

## Spinning ' Yarn

by Louis D. Mitchell

Somehow the customarily early southeastern-North Carolina spring came late this year to Columbus County. Few were unhappy about seeing the rather unusually chilly winter fade away into flowers, blooming trees, and chanting birds having come north once more to inhabit the skies. Suddenly the fragrance of spring intoxicated everyone and the churches--although they were usually filled on holidays--seemed to be extra crowded that particular Easter. Reverend Mitchell down at St. James Baptist Church said that people were merely showing their appreciation to the Lord for having finally relieved his flock from a hard and long winter.

Rev. George Jacobs up at Rohobeth AME Church said that his folks jess wanted to make a greater noise unto the Lawd that Easter 'cause life had been real tough fer them that winter.

Reverend Dallie Moore at Shady Grove merely shouted "Halleluiah! Spring has show sprung as we's grateful Lawd, Mah Lawd have mercy, we's grateful! Thar's been lots of sinnin' this winter Lawd but we's all hiar to ask fer yo fergiveness..Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Reverend Alwood Spaulding at Sandy Plains Baptist Church, a little more conservative than his colleagues, merely thanked the Lord for His blessings and said that he was "show glad to see his people again attending services. Outside funerals and a few prayer meetings thar ain't been much church-going downhiar this winter. But we's got one more funeral down thar at St. James this week and we wants you all to attend. But thank the Lawd fer lahfe, health, and fellowship and fer bringin' spring all over again. Yo hand is mahgty among the mahgty."

It was after that same funeral down at St. James Baptist Church, (down below,) that Georgia Spaulding made her way out to her second cousin's house. June Mitchell was practically waiting at the door when Georgia stepped out of her car in front of the one-storied house set back some twenty feet from the road.

Georgia shooed away a few chickens, shouted for the dog to get out of the way, and mounted the little porch. She fondly kissed her cousin and the two women, knowing surely that there was much to say and much to hear, automatically entered June Mitchell's kitchen as if it had all been planned ahead of time. They sat down at the table, poured their coffee and as if they had not been apart for a long while began to speak from the middle of a conversation.

"Well," announced June, "as Ah was tellin' you 'bout yo family jess a couple of days ago, that thar ol' Linda Spaulding was some hypocrite you know. You kin tell me all 'bout the funeral when Ah'm finished with this story. Ah knows you's got somethin' harmful to say 'bout somebody. Lawd knows it ain't tellin' who it is this tahme o whose family it is. Lawd knows chale you show kin spin some yarn. Uncle Ben Chessfire Spaulding used to call it lahyin' but he was somethin' else again." She paused a moment and looked at Georgia, desirous of seeing what effect this thrust had had.

"Well as ah was sayin', Georgia honey, that thar ol' Linda, and a sorry hussey she is, use to set 'round with her chickens and talk to them and say evil things 'bout people to them and declared that she ain't never said an evil thing to nobody 'bout nobody else. She was rahght, at least a little tiny bit, she said them thar 'ol' mean things to the chickens. Ah kin remember how she would compare her old hen Tillie to Aunt Mariah when she was flirtin' with Uncle Josh



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Mitchell. She'd say that when Tillie saw her ol' rooster nearby she would jess perform and carry on. She'd just cluck with pleasure at her food and get all silly-lahke and real girlish lahke when that thar rooster come near. So did all the other ol' hens, too, but she seemed to think that Tillie was the one who flirted and carried on the most. She used to say that that's why she layed so few egges. Show was. Then when tahme came to kill her and some others, she passed that dern ol' tess. You know the one that goes ef yo two fingers fits up her rear then she's good fer egg-layin', and ef only one fits then she ready fer the table rahght soon. Well ol' Tillie pass that bloomin' ol' tess and she lived on and on flirtin' and kickin' up her heels, and playin' real cute lahke till she got Linda Spaulding, yo sweet aunt, real mad 'cause she hadn't layed a egg in three days. One day Linda went out thar, honey, in front of the chicken house and locked rumps with that ol' hen and you ain't never heard such fussin' in yo lahfe. Don't you know that thar ol' rooster didn't lahke whut was goin' on to his particular girl friend and so he sailed into yo sweet Cousin Linda Spaulding, and thar they all was.

