyrone was the only black kid in his class,” Jaime said.

“Like me,” Beau said. He flipped a few pages. “Tyrone was on the varsity basketball team.”

“He looks too short to play basketball,” Jaime said

“He was my height, five seven,” Beau said. “That’s what it says here. Maybe he was fast.”

“But not fast enough to outrun his killers.”

“Allie was yearbook editor. She wrote the preface.” Beau put the yearbook on the table for all to read.

Thank you, fellow Bobcats, for choosing me to serve as your 1968 yearbook editor. By the time we look at this book of memories we will be graduating from Witherston High School and going out into the world. What will guide us? Perhaps the wisdom of three recently deceased Georgia writers will provide a path. I leave you with their thoughts:

For fear is a primary source of evil...The xenophobic individual can only reject and destroy, as the xenophobic nation inevitably makes war.

~ Carson McCullers (1917-1967)

The warped, distorted frame we have put around every Negro child from birth is around every white child also. Each is on a different side of the frame but each is pinioned there. And what cruelly shapes and cripples the personality of one is as cruelly shaping and crippling the personality of the other.

~ Lillian Smith (1897-1966)

Acceptance of prevailing standards often means we have no standards of our own.

~ Jean Toomer (1894-1967)

*So farewell, friends. And remember our Bobcat pledge:
"To make change for the better."*

~ Allie Marie Camhurst, Class of 1968

"Wow," Paco exclaimed. "Allie was pushing for civil rights for African Americans."

"She was brave, and she was mature for her age," Lottie said.

"Maybe she was already hanging out with Tyrone."

"In secret. If she was hanging out with Tyrone, she would have had to do it in secret."

"Who gave you the yearbook, Beau?" Jorge asked. "We should interview her grandmother."

"Mona Pattison. Your old girlfriend, Jorge."

"Oh," Jorge said.

"Mrs. Pattison was our second grade teacher, Jorge," Jaime said.

"Oh. Right."

"Mary Lou Pattison is in my book club. I can talk with her," Lottie said. "Shall we go see her together, Beau?"

"Sure. I'm free after school tomorrow."

"I'll call her."

"Okay, Aunt Lottie," Mev said. "You all investigate the 1968 case, and Jake and I'll investigate the 2018 case."

"You said Crockett mentioned a twin sister in his will. What was her name?"

"Trudy Lee. Actually, Gertrude Lee Wood."

"Interesting. She must have been named after her great aunt Gertrude, Obie Wilker's wife and Bullet Wilker's mother. So her father Harper B. Wood and her uncle Bullet Wilker must have stayed close."

“But she and Crockett didn’t stay close. Crockett didn’t know her address.”

“Now isn’t that weird! They were twins, and they didn’t communicate. I can’t imagine Jorge and me not communicating,” Jaime said.

“Something must have split them apart,” Jorge said. “Maybe their parents favored one over the other.”

“Or Crockett did something to Trudy Lee, and she didn’t forgive him.”

“She’s in this yearbook,” Beau said. “Here’s a picture of her with Crockett at a football game. She was a cheerleader. She was beautiful.”

Jorge read over Beau’s shoulder. “The caption says, ‘The Wood twins.’”

“They both have light eyes.”

“Probably blue eyes, and blond or red hair.”

“She’s tall,” Beau said, “almost as tall as her brother.”

“But not as skinny.”

“We need to find her,” Mev said. “But she seems to have disappeared.”

“We’ll find her, Mev. Everyone leaves tracks,” Lottie said.

“Are you going to let Red Wilker know about his cousin’s death before he reads Webby Witherston tomorrow?” Paco asked Mev.

“I’ll call him right now.” Mev went in the house.



Mev reached Red Wilker on his cell phone and told him of his cousin’s death.

“I’m sorry to hear that, Mev, truly sorry. Nobody should have to die that way. It’s a shame. Truly a shame. But I confess, Crockett and I were not close. Never have been. He’s a white supremacist, and I’m not. I’ve never heard of the Saxxons.”

“Have you seen Crockett recently? Or spoken with him?”

“No. I didn’t know he was around till I read *Webby Witherston* Sunday morning. And even if I’d have known, I wouldn’t have gone to see him.”

“Bad blood between you all?”

“That’s one way of putting it.”

“When did you last see Crockett, Red?”

