Chapter Ten

Son of Goatman

I rode into Georgia on a warm sunny day in early November. As I crossed the border, I passed over the Savannah River, but not on a bridge. The road ran over the top of the Clark Hill Dam. About the time Brownie was in Georgia and I was still in South Carolina, I stopped and took a long look at the glassy smooth lake stretched out to my right. To my left was a deep gorge with the fast flowing river at the bottom. The next day, as I was heading out after I had camped in a grassy field not far from the dam, an oncoming car slowed down to a crawl.

A young black woman inside shouted out through the lowered passenger side window, "Where you from?"

"Pennsylvania," I shouted back.

"Welcome to Georgia!" she exclaimed with a big smile.

Not long after that, a pickup sped past me and a fire cracker exploded about fifteen feet in front of Brownie. Brownie jumped a little but kept on going at his usual pace. Quite a welcome, I thought to myself. Fireworks and all!

At lunch time I stopped in the town of Pollard's Corners. The place consisted of a general store and a few dumpy houses. I staked Brownie out to graze on an extra lush stand of grass near the store. It looked and smelled like a leaky septic tank was the cause of this especially fertile spot. Brownie feasted while I picked up a few things in the store. Outside the store wasn't much to look at, but inside I discovered a wide assortment of goods. I noticed that they carried a large line of cast iron cookware, new wood burning cook stoves, and a lot of other things related to old time country living. One nice looking new cook stove range was priced at only $250. Perhaps that's all the local market could bare. I supposed if fate would have had me settle down in Georgia, I would have bought one.

That afternoon as I continued on, a man stopped to talk. I mentioned that I needed a horse shoer and it so happened that his brother was a shoer. Soon his brother caught up with me and also lined up a place for me to camp. Arriving at the David Bullard family farm, I discovered I had quite a welcoming committee to meet me. The neighbors had been alerted too and were there in numbers to check out the unusual traveler. After introductions

and a few questions, excited parents placed their kids on the wagon seat next to me and took snapshots. I was invited to sleep in the Bullard's big old farm house and Brownie was put in a large pasture with their horses. Mr. Bullard was a farmer. He was not so much working his own land but rather farmed government owned land, cultivating small grain plots to feed wild game. I enjoyed a sampling of that wild game in the form of a venison roast for supper with the family. We stayed up late talking.

The next day I was all set to get Brownie shoed. But one delay led to another and the shoer never showed up. This didn't put the Bullards out one bit. They extended an open invitation for me to stay as long as I needed to. There were more delays and excuses from the horse shoer, so I stayed another day. Then another and then another. I must admit, I was enjoying my time there. Mrs. Bullard was an excellent cook and had three big meals on the table for me to share in each day. They thought it odd that I called the noon meal "lunch", and the evening meal "dinner". Being farm people, they called these meals "dinner" and "supper", respectively.

I passed the time writing in my journal, writing letters, making prints from some of my glass negatives, and doing some target practice with my cap and ball revolver. I was getting pretty good with the gun. I could hit a soup can at twenty-five paces most every shot.

Mr. Bullard took a day off from his work. His helper man didn't show up, so he just came back home.

"He probably went fishing," Mr. Bullard said. "I think I'll do the same. Would you like to come along? I got an extra pole."

So, with poles dangling over our shoulders, we walked down to the pond, a thousand or so yards west of the Bullard's house. It was about an acre in size. They kept it stocked with catfish, which they fed regularly with special catfish food they bought at the local feed store.

Mr. Bullard threw some of the kibble-like feed onto the water. That area soon boiled with the swirling and lunging dark backs of catfish. We threw our hooks, baited with cheese balls, into the vicinity of where the catfish were feeding. After only about fifteen minutes Mr.Bullard decided they weren't biting. He knew of a better pond on his neighbor's place. So, off we went in his pick-up to the other pond. On the way, we passed an old weather beaten, clabbered sided, two story house that really caught my eye. It looked like it could have dated back to the Civil War. I voiced my interest to Mr. Bullard.

"I'd love to get a picture of that place before I leave the area," I said.

"A picture of that old nigger shack? Why, you might better photograph my house. It's over a hundred years old."

I tried to change the subject. I had no interest in wasting a plate on his house. It may have had a hundred year old skeleton, but the vinyl siding, the modern junk stacked up on its big wrap around porch, and the massive TV antenna on the roof just didn't have the simple country living style I was interested in photographing and preserving for posterity.

At the neighbor's pond we spent another fifteen minutes fishing and Mr. Bullard caught only one catfish.

"By this time we should have hooked a dozen between us," he announced. "They just ain't biting nowhere." He went on to tell how if you really get serious about catching a mess of fish in these farm ponds, you use a big scoop net.