"Well Georgia you ain't never seen such a sight in yo lahfe and yo ain't heard sech cussin' neither. Yo knows how yoll Spauldings kin cuss then go off to church and come home cussin' again. Well Linda Spaulding loss all of her religion--whut little she ever had--that day. And them thar chickens was cussed to no-not-one! She called them every word in the book and then made up some more. Then she called them every relative's name she could think of, sparin' none. Of course they was none of them Spauldings 'cept fer Uncle Nasty ol' Ben Chessfire Spaulding. Ah always knowed she had it in fer mah family, and honey she showed it that thar day. Then there was kickin', and scratchin', and scrappin', and snappin', and hackin', and flailin',

left and rahght with that big butcher knahve of Linda's. Then there was all that fussin', cluckin', and cacklin', and cawin', and coughin', and howlin', and hissin' and droppin' all that dung all over the place as the three of them went round and round and round. Lawd knows, Honey, that feathers flew in all which-away and the blood and the dung, and the grass, and the chicken feed, and the leaves, and pieces of Linda's dress and stockin's, and her cuss words all mingled together lahke some storm had swept into that little patch of land fer a moment. After all that screamin' and cussin' and hackin' and howlin' and pickin', and peckin' and scratchin', Linda Spaulding stood exhausted with that bloody knife in her hands jess a-pantin' and a-huffin', and -a-puffin'. Honey she didn't even have 'nough breath left to say her last cuss words. Ah s'ppose you could say them fer her. Ah ain't never seen sech a mess to clean up. She wrestled them thar two chickens to the kitchen and fixed a good meal fer Reverend Jacobs that nahght.

"You knows that he show came over and ate half the hen and all the rooster along with his cornbread, ham, greens, snap beans, rahce, yams, gravy, pahe and coffee. Honey when Ah says pahe ah means a whole one and it was sweetpotato, too.

"Well Ol' Linda Spaulding went up to Clarkton. She said she needed a vacation so bad had that whole thing been on her nerves. She done said that Doc Graham suggested it, but you knows that that ain't nowhars near the truth. Well, honey she went up thar all rahght and she done have herself a ball. You ain't s'pposed to know nothin' bout this neither, do you hiar me? Well ah s'ppose you goina tell it anyhow. Besides Miss Lollie knows all 'bout it and you know when she knows Aunt Carrie knows and then the



whole world knows so Ah don't know whah Ah'm tellin' you to keep yo mouth shur, fer. Well you cian't noway.

"Well Honey, she done went up thar and had a drink. Now she ain't never had a drink in her lahfe-so she said. Ah ain't b'lieved it no how, fer show. Ah gits mahghty suspicious of them thar sanctified people. Miss Lollie's that way, but then, you knows her very good and Aunt Carrie Spaulding's a near relation of yo's. Well, as Ah was sayin', Linda Spaulding had her a little nip and went jess wald fer a day.

"She got so drunk at a party, from that thar one drink, and don't you b'lieve that it was only one. Then she started preachin' about hell and fire and righetousness and sin and evil and goina off to church. She ain't been in some whale but do you think Ah'd repeat sech stuff 'bout her nor nobody else. Ah leaves things lahke that thar fer yo family to do. Well then she fell down and got run out. Jess outside the door of that thar drinking place she saw a man. Well she's always wanted a man and she found one. She laid down thar besides him and got to kissin' him. Well he was ossified himself and so she got drunker fer that thar messy kissin' that folks does when thay's had too much. You know how Teddy Spaulding-yo uncle-used to do. Well she didn't have enough so she got up and ran down that street up thar at Clarkton to a carnival that was in town. She pulled a quarter out of her pocket and run up to the lady that was sellin' the tickets to git in. S he done bent over and press that thar woman's nose with her finger and shoved that thar quarter into that thar woman's mouth as she opened it to holler. Then she dash on into the carnival and had a drunken ball. They had to git the police finally to subdue that thar woman. Well she had the onliest

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fling of her long lahfe. Now she goes to church, now and then, of course, and plays the righteous one lahke all them thar devilish Spauldings."