“Are you interrogating me, Detective Arroyo?”

“No, of course not, Red. If I were interrogating you, I’d come to see you with Chief McCoy. I’m just curious about your last encounter with Crockett.”

“That might have been when we graduated from high school.”

“From Witherston High? What year did you graduate?”

“1971. I joined the air force that summer and went to Thailand. Crockett married Pina Mae, joined the army, and went to Vietnam. I didn’t like Crockett much then, and when he got out of the army, I never went to Dawson County to see him.”

“I believe you, Red. Thanks for talking with me.”

“I don’t know why Crockett was hanging around Witherston. He’s got no friends here.”

“Good luck with your campaign, Red.”

“I bet you’re supporting Rhonda,” Red replied and disconnected.



Mev returned to the porch and reported the phone conversation.

“Do you believe Red, Mev?” Lottie asked “Do you believe that he and his cousin had nothing to do with each other?”

“If they had nothing to do with each other, why did Crockett Wood come here, especially if Mr. Wilker was the only person he knew?” Jorge said.

“And why did Crockett Wood leave ten dollars to Mr. Wilker if he and Mr. Wilker didn’t speak?” Beau asked.

“Ten dollars is an insult, Beau,” Jorge said.

“Oh.”

“Mev, did you tell Red that Crockett mentioned him in his will?”

“I did not. He’ll find out in due time.”

“What if Mr. Wilker is really a Saxxon too?” Paco said. “No way would he tell us.”

“Mr. Wilker is just a right-wing aardvark, Dad,” Jorge said, “who likes guns.”

“He shot down Mr. Wood’s drone,” Jaime said.

“Mr. Wilker could have thought he was shooting a big bird, like a hawk or a turkey,” Paco said.

“How could Mr. Wilker, the self-acclaimed game hunter, not know it was a drone?” Jorge asked. “Aunt Lottie knew right off.”

“Mr. Wilker told me to give the drone to him,” Beau said. “Why did he want it?”

“To keep anybody from tracing it to his cousin,” Lottie said. “I think he knew more about his cousin than he said.”

“Maybe Mr. Wilker killed Mr. Wood because Mr. Wood had something on him,” Jorge said.

“Yeah. Maybe Mr. Wilker didn’t want Mr. Wood to embarrass him with all that Saxxon stuff,” Beau said, “in the middle of his campaign for mayor.”

“Beau, can you get us Witherston High School’s 1971 yearbook?” Mev asked. “I’d like to see what Crockett Wood did in high school.”

“I’ll put a classified ad in tomorrow’s *Webby Witherston*. I can do it now on my phone.”

As Beau pulled his phone out of his pocket, Mev got a call.

“Hi, Catherine,” she said. “What’s up?”

“Hello, Detective Arroyo. *Webby Witherston* just got an untraceable email. I’ll read it to you. ‘To the Editor. If Witherston becomes a sanctuary city, Witherstonians will pay for such action, perhaps dearly.’”

“Jeepers! How was it signed?”

“It was signed, ‘A Saxxon.’ No name.”

“Have you contacted Chief McCoy, Catherine?”

“I’ve forwarded the email to him. And I also forwarded it to you, Detective Arroyo, but I wanted to call you since you’re leading the investigation into Crockett Wood’s death.”

“Are you going to print the letter?”

“Yes. Of course.”

“Thanks for calling me, Catherine.” Mev disconnected.

“What did Catherine tell you, Mom?”

Mev opened her email and read Catherine’s message aloud.

“Wear your gun, Mevita,” Paco said. “You could be in danger.”

“So could you, Paco,” Mev said. “And so could Beau, and Jaime, and Jorge, and even Lottie.”

“Imagine Aunt Lottie with a gun! She’d look like Annie Oakley but more beautiful with silver hair,” Jaime said.

“She’d tell the Saxxon, ‘Stick ’em up or I’ll shoot your brains out,’” Jorge said.

“I’m safe, folks. I’m too long in the tooth,” Lottie said.

“Aunt Lottie!”

“What would you do, Mevita, if the Saxxons kidnapped one of the boys? You’d probably do anything they told you to do to get him back.”

“That’s the point, Paco,” Lottie said. “That’s the power the kidnapper would have.”