That afternoon I decided to load up my camera into the wagon and drive over to see if I could photograph the old house that Mr. Bullard thought so little of. He had told me about Liney, a ninety-year-old black lady who lived in the house all by herself. The two Bullard boys were home from school and I asked them if they'd like to come along to Liney's house. Darryl, the ten-year-old, decided he'd come. He was quite excited about it. I was looking forward to hopefully meeting Liney. Mr. Bullard had said she was the grandmother to most of the blacks in the area. He remembered going by there when he was a kid and seeing the long front porch with a row of babies and infants on it. Their parents worked in the cotton fields surrounding the house. These days, Liney kept busy doing washing for people. She used water from her simple bucket well and heated it in a wood fired cast iron caldron. She often boiled the clothes in the caldron. She also used a washboard and galvanized wash tubs to get the job done. It was said that no one could get your clothes cleaner than Liney, even with modern detergents and washing machines. She had a clothes line, but when she ran out of room on it she'd hang things on the barbed wire fence that bordered her place. It was a mystery how she kept the clothes from being torn.

As we neared Liney's place we could see a lone figure sitting in a chair just inside a side doorway. She was looking our way as we approached.

Darryl said, "That's Liney there in the doorway. She's always got that door open, looking out to see who's coming and going, even in the winter."

There was a brick chimney on either end of the house. Darryl said she did her cooking in the fireplace and used it as her only heat source. The windows had no glass sashes in them but only a single wooden shutter on each. The place had no electricity or plumbing. I could see a simple outhouse out back. I also noticed there was no junk or trash anywhere around the property like I often saw around other humble country dwellings I'd passed in my travels so far. As a matter of fact, Liney's place looked like it

could have been right out of the 1860's. We pulled up in front. Liney came out on the broad porch.

Darryl was quick to say, "Hi Miz Liney. This is my new friend, John Coffer. He's traveling from Pennsylvania to Florida in this wagon."

"Um, um, do tell," Liney said quietly with a friendly smile. "Pleased to meet you sir."

I asked, "Would you mind if I took a picture of your house? It sure is an interesting place."

"You just help yourself," she replied.

"Could I get you to be in the picture also?"

She agreed. I had her sit on a chair on the porch with the quilt she had been working on in her lap. Just the house and Liney would have been plenty enough for a fine picture, but since I had an assistant this time to squeeze the red rubber bulb to work the old Packard Shutter on the camera, I decided to be in the picture as well, along with Brownie and the wagon. Quick as I could, which was really not very quick, I got the camera all set up and focused and Darryl drilled on what he was supposed to do when I gave him the signal. It was a fairly long exposure time of eight seconds. Liney was nothing but patient and held still for the shot like she'd done it many times before. We talked a little about her quilting which she said she loved to do. The sun was resting on the horizon. I had to pack up and leave much sooner then I would have liked. Liney bade Darryl and I kind farewells. I couldn't help but notice when Liney spoke to Darryl she would call him Master Darryl. I wondered to myself if this was just another example of a term left over from the 19th century when Liney was born. The short visit had been very special to me. As we headed down the road, I looked back and could see that Liney had resumed her position in the side doorway, quilt on her lap, watching us go. I thought to myself, what a loss it will be when Liney has to leave her place for good. The house will surely be razed and not kept and preserved as a historical treasure as it should be.

After three days with the Bullards, the horse shoer called and admitted he wasn't up to shoeing a horse Brownie's size. I decided it was time to push off regardless. I didn't want to wear out my welcome with the Bullards. As the saying goes: fish, relatives, and company begin to smell after three days. I had enjoyed my stay, but unfortunately Brownie clearly had not. He left with several serious bite marks given to him by the gang of horses he'd been in with. It was a lesson to me to avoid putting him in a pasture with more than one horse. In the establishment of their pecking order when a new horse comes on the scene, a group of horses can get quite violent if not downright deadly. I would learn just how deadly this could be later on in my travels.

I headed out, hoping to find someone capable enough to shoe Brownie as soon as I could. As I passed Liney's house, she came out and stood, watching with a gentle smile as we passed.

"Goodbye. I wish you luck, Sir," she called out to me.

Later on, I sent the Bullards a print from the glass negative I shot. I also included an extra print for them to give to Liney.

This part of Georgia continued to be quite rural. There were a good

many black folks and every so often I'd pass houses similar to Liney's but not as large. I photographed one near Stapleton that was especially plain, but striking at the same time. It had two large leafless Chinaberry trees in the sandy front yard.

There were other "plain" houses I passed by in this area. But these were newly built and belonged to members of a local conservative Mennonite church group. I was excited to see their farms because I'd enjoyed the Mennonite country I'd passed through in Pennsylvania. But, I was surprised at the affluence these plain people, especially compared to their non-Mennonite neighbors. The ones here drove new looking dark colored cars and pickups. They used the latest big tractors with all the accessories. They had electric, plumbing, and great large metal sided barns and outbuildings.

I talked to one of the full bearded men who stepped off his new riding lawn mower long enough to find out my story. I asked about his story too. He said he and the others in his church group came from Kansas some years before. He said something about simple living and how he and I were alike in

that way. I couldn't see the correlation, but agreed that living the plain life was good for the soul. I wanted to add that he should try it sometime, but didn't, and headed on.