Georgia Spaulding sat back, laughed a bit and took it as gracefully as she could. Her cousin's caustic wit did hurt her ever so much but she thought that deference was the better defense. She thought that a humorous story in reply would lighten the air. Little did she know that she would be rebuffed by a worse barrage of detractions, and calumnies. However, Georgia bent to her kinder and more gentle desires to be at loving peace and affability with her somewhat candid second cousin. Georgia smiled, and nodding agreeingly. Then she softly began her part of the exchange:

"Well now you knows Honey, Cousin Mamie's son, Wash, fell off that ol' mule Peg, went to the doctor and then went to hurting, and then dahed over nahght. Don't you know we was all surprised.

"Ah went off to the funeral this Sunday afternoon. Saw Cousin Josephine, Lula, and Ronah Spaulding, all of those Ben Chessfire's folks down thar at St. James. Junius Mitchell was standing off out thar with his great big ol' ten-ga-lon hat in the blazin' sun. Ah stood thar lookin' and a-lookin' at thar ol' crazy man and couldn't hep from wonderin' ef he was goina pull his hat off before he went into the church fer the service. Now that ah's been to that thar ol' service, Lawd they could have had fahve of them durin' that tahme and buried fo people at Mitchell field and then had three suppers in the tahme it took them thar folks to git through that service fer that boy. Ah ain't never heared such praisin' and fussin' and carryin' on, and honkin' of noses and sech crockerdahle tears in mah lahfe. The chale ain't lived that long to do no harm to nobody and not much good neither. Ah muss tell you too Honey, Junius



ain't taken off that thar ol' hat yet, Ah do declare.

"An you know, Ron Webb even introduced me to that thar Indian preacher they had that afternoon. He done said he was Indian when he introduced me to him. Landsakes Alive Honey, that man show looked lhake one of urs, but them thar folks says we's Indian anyhow. Well, Honey to give you a idee 'bout how long that thar service was, let me tell you rahght hiar and now that that thar Indian Preacher, Steve Mitchell, they done called him was on the program to read the scripture. Honey he read that scripture all rahght, for jess 'bout fifty minutes. Then Honey after he done stumbled through that thar passage they always uses fer the daid, he went off and commenced explaining it--couldn't read worth a am-Ah-Born-to-dah, neither-- he then decided to preach his own sermon about the evil in the world and how the Lawd is goina git those evil folks who drinks, steals, womanize. Show wonder June ef any womanizers in this hiar world are worse then those folks that cheats, and don't give 'nough fer church, and those folks that talks about their neighbors before and after --Honey he forgot those that talks 'bout their neighbors during church, but he ain't forgot much, no how--and them thar folks that eats too much, and them that don't eats enough, and them thar preachers that goes to their folks's houses and eat too much chicken or chitlins, and stump-whipped potatoes and all such stuff lahke that thar. Then he got a goin' on some ol'preacher he knowed who was so hungry when he went to one of his people's houses that he said that he could eat a chitlin three mahles long and stop every now and then to take a ress with some collards, chicken, biscuits, frahed ham, sausage, bacon, and then a gollon of ahce-tea. You know that ain't nothin' but gluttony, he concluded. Well, Ah show

kin remember that thame you done had him--Ah means that thar same Indian preacher, Rev. Mitchell to yo house an you told me that he done clean out your chicken yard at one meal and ate jess 'bout all your canned peas, and beans. Fact yo husband told me that he had to go out to the smoke house the next day to git some more meat fer you and the children. Well, we won't mahnd nothin' 'bout that one no how.

"Lawd know, honey when he got through he was hastlin' like an ol' wet boar after a love affair. And Honey during all that carrying-on and boomin' and bellowin' Ah jess sat thar, fanned mahself, sweat mo and mo and then all that perfume commenced to warr away that thar church, and then those who come with dirty ol' shoes from the fields, and them thar babies cryin' and gettin' sick, you knows it warn't no good fer the nose no way, no how. Then Ah commenced to squirmen' and twistin', and slippin' and slidin' on that thar hard bench in that thar church--wonder ef it was that bad when Uncle Melvin Spaulding helped found that thar church some yars ago--and that man went on and on and on and on and wasn't 'bout never to stop her hollerin' and ravin'. Ain't nobody seen, it 'cept me a some kids in the back, but thar was one tahme he had a bout with a couple flahs that near 'bout went down his mouth. He fought them off Honey, but it tickled me so Ah almost split my dress. You knows that my clothes are jess a bit tahght these days. Been eatin' too many of pahes, of course.