CHAPTER 7

[WWW. ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM](http://WWW.ONLINEWITHERSTON.COM)

WITHERSTON ON THE WEB
Wednesday, September 5, 2018

NEWS

Crockett Wood Is Shot Dead in Outhouse

Crockett Boone Wood of Heron Brook, Georgia, was found shot to death at 4200 West Bank Road in Witherston yesterday morning. His body was discovered in his outhouse by Chief Jake McCoy and Detective Mev Arroyo of the Witherston Police. The door had been bolted from the inside.

Chief McCoy said, "The killer stuck a gun through the crescent moon and blew a hole through Wood's heart. Wood didn't have a chance, sitting there with his pants down."

In an initial search of Wood's cabin Detective Arroyo discovered a loaded hunting rifle, a loaded assault rifle, and some fifty four-by-six-inch Saxxons for America flyers.

They also found a DJI Phantom 4 Pro hobby drone kit with the remote control minus the quadcopter.

“Evidently, the missing quadcopter was the one that Red Wilker shot down on Sunday,” Detective Arroyo said, “The one that dropped the Saxxon flyers.”

Dawson County records show that Crockett Wood resided on a twenty-acre farm owned by his father Harper B. Wood at 10 Split Road in Heron Brook, Georgia, from February of 1993 through the present. His closest neighbor a half-mile up the road, Carl Tomson, said that Crockett Wood bred bullmastiffs for sale. He said that Wood worked in construction and drove a black Dodge Ram. He said that until this past year Wood’s father lived with him on the farm.

A black Dodge Ram, registered to Crockett Boone Wood, was found parked behind the Witherston cabin at 4200 West Bank Road in Witherston. A large puppy, possibly a bullmastiff, was found shot to death nearby. On his collar was a tag with the name Bedford.

Wood’s arrest record includes several DUIs and two assault charges. In September of 1992 Crockett Wood was arrested in Atlanta for second-degree domestic assault but acquitted when his spouse, Pina Mae Marston Wood, declined to press charges. More recently he was charged with DUI on two separate occasions and assault causing bodily injury on one occasion.

Crockett Wood also had a history of arrests at white pride marches outside Georgia. On July 4, 2012, he was arrested at Saxxons for America protest march against DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy) in Gainesville, Georgia, for shooting a semi-automatic pistol into the air. On July 18, 2015, he was arrested at a Ku Klux Klan march in Columbia, South Carolina, for assaulting a policeman. On August 12, 2017, he was arrested at the “Unite the Right” torch rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, for striking a black woman who carried a “Black Lives Matter” sign.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

Crockett Boone Wood Leaves Bequest to Saxxons

Crockett Boone Wood, shot to death on Labor Day on his father's property at 4200 West Bank Road, bequeathed a portion of his estate to the Saxxons for America, c/o Ace Melton Barnett of Heron Brook, Georgia.

Wood also made bequests to Ace Melton Barnett of Heron Brook Georgia (\$4,980), his father Harper B. Wood of Heron Brook (\$4,000), and his twin sister Gertrude Lee Wood "address unknown" (\$1,000). He left \$10 to his ex-wife Pina Mae Marston Wood, should she survive him. If she predeceased him, he specified that the \$10 should go to his cousin Red Wilker.

Ace Melton Barnett is treasurer of the Saxxons.

Chief Jake McCoy and Detective Mev Arroyo discovered Wood's hand-written will in a search of Wood's Heron Brook home.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

Witherston Roundtable Endorses Red Wilker for Mayor

The Witherston Round Table endorsed Red Wilker for mayor at its monthly luncheon yesterday, according to Roundtable president Trevor Bennington, Jr.

Red Wilker is a member of the Roundtable, as is Mayor Rich Rather. Rhonda Rather, who is Red Wilker's opponent, is not.

The endorsement followed speeches by the two candidates: Rhonda Rather spoke in favor of the sanctuary city, and Red Wilker spoke in opposition to it.

Interviewed afterwards, Wilker said, "Do Witherston's school children want to sit beside illegal aliens who can't speak English, who don't know how to read or write, who will bring crime to our town? Do Witherston's parents want

to support illegal aliens who've committed rape and murder? I don't think so. As mayor, I will look out for Witherstonians and nobody else."

When told of Wilker's statement Rhonda Rather said only, "Bless his heart, Red Wilker has no capacity for empathy."