I stopped for lunch along a wide spot by the edge of the road. I noticed a couple of pecan trees nearby. Many nuts had fallen on the road and had been crushed by cars driving over them. It was an extra breezy afternoon and more nuts were shaking loose and falling out of the trees. I decided this was a good time to stock up with pecan nuts. I had gotten a good primer on pecan trees while I was at the Bullards. They had a whole row of them along their long driveway. They'd shown me the most convenient way to shell them. You just hold two in the palm of your hand and squeeze them tight together until one cracks open. As I traveled on through Georgia, I was never short of pecans.

About the time I was going to hitch Brownie back up and hit the road again, a man about my age stopped to talk and take a few pictures of the wagon, Brownie and me. He worked for the Georgia Farm Bureau. At first I thought this was a government sponsored agency for farmers, but later I learned it was just a regular commercial insurance company. He and his wife had a place with some acreage I could put up at on the edge of Louisville, the next town ahead. They let me stay an extra day so I could line up a horse shoer and get Brownie shoed properly.

The shoer my hosts helped me find was a young man about my age who was just getting started in the business. His name was Butch. He did an excellent job and put borium on all the shoe's toes and heals. When he was through he gave me a couple extra shoes to take along and he didn't charge me a cent for anything.

"That was the first draft size horse I've ever done and it was worth the experience," he said. "Besides I really admire what ya'all are doing."

I headed out the next morning bright and early but lingered downtown getting groceries, supplies, and going to the post office. I had to go to the bank to cash a traveler's check. I noticed the bank had a drive through, so I drove the wagon up to the teller's window just like I was in a car. The young woman teller coolly conducted the transaction.

Then, as I was about to leave she blurted out, "Alright, now what are you doing with that wagon?"

I told her I was going to Florida.

She said, "Florida? You can't go all the way in a wagon!"

I explained how far I'd come already.

By now a couple of other bank employees were by her side, looking me over. The young teller went on to say how she'd love to do something like

that someday.

I said, "Come on then. I can make room for you. Quit your job and let's go."

They all laughed and wished me a good trip. I was only kidding with the bank teller. But there was one young lady I had hopes would really quit her job and run away with me. That was my friend Jan who lived in Atlanta. I'd been writing and calling her from time to time, telling her of my progress and exploits. She'd promised to at least rendezvous with me somewhere in Georgia for a day trip. I was sure if she saw the life I was leading and rode on the wagon, her heart would forever be mine.

A Traveling Studio

A hobby of a traveling tin-type photographer is proving to be an exciting adventure as he makes his way southward to Florida. John Coffer left his home town in Lancaster County, Pennslyvania enroute to Florida some 11 weeks ago. The young free lance photographer is visiting historical site d points along the way, making tin-type photographs of the historical point. The film is processed 's horse and covered van-type wagon with photos available to the citizenry of that area. Coffer s to be at his destination before the Christmas holidays. He has found his trip exciting, ering many scenic points, as well as visiting historical areas. (Photo by Billy Jordan)

People in Georgia were so friendly and seemed to enjoy what I was doing. I was hardly ever regarded with suspicion and this surprised me a little. I figured it had to be the horse and wagon that made the difference. The way I traveled seemed to appeal to all kinds of people: young and old, rich and poor, black and white. Case in point: I was taking time to get a snack at a wayside little country store one day. A few locals gathered around me as I stood with Brownie. There was one lean old man in farmer overalls who

came closer to talk. He pulled his soiled Dekalb Seed ball cap down to shade his deeply furrowed face as he gave me and Brownie and the wagon a good looking over.

Then, hanging onto the straps of his overalls, he began, "You know sir, I can't remember the last time we had a traveling man come through here in a wagon. Now, we've had hippies come by on bicycles. And one time a man show'd here a walkin' with a pack on his back. He went into the store and told Mary Lou that he was tired and just sat down in a corner. Well Sir, she up and called the sheriff on him."

I said, "When you travel by horse and wagon it sure makes a difference."

"That's right," he agreed. "You can go out and get yo'self a brand new Cadillac car and drive down the road. But nobody going to pay you no mind. But you get yo self some old mule and wagon and comes to town and eva'body's got to get a look and know all about it."

As I traveled I was like a miner looking, not for gold, but for knowledge about the old ways of doing things. Most old timers were eager to talk about such things, but some were not. One day as I was coming into the town of East Dublin, I noticed a large roadside produce stand. An old man was operating a sugar cane press. I'd seen the old cast iron roller presses up on pilings in a few barn yards already in my travels and knew what they were for. But here was somebody actually using one. The man sat quietly by the mill feeding the long green sugar cane stalks into the vertical rollers that crushed them. The flattened stalks came out the other side and into a growing pile. Out of a tin lip on the bottom of the press came light green juice into a large barrel with a screen filter over it. A small mule hitched to the end of a long sweep pole, which was fastened to the top of the press, provided the power as the mule walked a perfect circle around the whole operation. I pulled off the road, tied Brownie up and asked the man if I could take a couple of pictures. He simply nodded his approval.

Soon as I could, I unloaded my old camera from a wooden box inside the wagon and set it up on a heavy tripod. While walking around studying the scene, I noticed a sign hanging off the edge of a barrel by the press and the old man that said, "Snaps 25 cents". I shot two 8x10 plates. After I'd repacked my camera and tripod back in the wagon, I paid the old man. Without a word spoken, he put the coins in a Prince Albert tobacco can he had in his denim apron pocket.