"Then Ah commenced to look around and Ah saw in the back them thar white pallbarrers-Ah guess they was undertakers--well Honey that stood back thar and watch and every once and a while they'd crack the door open of that church and wonder ef it was tahme, but they soon found out that ol' Rev. Mitchell was not near ready to give out. Honey, don't you know those folks roasted and baked out thar waitin'



fer the end of that thar service. Ah cain't b'lieve it's over yet, Ah do declare. Juide Graham said after--and you knows how honest that thar woman kin be--that she thought that the body would putrefy rahght thar before that man done finish the singin' and the neihgin', and the flower procession, and the screamin', and the carryin' on at the coffin. Honey, Ah jess ain't begun, jess yet.

June Mitchell bent over her cold cup of coffee, smiled slightly, looked up at Georgia Spaulding and said: "Well now Honey, that was show a good story. You does know how to spin a yarn. Ah declare Ah did enjoy yo old funny sayings 'bout them thar people, but maybe it will keep you a might quieter in the future when you tells such stuff when you knows that thar ol' preacher you was belittlin' and signifyin' 'bout happens to be a relation of mahne. Ah don't mind one tincy bit neither tellin' you that as a Christian woman--an' even Miss Lollie says you mahght make it to heaven some day--heaven above only knows what Aunt Carrie has to say 'bout you--you show should keep from talkin' 'bout other people's folks. But as they often says to me, whut's fit fer the goose is fit fer the gander. Now you jess listen to me whale Ah tell a little biddy tale 'bout yo folks. Ah knows we ought to turn the other cheek but sometahmes, Honey it show is hard. This is one tahme ah'm not a goina do it neither.

"Lula June Mitchell," Georgia frowned disturbedly, "you knows Ah didn't mean no harm by all that talk. Them people's mahne too.

"But they ain't as close kin to you as they is to me. Besides, ef they was, you'd be close kin to me and Ah ain't show Ah wants that rahght now at this moment." She was noticeably upset by the Spaulding woman's invasion of her close kith and kin. "Well, jess let me tell you 'bout that ol' sorry Curry Spaulding's grandchildren. And

it's funny, too, but you ain't a-goينا lahke it and Ah's glad 'bout that.

Georgia Spaulding stood up, went to the stove dejectedly, brought the coffee pot back to the table and dutifully filled their two cups. She knew that she was in for one of those strangely unjust moments of revenge. She knew that there was no better competition for her spinning yarn than this superficially pleasant but vindictive cousin of hers. She knew that she had to bear with the story and somehow enjoy it as its brutal conclusion.

"Well, as you know, your Uncle Curry, the brother of your mother and close first cousin to your father--thar ain't no denyin' that, Georgia Spaulding, neither, had two grandchildren and they was almost as sorry as he. One wanted to be a preacher and the other was jess as bad, he wanted to be a teacher. Well they ain't 'mounted to much yet. Ah show knows one thing, that thar oldest boy, Hank, show can eat lahke a preacher. He done come up to Mama's house one tahme and jess ate two pounds of her stump-shipped potatoes by hisself. Then he ate a peck of corn, three legs, four breasts, and five wings of chicken, and a pound of country ham, a pound of turnip green, and a mess of rahce with hot gravy over it. Lawd knows, that thar man ate near 'bout as much as Uncle Henry Freeman and then some. Then his brother ain't no better. He ain't worth a Am-Ah-Boan-to-day neither. He's still studyin' they says, but the subject Aunt Carry tells me is women. He oughtin' to know lots 'bout them fer show, he's had 'nough of them. Well, the secret is, so Miss Lollie tells me, is that he drinks. She told me not to repeat such awful things 'bout folks 'cause it jess ain't rahght to talk 'bout folks's habits and evils lahke that, so open. Well, Ah declare, ef Miss Lollie told me and



told me not to tell a soul you knows that all Columbus County knows the story by now. A'hm show that it has even been added to by now. Whut's yo version of it Georgia, you hears these things and mo."