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

Saxxons Use Extortion to Stop Sanctuary City

Witherston on the Web received a letter to the editor threatening harm to Witherston if our Town Council does not cancel plans to become a sanctuary city. After consultation with Chief Jake McCoy, I decided to publish it. See Letters to the Editor.

Catherine Perry-Soto, Editor

Crockett Wood Had White Supremacist History

As reported at the time in the Atlanta Constitution, the late Crockett Boone Wood and five other former members of the Ku Klux Klan founded the white supremacist organization Saxxons for America on Labor Day, September 7, 1992, on Stone Mountain, fifteen miles east of downtown Atlanta.

In a salute to the Klan, which had been reconstituted on Stone Mountain in 1915, the Saxxons met on the north face of the granite dome, above the relief sculpture of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson.

Wood became the first president of the organization. Upon his election Wood stated, "Saxxons for America will restore the white Anglo-Saxon culture that the Pilgrims

established on our continent four hundred years ago. We will spell 'Saxon' with an additional X to symbolize the cross."

The organization is rumored to have as many as two hundred members across Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. With the exception of its leaders, the organization's membership has been kept secret.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

NORTH GEORGIA IN HISTORY

By Charlotte Byrd

Gertrude Wilker's diary chronicles the incipient influence of film on American values. On Sunday, September 21, Gertrude Wilker wrote:

Last Thursday we heard horns and shots all across the valley meaning revenueurs were around. So on Friday Obie loaded our wagon with whiskey and took me and Boone and Geraldine and our babies to Dahlonga to celebrate my nineteenth birthday and show Buehler and Harper B to my parents. Obie wanted me to deliver the whiskey to my father who just bought a model t with Uncle Rosco so they could run their whiskey to Atlanta. They are runners now.

On Saturday we left Buehler and Harper B with my mother and went and saw The Birth of a Nation at the movie theater. It showed how the Ku Klux Klan saved white people from dangerous Negroes. Geraldine and I thought the movie was scary but Obie and Boone liked it. Lillian Gish who is the star is beautiful. Boone said the movie proved we wouldn't be poor if the South had won the war and the Negroes hadn't took over.

Gertrude Wilker is referring to the way moonshiners warned each other that IRS agents were in the vicinity. One agent complained that every time he got close to a still the mountains suddenly echoed with gunshots, horns, and cowbells. Not the sound of music. The moonshiners had each other's back.

D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation," which came out in February of 1915, inspired William J. Simmons to revive the almost defunct Ku Klux Klan in November of that year. The movie, a three-hour blockbuster, was based on "The Clansmen: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan," a novel which Thomas Dixon, Jr., published in 1905 and adapted into a play. Dixon has been quoted as saying,

My object is to teach the north, the young north, what it has never known—the awful suffering of the white man during the dreadful reconstruction period. I believe that Almighty God anointed the white men of the south by their suffering during that time immediately after the Civil War to demonstrate to the world that the white man must and shall be supreme.

The "first era" Ku Klux Klan, formed in Tennessee in 1865 to return white supremacy to the South during Reconstruction, used violence against Negroes and their sympathizers but did not use the fiery cross or the white robe and hood. The "second era" KKK, formed in 1915, adopted the movie's fiery cross as their symbol and the white robe and hood as their costume.

OBITUARY

*Crockett Harper Wood
1953-2018*

Crockett Boone Wood, age sixty-five, of Heron Brook, Georgia, died on September 3, 2018, in Witherston on family property at 4200 West Bank Road.

Crockett Wood, son of Harper B. Wood and the Ella Crockett Wood and grandson of Boone Wood and Geraldine Harper Wood, all of Lumpkin County, was born in Dahlonega on August 8, 1953.

Crockett Wood is survived by his father Harper B. Wood of Heron Brook, Georgia, possibly his twin sister Gertrude Lee Wood (whereabouts unknown), and his second cousin Red Wilker of Witherston.

Crockett Wood graduated from Witherston High School in 1971. He married Pina Mae Marston that June. They had no children and were divorced in 1992.

Crockett Wood joined the United States Army in August of 1971. He retired as a Master Sergeant with an honorable discharge after twenty years. Army records show that Wood served tours of duty in Vietnam, Lebanon, El Salvador, and Kuwait. He possessed a Marksman badge, signifying top-level expertise as an Army sharpshooter.

In his will Wood requested that his body be cremated and that there be no funeral service.