It wasn't until later in my travels that I learned that "Snaps" did not have anything to do with pictures being taken, but was southern folk speak for short sections of sugar cane broken off a long stalk at each knuckle joint. Kids

especially liked to chew on a snap for the sweet juice in its pulpy middle. But, money was money to the old man, whether he had to break off a section of cane or sit for some dumb Yankee's camera. I'm sure he was smiling to himself under that deadpan expression that seemed to be frozen on his face.

I didn't see where the sugar cane juice was boiled down into syrup but I assumed it was in the nearby metal sided building. On a stand they had jars and jugs of the brown syrup as well as tables and shelves of what probably was locally grown produce for sale. At this point in my travels, I hadn't been frying up pancakes or making my own bread like I eventually would much further down the line, so I passed up buying any syrup. But, I did know how extra tasty it was. I'd just been introduced to it when I'd shared a pancake breakfast with some nice hospitable people where I had camped the day before. The sugar cane syrup was as good as any pancake syrup I'd ever eaten, maybe as good as real maple syrup, which I hadn't had much experience with yet either.

Still, the old man working at the cane press was as silent as his mule. I decided not to press him into any conversation and figured it was time to

untie and head on out. The bustling town of Dublin was ahead of me and I wanted to reach the other side of it and be well out in the countryside before quitting time. I did notice one very long and large red brick warehouse building with terra cotta trim on its front façade. It had to have been a hundred or more years old. What stood out at the peak of the building was a large star of David cast into the terra cotta. Later I would learn this was the cotton buying and selling exchange, owned and operated by local Jewish businessmen. I was finding that the south had a very diverse fabric.

That night I camped at a farm near Dexter. My host and I talked for awhile as I set up camp. He told me, "You know, you remind me of the Goatman. He used to travel the country with wagons pulled by goats."

I told my host I already knew a little about the Goatman. I'd heard stories about him here and there as I went through the Carolinas and on south. One woman showed me two color postcards she had bought from him many years before. They showed a bearded, rather disheveled looking little old guy by a dilapidated wagon piled high with assorted junk, with a small herd of goats.

"Some people said he was an eccentric millionaire, whose wife would catch up with him from time to time in a brand new Cadillac," I told my host. "Others said he was poorer than a church mouse. Some said he had a weird disease that only fresh goat's milk could cure. I really wonder what the true story is on him. I may never know, cause the last guy who told me about him said he was dead."

"No, he's not dead," declared my host. "After traveling for 40 years with his goats and wagons he settled down to live in a school bus body along Highway 80 just west of Jeffersonville. His real name is Chester McCartney."

"You're sure about that?" I asked.

"Sure am, I saw him just a couple weeks ago as I drove by his place on the way to Macon," he answered.

The next morning I thanked the man for the camp spot and also for steering me to the Goatman. I headed out, not south this morning, but northwest. It would only be a day and a half's drive out of my way but well worth the detour. I was excited about the prospect of actually meeting the legendary Goatman himself. But while en route I talked to some locals who said the Goatman was dead. Now I wondered if I was on some sort of wild goose chase.

I stopped at a little country store. As I was tying Brownie up, an old black man walked up to me with a twenty-two pump rifle under his arm.

"Is you the son of the Goatman?" he asked me point blank.

I thought to myself, this Goatman and his son may have been real

rascals. I quickly assured him I was not related to the Goatman at all.

"Now, don't you pay no mind to this here gun," he assured me.

I repeated myself, "No, I'm not the son of Goatman. Really!" I explained to the man who I was, and about my traveling down from Pennsylvania. This seemed to satisfy him and he went on his way. I'd heard that the Goatman had a son but there had been several interpretations on who this son was, and how he fit into the story.

The store owner assured me that the Goatman was alive and that he lived down the road a couple of miles past Jeffersonville. I once again felt confident I was on the right track. The store had a payphone booth outside. I called Jan and arranged a rendezvous with her. I thought the Goatman's would be an interesting place for that. Also it was as close to Atlanta as I was going to get. She said that she and a friend would meet me there. Now I was really happy. That night I camped on a farm near Danville owned by a couple from New England. I'd grown so used to the Southern dialect that their Northeastern way of speaking sounded almost foreign. They let me put Brownie in their fenced in pasture, showed me where I could get water, and went into their nice big house, never to be seen again. I dined on Chunky soup, corn, salad and milk I'd gotten from the store that day. I needed no company, as my mind was filled with thoughts about what the next day would bring.