"Well, June, Ah ain't never heard that he drunk, but Ah show ain't surprise to know the truth 'bout him, even though he is my relation. Ah always says, you picks yo friends but you show cain't pick your relations."

"Show cain't," snapped June Mitchell, "Ef you could, Ah'd think you'd would of did a better job than have them sorry Spauldings in yo blood lahne. That young ones name was Henry. It show is strange how people could be so dumb and name one son Hank and the other one Henry. Well, consider the people and the kind of people they is and you have the answer to thar dumbness."

Georgia smiled, leaned back and decided to listen because she knew from this point on there was no denying or dodging this assault of guilt by association. She resigned to bear the abuse and accept it graciously.

"Well, when they was young they got into all kands of trouble with their sorry parents, with the sorrier Grandpa, Uncle Currie, and his story needs another whole book of dream-book readin' and evil interpretations and Ah'll git to him someday. Well as Ah was sayin' they show caused folks 'bout here trouble.

"Ah don't know that you can remember that Currie's children had a store down thar near Lake Waccamaw. It was one of them thar nasty little luncheonettes. They used to call it 'The Store.' Mama used to say that the onliest way she'd eat thar would have been ef she wash her own plate in lye soap first and then not only take her own plate but bring the food to eat from it. Mama told me that

that sorry woman, Bee, Hank and Henry's mama, ain't never washed out a glass or a cup. Thar was lipstick stains, and snuff stains, and tobacco juice in the cups and the glasses. Lawd, knows how they sold anything to eat or drink, but they made a raght fine business. What it was though was that sweetgum tree that stood nearby. It was one of them great big old things and it spread out real far and high-lahke. It could shade a heap of sin and evil, and wrong-doing from the public. And, Honey, it show did. Them thar ol' hoodlums, and them thar ol' deviants, from the Lawd, and them thar ol' people who ain't never thought 'bout goin' off to church, them thar self-righteous Christians who said one thing and done another, and them thar ol' white lumberjacks and some of the community's looser girls--and they tells me that the Spauldings were sure active along those ways of misbehavin', but Ah ain't talkin' 'bout that rahght now, nohow. Well, Honey those ol' misfits from society had to eat and drink summers. You knows whar they slept both day and naght, don't you?

"June," interrupted the other woman, unwisely, "That's bearin' false witnesses again't yo neighbor."

"Now don't han me any of that thar stuff, Georgia Spaulding after you done talked 'bout my preacher relation and my folks down thar at St. James Church. You ain't got no rahght to talk about bearin' false witnesses against nobody. And the way you done misquoted Miss Lollie and Aunt Carrie, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Well as Ah was sayin' befer ah was so ruedly and crudely interrupted by your own morality. Ah must remember some tahme when Ah'm in trouble Ah'll have to borry a bit of it.

"Well Ah do declare that wickedness that went on down thar under that tree was a disgrace to the county, the state, the country,



and to the world. Great balls of fire, and the Lawd was near 'bout to strike one day, it would have taken Jesus Himself five whole weeks to have forgiven them people's sins against the ways of the Lawd. That is ef that was to be any forgivin' at all. An you knows that George Spaulding, Bee's husband, Hank's and Henry's Father, your close kin, wasn't worth a pimple on Aunt Marinanna's mules rear. Do you think he would clean that thar place out. It brought him good business. Ah show is surprised that all kahnds of diseases didn't break out down thar. Ah'm show they did. Heaven alone is the onliest place that knows how many babies came from those Spaulding connections. But old George Spaulding, Lawd have mercy how them thar old rotten sorry Spaulding married one another no not one, had a good eye fer money and he show made it, but then they tells me that them thar ol' prostitutes makes money too. You mahght know 'mo 'bout that than me."

Georgia Flinched, grit her teeth and merely whispered, "Well Ah declare."

"Well one day that thar ol' dern Uncle Curry suggested that they make the store a Greyhound stop. Lawd knows, you'd think that they had enough sin about them already without havin' that wickedness introduced. Lo and behold they got a application, the inspectors came and they decided to bring their business to The Store. Honey, ef you thought that was trouble befer, you ain't seen nothin' till that bus started comin' in. You should see the trash it brought and the trash that it took on, and the trash already at The Store mingled with the trash that was already under the tree and you know that thar place was real ready fer hell fire and the stroke of the Lawd.