Amadahy Henderson, Reporter

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Witherston Town Council will meet in the mayor's conference room at City Hall at 8:00 p.m. tomorrow night.

Atsadi Moon, Chair of the Witherston Town Council

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*To the Editor:
If Witherston becomes a sanctuary city, Witherstonians
will pay for such action, perhaps dearly.
A Saxxon
Georgia*

WEATHER

*More sunshine—here, there, and everywhere. More
sunshine in Witherston and Atlanta and Washington DC and
Mexico City.*

*High today in Witherston will be eight-two degrees. Low
tonight will be sixty-one degrees.*

Good morning, sunshine.

Tony Lima, Meteorólogo

CLASSIFIEDS

*Wanted to borrow: Witherston High School Yearbook of
1971. Contact Beau Lodge, beaulodge2001@gmail.com*



Lottie called out to Mev as Mev was getting into her car. The sun had just risen.

“Good morning, dear,” she said. “You’ve seen today’s letter to the editor from the Saxxon? It looks to me like a threat.”

“To me too, Aunt Lottie. That’s why I’m going to the station early today. Jake and I are thinking that the Saxxon is Ace Melton Barnett, who was mentioned in Crockett’s will. We need to locate him.”

“Maybe you all are thinking of Ace Melton Barnett because he’s the only Saxxon whose name you know. Anyway, I’ve been thinking. Jaime, Jorge, and Beau may have invited some trouble for themselves by visiting Crockett Wood’s cabin. I have three key chain siren alarms which I’d like to give them.”

Lottie handed Mev a baggie with three alarms, green and blue and yellow.

“Thanks so much, Aunt Lottie. But keep one for yourself.”

“I’ve kept a purple one for myself.”



After Mev had left, Lottie went to her computer. She googled Ace Melton Barnett and found two letters.

On October 26, 2016, during Donald Trump’s campaign for the presidency, Barnett had published a letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

To the Editor:

Make America great again. That is why patriots should vote for Donald J. Trump for president.

Donald J. Trump sides with those of us loyal to the country true Americans fought to establish in the American Revolutionary War. What kind of country was that? It was Christian and white. It was “great.”

Miscegenation, which is interbreeding among the races, caused America’s decline. When America allowed in “the tired, the poor, the huddled masses, and the wretched refuse of other nations,” America started turning brown, and America spiraled downward.

A vote for Donald J. Trump is a vote for a wall to keep the wretched refuse out of our country.

Take America back.

Ace Barnett

Heron Brook

Barnett's letter elicited the following response on September 28.

To the Editor:

Do white supremacist Ace Barnett and his billionaire hero Donald J. Trump think they were chosen by God to be white and not brown? Do they think they were chosen by God to be born in America and not Mexico? Do they think they were chosen by God to be Christian and not Muslim?

Do they think they were chosen by God to have power over others, power over brown people and black people, power over women, power over the disabled, power over the poor? Do they think God approves of their using their power to cause hardship to others not white, American, Christian, male, and able?

I would like for Ace Barnett and Donald J. Trump to answer these questions.

Janet Ullmann

Atlanta

“Now who could this Janet Ullmann be who writes such good letters to the editor?” Lottie asked herself. She googled Janet Ullmann and found an item in the *Atlanta Constitution* from October 1, 1975.

Weller's Manager Cleared of Rape Charge

Howard (“Howie”) Hedge, Manager of Weller's Wine and Oyster Bar at 418 Cotton Farm Circle in Atlanta, has been cleared of the charge that he raped one of his waitresses on the evening of July 4, 1975.

Janet Ullmann, who was twenty-one years of age at the time, reported to police that Hedge, her boss, had raped her in the back of his van after taking her to view the Fourth-of-July fireworks on Stone Mountain.

Hedge said that Ullmann had initiated the sexual encounter and had not resisted him.

In the absence of evidence to substantiate Ullmann's claim, Gwinnett County Superior Court Judge Albert Pate dismissed the case.

Hedge has fired Ullmann for her false accusation.

“Poor girl. That must have been a formative experience,” Lottie said aloud.

Lottie clicked on a letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* Janet Ullmann had written on September 12, 2016.

To the Editor:

Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly has died at the age of ninety-two.

Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly said, “Men hardly ever ask sexual favors of women from whom the certain answer is No. Virtuous women are seldom accosted by unwelcome sexual propositions or familiarities, obscene talk or profane language.”

Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly, a white, healthy, wealthy, well-educated, famous woman with a rich husband and six children, opposed abortion. She must have assumed that “virtuous women” never needed one. I assume that she never needed one.

Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly must never have been raped, must never have been forced to accept sexual advances from a man with power over her life, must never have suffered the humiliation of being disbelieved because she was a woman.

Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly also said, “It's very healthy for a young girl to be deterred from promiscuity by fear of contracting a painful, incurable disease, or cervical cancer, or sterility, or the likelihood of giving birth to a dead, blind or brain-damage baby.”

Did Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly believe that sterility, disease, and tragic fetal disorders were God's punishment for women less "virtuous" than she?

If there were a God, Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly would have died long ago.

Janet Ullmann

Atlanta

"Well done, Janet Ullmann! We are kindred spirits."

Lottie went back to her research for Mev. She found the letter Ace Barnett wrote to *The Heron Brook Weekly* on Friday, September 15, 2014.

To the Editor:

Today is the ninetieth birthday of World War II Marine veteran Lance Corporal Harper B. Wood, not only the best mechanic Dixie Speedway ever had but also the greatest patriot still alive in our community. Harper B proudly killed more than a dozen Japs in the battle of Iwo Jima in February, 1945. He stayed in the Marines until 1964. Now he lives at the Heron Brook Veterans Home.

Harper B's son Crockett and I invite Harper B's friends to celebrate Harper B's birthday tonight at five o'clock in the pasture behind my house at 80 Wylie's Road. Crockett and I will provide beer.

I will fly the American flag on my mail box, not just for Harper B but for all the other patriotic vets in Heron Brook who have fought for America. Sergeant Crockett Wood also has many kills to his credit, and so do I.

Corporal Ace Barnett

Heron Brook



Jake called Mev into his office.

“Look here, Mev,” Jake said, staring at his computer screen. “Dirk just emailed us Crockett Wood’s preliminary autopsy report. And it’s very interesting.”

Mev read the report over Jake’s shoulder.

*Dirk Wales, M.D.
Lumpkin County Coroner
Chestatee Regional Hospital
227 Mountain Drive
Dahlonega, GA 30533*

September 5, 2018

*PRELIMINARY AUTOPSY REPORT
Crockett Boone Wood, age sixty-five*

At 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 4, 2018, Chief Jake McCoy and Detective Mev Arroyo of the Witherston Police Department discovered the body of Crockett Boone Wood in a locked outhouse at 4200 West Bank Road in Witherston.

The body was taken by ambulance to the Chestatee Regional Hospital where a routine autopsy was performed by Dr. John Morston, pathologist.

According to Dr. Morston, the deceased, a Caucasian male, six feet, one inch tall and 175 pounds, died of a gunshot wound to the heart on Monday, September third between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Dr. Morston reported that the deceased was suffering from early stage pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Morston noted three tattoos: On the deceased’s right shoulder, the Celtic Cross; on his chest, the number 8122017, and on his back, the words “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”

*Dirk Wales, MD
Coroner*

“Pancreatic cancer is usually fatal. Crockett Wood was dying,” Jake said. “Maybe that was why he returned to Witherston.”

“Out of nostalgia? Crockett doesn’t seem the nostalgic type, Jake. What else could have been his motive?”

“To harm his cousin Red when Red’s running for mayor?”

“Or to hassle us when we’re about to make Witherston a sanctuary city.”

“Crockett must have known he was dying. So he had nothing to lose. What do you make of his tattoos?”

“The Celtic Cross is obvious,” Mev said. “The white supremacists adopted it to mean white pride. And the words on his back are the ‘Fourteen Words’ that are the slogan of the white nationalist movement.”

“What could the numbers mean? Eight million, one hundred twenty-two thousand, seventeen.”

“Let’s see. Seven digits. Eight, one, two, two, zero, one seven.”

“Sounds like a phone number, Mev. Eight one two dash two zero one seven.”

“Without the area code, we’ll never track it down,” Mev said.

“Two zero one seven is twenty seventeen. Maybe it’s a date.”

“Eight dash twelve dash twenty seventeen. That would be August twelfth, 2017. Yes, it’s a date, Jake! The date of the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville.”

“That date must have meant a lot to Crockett,” Jake said.