In the morning the sky was clear blue and it promised to be a perfect day. I had gotten up extra early so I'd have time to give myself a good shave. This was a real process as I used an antique "Double Duck" brand straight razor. Over the months I had gotten it down to a real tried and proven routine that I was quite good at. Well, at least I never cut myself anymore. One of the keys to not drawing blood was to start with a sharp razor. To get that fine edge on it, I flicked the razor up and down a device called a razor strop. Mine had two strop straps about three inches wide and two feet long, attached to a metal ring that I hung up on a hook from the corner of the wagon. One strop was thick canvas treated with a fine abrasive and the other was leather which was also treated with a special stropping compound. I hung up my antique beveled mirror on the side of the wagon and heated up a small pot of water on my smoky stover. I placed a towel soaked in the hot water on my face and left it there a couple of minutes to soften the whiskers. This was another key to getting a close shave without cutting yourself. Next, I quickly made a mug full of lather by putting a round bar of shaving soap in the bottom of an enamelware cup with some warm water. I worked a thick lather up with a badger's hair shaving brush. Then, looking in the mirror, I painted my face liberally with it. Carefully I passed the straight razor blade

over my face at just the right angle and in just the right direction, flicking lather peppered with stubble off after every couple of strokes. I left my upper lip alone and would trim my mustache later with scissors. The straight razor works best when it moves the same lay and direction the hair is growing. So, shaving the upper lip could result in the old adage: cutting off the end of your nose to spite your face.

I'd learned the technique of straight razor shaving pretty much on my own by trial and error. It was just another one of those things on the American landscape that had fallen by the wayside that I decided to give a try. From this experience I could understand why men in earlier times groomed as they did. Mustaches and beards were common a hundred years ago, especially for older men. I would imagine it would be hard to shave a wrinkled face with a straight razor. It took me about an hour to do the job. But when I was done, I had a closer shave than could be achieved by any other means. It usually took about three days until I had enough stubble going to make it worth while to shave again.

I was looking good as I set out for the Goatman's and my much awaited rendezvous with Jan. I wore a white shirt, brown vest, and a clean pair of blue jeans. On my way, the local Jeffersonville newspaper reporter stopped me for an interview. I suggested she meet me at the Goatman's, and she agreed that would be ideal. By afternoon I spotted the school bus body in amongst the tall pines on his property, just like I had been given directions. As I pulled into the driveway I noticed a roofless plywood structure not far back behind the school bus body. An old gray-haired be-whiskered head popped up over the top edge of the plywood. I'd evidently caught the Goatman in his privy.

Soon he was out and greeted me enthusiastically. "My name's Ches McCartney, otherwise known as the Goatman."

He didn't have much, materially speaking, but he was glad to share whatever he had. And he was happy to spend the day talking about his far flung adventures. Some curious boys from up the road had run down to see who I was. Ches quickly put them to work fetching water in a bunch of empty plastic gallon jugs from his neighbor's water hydrant so I could water Brownie. He told them he would give them each one of his books for doing it.

The reporter lady arrived. Ches talked to her more than I did. She took several snapshots of Ches and I standing together with his pony. The Poloriod camera she used shot black and white film and was somewhat of a relic. It was the kind where you had to give each shot time to develop before you peeled the packet apart to reveal the picture, and then you had to go over the print with a preservative compound loaded squeegee brush. She was kind enough to give me two prints. Ches was retired from the road and didn't have goats

anymore. But someone had given him the pony. He kept her tethered out on a long rope to graze whatever grass she could find on his property. He called her Lady Bird.

When I asked how he came up with that name, he explained, "She's named after the wife of that horse's ass, President Johnson. He sent so many of our boys to get killed in that Vietnam. His wife's name is Lady Bird, you

know.”

Lady Bird took a lot of abuse from Ches. He’d often stop in mid-sentence and scream insults her way, especially when she whinnied. The Goatman told me that he used to ride Lady Bird to town to get supplies. But not so long ago he’d had a serious accident and had fallen off and been dragged when his foot got stuck in the saddle’s stirrup. He’d been found unconscious. His knee had been badly dislocated and he had broken several ribs. He was in the hospital for several days and now walked with the aid of a crutch. The reporter confirmed his story.

I brought Lady Bird over to meet Brownie. She swiftly spun around, turning her rear to Brownie’s side and kicked him with both hoofs as hard as she could. Brownie was stunned and at the same time confused by this less than friendly introduction. Ponies had always been his pals until now. Brownie was tougher than the old Goatman. He just had the wind knocked out of him, but was otherwise unhurt. As unusual a pair as Ches and Lady Bird were, I thought they might actually be just right for each other. And Lady Bird still had some usefulness. She kept the grass and weeds mowed down and she was quick to whinny if anyone approached the Goatman’s place.

Soon, Ches talked the reporter into giving him a lift into town to get some groceries. While he was gone I took the time to set up my big old view camera so I could take a picture of the famous Goatman when he returned.

He was back shortly with a full bag of groceries the reporter had bought for him.

He thanked her but added, "Like I said, I would have paid for all this myself, but I accidently burned my last $5 bill in a paper bag I was starting the fire with this morning."

She assured him, "Don't worry about it. My treat."

The Goatman put his sack of goodies in the old school bus body and then came back out, eager to pose for me. He was quite a sight too. He was short in stature with a gray straggly beard and a stub of a cigar poked out the corner of his mouth. His clothes were a mix matched assortment of loud colors but clean. He had his single crutch under his arm. I got him posed standing with the old school bus body and Lady Bird in the distant background. But in the process of walking back and forth between him and my camera to make final adjustments, I tripped on one of the legs of the tripod and sent it and my precious old camera crashing to the ground. It was a sickening sight. The back of the camera had torn loose. It would take some major repairing to get it back in proper working order. The Goatman seemed genuinely concerned and felt bad for me. If I'd had the right wood glue and a couple of c-clamps I could have fixed it right then and there. That would have to wait until I got to town again and found a hardware store.