"Well you knows when we was young--and that had to be some tahme after yo chalhood, you ain't never told the truth 'bout yo age, but that don't matter, we all knows, them Spauldings cain't keep no secrets neither. Well as Ah was sayin' in the former days you could tell someone's position in lahfe down here by the type of outhouse he had. A one-hold was fer the poor. Two-holer was fer the middle folks, and ef you was rich lahke Uncle Curry and all them uppidy Spauldings and Moores, and Freemans, you'd have three holes in your privy. Well, George and Bee got really hainty and decided to have a three-holer put in rahght back of The Store. Thar was a path leadin' to it, which went rahght on by that thar Sweetgum sinful tree. In fact it separated The Store and the tree. Well ah went down thar one mornin' to meet my nephew comin' in from Raleigh. That thar dern ol' bus wasn't on tahme neither, but thar was show a lot to see over thar 'neath that thar tree. Whut a collection of feet, hands, hats, bodies, rags, clothes, bottles, cans, shoes, wrappers, cheap pictures, and hair and socks, and ripped clothes, cats and dogs, and show 'nough the birds carrie-on their tuneful ways up above as though it was another world different from all that sin goin' on below. Show 'nough them thar legs was movin' and so was them thar bodies ef that hadn't drunk too much. Then they was movin' in another way. Ah's always wondered whut hell looked lahke and now Ah knows. Show could give some folks a good comin' attraction fer their lahves after death, but Ah's too good a Christian to do that to other folks. Ah knows that the commandment is to love thy neighbor. It's jess so hard when Ah sees such sin as this.

"Well Georgia, them thar two hateful boys had gotten to announcin' the buses as they came and went. They said that they got to be



really good at it. Well, you know that the devil had to git into them and it did. They went out and bought one of them connection with two speakers. They looked lakke two big horns to me they used to use at them thar big church picnic vonventions. Well, Hank took one and Henry took the other. Hank took his to the back of The Store and Henry used his in front of The Store to announce the comin' and goin' of the buses.

"This same day Ah was har, some mischief broke out and don't you know it was real funny Ah muss admit. It was the bus befer my nephew's bus was supposed to arrive. Ah cain't remember now whut town is was from. It probably came from Whiteville. Well it pulled up in front of the building, and it sneezed to a stop. The driver stepped out and stood by the door as folks came out. Lawd have mercy, Georgia, thar was one woman who came out and he had to step back from the door so as to give her enough room to squeeze out. Honey he had to reach over and up to give her a hand. Lawd knows that woman was so big that her baloon butt had trouble slidin' down the stairs. Honey Ah jess don't know how in all the world they got that woman on that bus. They had to have greased her sides. She oughtin' to have had to have paid three fares, too. Great Day in the Mornin', Georgia, it was bess that she was in tha thar bus 'cause ef she had been outside and that bus had hit her, that thar ol' bus would have disappeared.

"Georgia, ef that thar woman had broke wind, she was so big that thar would have been a real tropic storm from the force of it.

"Well, Georgia, they finally got that huge woman out. Ah should say they finally oozed her out. That po driver he show did keep a straight face as long as he could. Once they got her on the

ground, he smiled when she said thanks. He bent over looked at his front wheels to see that the tires weren't flat or the axles broke. Then he covered his face, turned completely around and went off into The Store fer coffee. Thar show was some giglin' too, when he got inside the door. Ah stood at the sahde of the front door jess a-lookin'. That thar big woman looked up at the sign which said 'restroom and privy in the rear' and she headed down that thar path. Lawd have mercy, Georgia, she brushed the tree on one side of her and the building on the other. Ah looked up at the bus, and show 'nough that thar vehicles had rose up a few inches after that woman got off. Ah jess had to see this one to the end, 'cause Ah think she was goina git back on and Ah wanted to see that one. Ah warent show, mind you, but Ah still had to wait fer mah nephew's bus anyhow. Ah jess hoped it wouldn't come in 'fer this one had to leave.