“How discouraging. Crockett wore the date on his body as a badge of honor. To him, that date must have signified the largest show of white pride in his lifetime. To the rest of us, that date signifies the white supremacist assault on Charlottesville.”

“And a white supremacist’s murder of Heather Heyer.”

“And maybe the moment our country officially recognized the danger white supremacists still pose to our democ-

racy. I guess history is in the eye of the beholder,” Mev said. “We need to know more about Crockett’s past, Jake. Would you like to drive back to Heron Brook this morning to interview his father? We should inform him of his son’s death anyway.”

“And you and I need to talk about the Saxxon’s letter to the editor.”

John Hicks walked into Jake’s office with the drone’s monitor. “Do you all have time to see the video? It’s in two segments.”

“Of course.”

For the next fifteen minutes, Mev, Jake, and John Hicks watched a movie of Witherston shot from the air. The movie took them from Saloli Stream over Founding Father’s Creek to Mev’s house, across town to the Lodges’ house where Jim Lodge was mowing his lawn until he looked up, and east on Black Fox Road to a large ranch house with a couple of German Shepherds in a chain link enclosure.”

“That’s Red Wilker’s place,” Jake commented. “And now the drone’s going north up Hiccup Hill.”

“There’s Tayanita Village,” John Hicks said. “See Grass and Weed? There’s Amadahy with Franny. She’s spotted the drone. Oh, she took a picture! Here comes Atsadi.”

Then the video cut off. John Hicks pushed the PLAY button again. “Now you’ll see what getting shot down feels like,” he said.

In the second segment they got an overview of the parade line-up on the Grays’ pasture, a close-up of the KNN float on which Beau and Sally were seated cross-legged on the truck bed holding hands, the Grays’ red barn, and the Grays’ white farmhouse. Above the farmhouse the image suddenly turned into a swirl of colors for a few seconds before they got a long close-up of a ripe zucchini on red soil. Beau’s face suddenly appeared onscreen. Then nothing.

“Crockett Wood was looking for something,” Mev said. “If he’d just wanted to look at Witherston, he would have

videotaped our courthouse and the Witherston Baptist Church.”

“He was not a tourist,” Jake said.



Mev and Jake rang the bell of apartment thirty-eight at the Heron Brook Veterans Home shortly before lunchtime. They showed their credentials and introduced themselves to the nurse who opened the door.

“We’re here to see Mr. Wood,” Jake said.

“How do you do? I’m Priscilla,” she said. “Nice to meet you, Chief McCoy, Detective Arroyo. Come in.”

Priscilla ushered them into the bedroom, where a very elderly man lay sleeping in a hospital bed. On the bedside table was a telephone and a framed photograph of Crockett Wood holding a hunting rifle.

Catherine Perry-Soto stood at Harper B. Wood’s bedside.

“Hello, Chief McCoy, Detective Arroyo,” Catherine said. “I got here a few minutes ago.”

“Hello there, Catherine,” Mev said. “Why should we not be surprised that you beat us here?”

“Has Mr. Wood spoken to you yet?” Jake asked her.

“No, not yet.”

“And he may not,” the nurse said. “I just gave him a sedative after breakfast. He was upset about his son’s death. He was screaming. He’s not right in his head anymore.”

“How did he find out about Crockett’s death?”

“Somebody called him a couple of hours ago. He answered the phone, so I don’t know who it was. He didn’t say anything. He just hung up.”

“Who might it have been?” Mev asked her.

“It might have been his ex-daughter-in-law, Pina Mae, who was probably glad Crockett was dead. She hated Crockett, but she did call Mr. Wood every now and then. Or it

might have been his race-car buddy Ace Barnett. Or it might have been his daughter, who called him Sunday morning.”

“Trudy Lee Wood?”

“Yes. Trudy got Mr. Wood real mad. He screamed, ‘You be damned! Go whine to Crockett. He’s in Witherston right now!’”

“And Trudy might have been the one to call him today?”

“Possibly.”

“What did Trudy look like?” Mev asked.

“Does Mr. Wood have a picture of her?” Catherine asked.

“I never laid eyes on her since she never came here,” Priscilla answered. “And Mr. Wood doesn’t have a picture of her. But she’s been sending him money since he turned ninety, fifty dollars in cash every few months. No return address on the envelopes. Just the name Trudy Wood.”