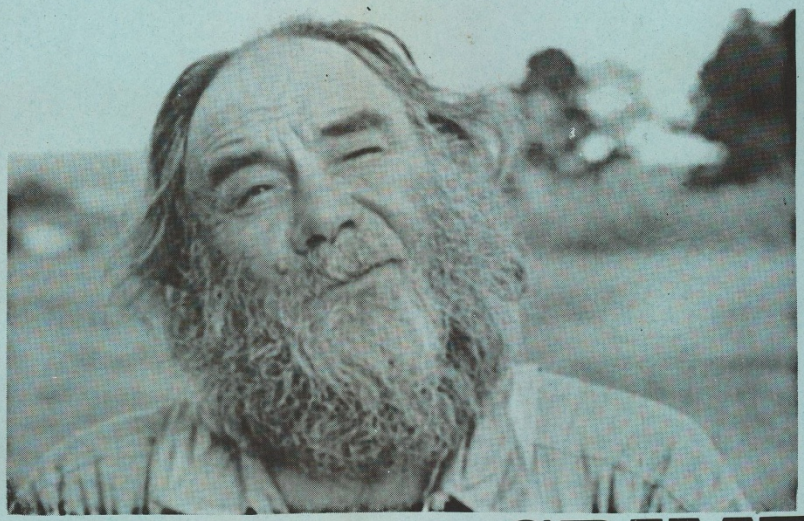
The reporter had left and most of the afternoon I had a chance to do my own interview with the Goatman. He told me he was 93 years old, but to me he didn't look that old. Later on I read a small pamphlet-like book entitled Goats and Guts which the Goatman and a friend of his had put together. The book told about Ches's life and placed his age at 77, which seemed more like it. He also told me he'd been married four times but the book said he'd been married only once.

That was the Goatman for you. He was a story teller, or better put, a teller of tales. You never knew where the truth ended and the fiction began. It was all part of his act. I speculated that this is the stuff of legends.

Ches told me he was an ordained minister of the Lord. He could quote scripture with the best of them. The only problem was when he'd interpret the scriptures there might be a few four letter words laced in. Some didn't hold well with that as he preached along the roadside in his nomadic days. He would also get himself in trouble by berating people in the flock about their sinful ways. He'd had his wagons turned over more than once and he and his goats injured by people he'd angered or by sick minded pranksters. The Goatman was clearly as proud as he was unorthodox.

He assured me, "When I go, it will be like Jesus went, between two crooks." With his flair for sarcasm he added, "A doctor and lawyer!"

GOATS GOSPEL



GRIT and GRIME

CHARLES McCARTNEY, "The Goat Man" and his mobile home with which he has traveled more than 100,000 miles, and has used the highways of every state in Continental U.S. This particular model rig is rather unusual in appearance, and lacks some of the more elaborate conveniences, that are standard equipment in more familiar brands. Mr. McCartney has a very simple philosophy of life. He feels that every man's lot in life is predetermined by a power greater than Man or Science, and that if you appear to be slow, in finding what you're searching for, it will eventually find you. Wherever he goes, he finds himself surrounded by crowds with mixed emotions, sympathy, curiosity or ridicule. He welcomes everybody, answers personal questions, poses for pictures, gives personal opinions and observations on topics of any nature.

His rig is not equipped with safety belts, but he says you don't need them if you travel outside. He has running water when it rains, and heat every summer, no plumbing or electrical bills to bother with. He never has motor trouble, nature provides him with replacements, his power supply also provides goat milk anywhere on his excursions, a performance that has not been duplicated through any mechanical power source perfected by man. He owns the World's largest T-V set, with all outdoors for a screen. Live programs run continually, with an unlimited cast of characters. His way of life is a continual travelogue with the ability to stop the action at any point for a more thorough study of objects or views that are of most interest. There are no reruns and no tube breakdown.

Mr. McCartney's vehicle was not designed for speed, but as he so aptly puts it: "If you have no definite place to go, and no specific time to be there, speed ceases to be an important factor." He has goats with whom he has kept constant company for as much as 25 years. How many people can do that with people? Wherever he goes, he is greeted by people from all walks of life, some critical, some curious and some sympathetic - all are welcomed by the "Goat Man," and given the opportunity to help to finance his ventures in life, and his hobby of building churches and preaching from his ever-handy Bible. This he is able to do through the sale of novelties, picture postcards and stories of his adventures. Whether you buy or not he thanks you for visiting with him and asks you to visit often.

He does not have to beg or steal to exist — The Lord provides the perfect Medicine, a mixture of sunshine and water, and provides the goats with plenty of vegetation, and they provide milk.