"Georgia Honey, that woman got back thar to those privies and you know it show was a good thing that your relations put in three holes 'cause she was big enough to use all three of them at the same tahme. Then Ah looked up and out of the corner of mah eye Ah could see that ol' mischievious Hank headed back that way. He warent up to no good, Ah jess knowed that. And as show as the Jews cross on drah land with Moses leadin' them to git to the other side of the Red Sea, Honey thar was excitement rahght around the corner. It happened all of a sudden. That thar ol' sorry Hank waited fer that thar woman to squeeze into the privy and waited till she was seated. Lawd knows she almost knocked down that thar new building tryin' to git in. The outhouse rocked and it swayed, and it squeaked and it squawked, and it shook. Hank took his lahfe in his hands and went back thar with his big announcin' horn and squat rahght down. He waited till he heard his brother announce out front fer tahme fer the



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bus to leave fer Wilmington. Then he stuck his ol' big mouth to that thar horn and aimed it up at that thar ol' privy whar that thar lady squirmed and shifted, and strained her inners out. Then he aimed it high up so that it was not too far from the privy holes. Then he let loose these hiar words. "Lady, it's tahme fer yo bus to go, have mercy on urs down hiar, you's suffocatin' urs down below you."

"Great balls of fahre, honey, and Great day in the mornin', Ah thought that the world had come to an end and all tahme had stopped. That thar woman let out a yell that jess 'bout deafened me. That ol' outhouse gave in as she pushed open the door. The mice scattered from 'neath that ol' buildin'; the sparrows on top of the privy scattered. That thar woman came screamin' up that thar path holdin' her pants up with one hand and clutchin' at her pocketbook with the other. Her ol' green, yaller, pink, and orange dress with birds, bears, cakes, and sandwiches painted all over it was flyin' up roun'd her big hips. Lawd, Chale, that thar dress had to have been a tent at one tahme. It show spread all over the place. Ah'm show it would have made twelve gunny sacks.

"You know how some whate folks has complexions lahke four-day-old wes oat meal. Well hers did but it suddenly had a reddish tint to it. Her mouth was wahde open, her lower dentures hung out and the uppers were dancin' every which way. Then that thar old orange and snuff-juice colored hat with the grapes and the nanas, and the peas, and owls ontop of it, began to tilt one to one side. Lawd, knows, that woman hauled buggy out to the front of the building, knockin' down everything in her path. The roll of toilet paper got caught in her hat and strung behind near 'bout to the door of the privy. She

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lost a show as the two old black and white cats scrambled up the tree. The mangey ol' dogs stood up went to the evil tree and howled and barked as if he had treed a coon. The chickens clucked about and dropped all over the front and side of The Store. Some even went in. The birds flew up and away from that thar tree in confusion and scared as a tom cat with a tin can tiahed to its tail. They dropped all over the place and even some of those ol' sinful lovers under that thar sweetgum tree was disturbed by all this carrying-on. That thar woman ran rahght into the bus and the driver bent over clutchin' his stomach with both hands in wild laughter. He turned clear 'bout and went back into the buildin' cause Ah jess knowed he couldn't stand it no more. Ah swanne, Georgia, it was all Ah could do to stand thar and see all this carrying-on.

"Ah saw ol' George Spaulding, fer the first tahem in his lahfe show somethin' in him. He went off runnin' after Hank to give him a good whuppin' fer disturbin' the peace and that po ol' fat woman. He caught him and he beat him good. Ah show thinks he beat him instead of laughin', 'cause honey it was funny.

"Well they finally calmed that huge lady down with some smellin' sauce and then piled her back in that thar bus. The other folks got in tryin' to keep straight faces. Ah don't know how they done did it 'cause Ah jess sat down on one of them thar nasty benches neath that ol' sinful tree and laughed until Ah cried as that ol' Greyhound bus grunted and groaned beneath the weight. It finally got off into the road and Ah was jess 'bout give out when mah nephew came. He wanted to know whay I was so breathless and exhausted when he come down out of the bus and kissed me, but Ah ain't never told nobody this story till now. You sees, whut your folks can do with a business, cain't you. Ah ain't never told Miss Lollie nor Aunt Carry but Ah'm show



you will. Them thar Spauldings ain't never brought no good to no body and that thar po fat ol' woman ain't no exception to the bad news."

Georgia bent over with her distant cousin June Mitchell and joined her in one of those stomach laughs that not only exercise the body, but do the soul a great deal of good.