“Did Mr. Wood have any visitors?”

“Crockett came a couple times once a month and called him a couple times a week. And Mr. Barnett came every two or three months. Mr. Wood and Mr. Barnett talked about race cars.”

Harper B. Wood opened his eyes. “Who are you?” he screamed at Jake. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m Chief Jake McCoy, of the Witherston Police Department. This is Detective Mev Arroyo. And this is Catherine Perry-Soto, our friend. We’ve come to offer our condolences for the death of your son Crockett.”

“The police? You can’t arrest me!” Wood screamed. “I’m ninety-four years old! You’re too late!” He laughed loudly. “Where’s Crockett?”

“Crockett has died, Mr. Wood,” Mev said gently. “That’s why we came. We’re not here to arrest you, or anybody.”

“Crockett is not dead! He came by last week. He brought me whiskey. Where’s my whiskey? Nurse!”

“What did you and Crockett talk about?” Catherine asked.

“About his dogs, like we always do. He brings me whiskey, and we talk about his dogs. He raises dogs for protection, guard dogs. They weigh a hundred pounds. He would have been killed a long time ago if he hadn’t had his guard dogs. And his guns.”

“Why would Crockett have been killed?” Mev asked.

“There are people out there who will kill you and steal everything you have. They would have killed me too if I hadn’t had my guns. Nurse! Where’s my gun?”

“Why would you have been killed, Mr. Wood?” Catherine asked.

“I ain’t talking to you anymore, lady. Not to you either, mister police chief. Not to anybody. You all get out of here. Leave me alone!”

Wood closed his eyes.

“Time for us to go,” Jake said. “Thanks, Priscilla.”

Priscilla accompanied Mev, Jake, and Catherine out of the apartment.

“Mr. Wood had a trophy on his shelf,” Mev said. “Did you all notice it?”

“It’s a Dixie Speedway trophy. Mr. Wood won a race there in 1970, just two years after the speedway opened,” Priscilla said. “I’m surprised he didn’t tell you about it.”

“So he was a driver,” Jake said. “Is that how he earned his living?”

“No, he earned his living as a pit stop mechanic at the speedway,” Priscilla said. “When he got too old for the races he opened a car repair shop here in Heron Brook with his son Crockett.”

“How long has he had dementia?” Mev asked.

“For a year, maybe? In the last few months he’s been going downhill fast.”

“Here’s my card, Priscilla,” Mev said. “Call me if you remember anything useful to us.”

“I wonder why he thought we’d come to arrest him,” Mev said to Jake and Catherine as they walked back to their cars.

“Mr. Wood is paranoid,” Catherine said.

“He’s not right in his head,” Jake said.

“What did Crockett Wood’s autopsy report say?” Catherine asked Jake. “I understand you got it this morning.”

Jake told her.

Want to read more? Get the full version of
Saxxons in Witherston by Betty Jean Craige
Available at Amazon, B&N, Smashwords, Kobo,
iTunes, BlackOpalBooks.com, and other fine bookstores

About the Author



Photo by Alvaro Santistevan

Dr. Betty Jean Craige is Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature at the University of Georgia. She has published academic books in the fields of literature, poetry translation (from Spanish), history of ideas, and art.

Her non-academic books include *Conversations with Cosmo: At Home with an African Grey Parrot*; four Witherston Murder Mysteries: *Downstream*, *Fairfield's Auction*, *Dam Witherston*, and *Saxxons in Witherston*; and the thriller *Aldo*, all published by Black Opal Books.

Fairfield's Auction won first place in the category of Murder and Mayhem in the 2018 Chanticleer International Book Awards. *Dam Witherston* was named Winner of the 2018 New York City Big Book Awards in the Mystery category, Honorable Mention in Mystery in the 2017 Royal Dragonfly Book Awards, and Distinguished Favorite in Mystery in the 2018 Independent Press Awards. *Aldo* was named Distinguished Favorite in the 2018 New York City Big Book Awards in the Mystery category, Second Place in both Mystery and Science Fiction in the Royal Dragonfly Book

Awards, and Distinguished Favorite in Crime Fiction in the 2019 Independent Press Awards.

Craige lives in Athens, Georgia, with Cosmo, her very smart, very talkative, very funny African Grey Parrot.

Visit her website: <http://bettyjeancraigebooks.weebly.com/>