Everybody is his friend, but they always visit him wherever he is, thus making it unnecessary for him to use a mortgaged car, burning Credit Card gas and traveling on borrowed time to visit with you for a few minutes, then rush at unsafe speed to make it in time for dinner or an appointment that someone else will probably break anyhow

Mr. McCartney thanks you sincerely for your financial assistance. He has a lot of mouths to feed. They work hard and they like to live high.

The "Right" Reverend CHARLES McCARTNEY

The Goatman told me he'd run away from his family's farm in Iowa when he was a boy. He'd sold newspapers in Chicago and battled for the possession of his street corner with the other newsboys. He was fourteen when he married a woman who was twenty-four. She was a knife thrower and used him in her act as her target she would throw her knives carefully around. Whether this story was true or not, it showed some things about Ches. He thought of himself as a ladies man and a showman. When his knife throwing wife became pregnant, the story went, they moved back to his home state of Iowa. Ches became a farmer. But they lost the farm to the bank at the onset of the Depression. This was when he got the idea to go on the road with his family with a wagon pulled by goats.

At this point in the narrative, Ches became very bitter. He called the Depression "Hoover Days" and blamed the government for the wanderings that occupied the next forty years of his life. His wife had left him and their boy early on. It was hard to understand Ches. He may have been bitter but he was still immensely proud of the life he had led.

Charles "Chess" McCartney "The Goat Man"

Born during the first year of a new century, Chess was more fortunate than many of his neighbors. By working long hours and planning ahead, and with the help of God, he had been able to earn a comfortable living for his wife and son, and by working six days each week and teaching the gospel the seventh, he was able to own his home, some farm land and a church while he was still in his early twenties.

Chess had managed to acquire and bank enough money to provide for an education for his son and hospitalization for his family, in case it was needed. The Crash of '29 changed this picture completely, his crops were good but his bank account was frozen. Being unable to withdraw money to pay for harvesting, Chess and his family gathered and stored what they could, and less fortunate individuals were allowed to gather grain for half of the amount of food they salvaged. There was very little money in circulation, therefore it became extremely difficult to sell anything. With an abundance of food but no money, Chess saw no need to raise more food, so he and his family decided to see how the rest of the world was doing. Chess left his worldly goods available to those not fortunate enough to have food and with his wife, his son, the dog, and twenty-eight goats, they loaded an old wagon with enough food to last them through a long cold winter and started a long endless journey searching for nothing but finding contentment.

Since the start of this journey nearly a half century ago, Mrs. McCartney has passed on to reap her reward in Heaven as have two Mrs. McCartneys after her. The little boy has grown into manhood and acquired a college degree. His life was much fuller and his understanding of humanity more thorough because of his vacations spent with his father trudging the hiways of this vast continent.

Life has not been easy for Chess, but he believes that "you get out of anything in proportion to what you put into it." With this theory or philosophy of life, Chess continues to put every effort into daily existence. He keeps his own books, pays taxes and Social Security and refuses to consider any form of Federal Assistance as long as he is physically able to provide for himself. Chess is charitable to anyone that appears in honest need, and feels that with the rest of the world depending on the help of the U.S. Taxpayer, he will hold his own and ease the strain that much.

He said to me, "You know Buddy, I'm the original hippy. I had long hair way before the hippies did." Ches never called me by my name the whole time I was there, but rather he called me 'Buddy' or even 'Honey' a couple of times.

Ches told me he'd been through all 48 states with his goats and wagons and had gone the length and breadth of the country several times. He said he had as many as 50 goats with him at one time. The herd often sprawled across both lanes of the highway. I knew there was at least some truth to that because I'd seen him myself as a small boy, coming down a road just outside of Las Vegas. What a sight he had been, taking up much of the road with his goats and ramshackle wagons. I had begged my mother in vain to stop the car so I could take a closer look. The Goatman said he had, in fact, gone through Vegas. Decades later on my own wagon travels, an old farmer in Western New York State stopped me to ask if I knew the Goatman. He said many years before the Goatman had camped at his farm.

"I've been through major cities in this country, like Chicago, New York and Washington D.C. Me and Jack Kennedy got along real good. I could camp on the White House lawn any time I wanted to. Jack was a great man but he had a bad wife. He'd ask me where she was sometimes, and I'd have to tell him, 'Why, she's run off with that Onassy on his yacht.' Now when that Johnson took over I was kicked off every time I got near the place." Maybe it was because the Goatman had run for president in 1960 but had withdrawn so Kennedy could have it.

It was about this time that things started to take a turn for the worse for the old Goatman. In the mid-sixties he'd been hit over the head as he slept, resulting in a wound that needed 27 stitches. Many of his goat's throats had been slit. Another time some of his goats had been stolen and tied to the railroad tracks and hit by a train.

Ches said he could live with his wagons being turned over occasionally but the deadly crazy things seemed to be increasing. So he decided to retire from the road life. In the fifties and before, life on the road for the Goatman had been different. When he came to town, schools often let out for the day so the kids could visit him. He had been quite the novelty, especially down South. I had come to know about such notoriety myself. I would eventually have a little taste of the crazy deadly stuff too, later on in my travels.

Ches said there was no friendlier place than the South. That's why he finally bought a couple of acres there in Georgia to settle down on. He built a small wood frame shack with a crude steeple and painted it white. That was his chapel. He lived in it for several years. Using cement and cinder blocks he built a burial vault behind it. He said his parents were interned there and

he hoped to be also. He almost achieved that end when the chapel caught fire one night with him in it and burned to the ground. He lost many precious boxes of postcards of himself and his goats and wagons. Also burned were boxes of his books that he sold about his life. After the fire he had to recover from serious burns and smoke inhalation. He convalesced in a nursing home in Jeffersonville for some time.

I cooked a meal for Ches and myself on his flimsy wood burning stove in the school bus body that evening. His place was a disorderly rat hole, but made enjoyable by more tales of his adventures.

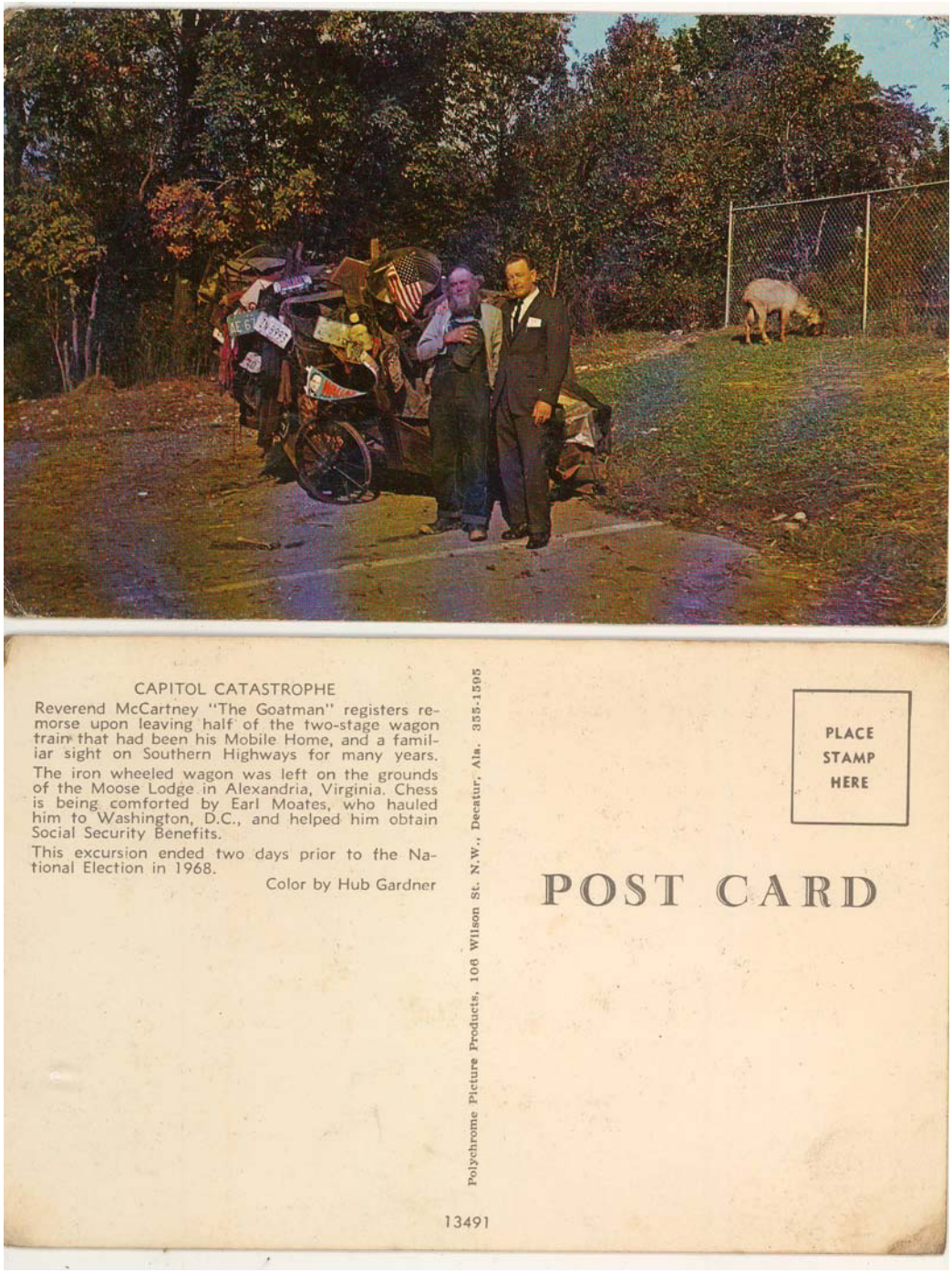
"Why honey, I nearly froze to death when I crossed those big mountains out there in Oregon. I put a lot of newspaper over myself and brought four nanny goats into the wagon to sleep with."

Ches still had a few books and postcards and he gave me an autographed copy of his two books and a couple postcards. They showed his old steel wheeled wagons piled high with hub caps and assorted junk. One wagon was a four wheeled affair and the other was a two wheeled trailer. The trailer was his goat nursery, where the baby goats would ride. On top of the main wagon was a large sign that read, "Jesus Wept." Ches eked out a living selling his autobiographical books and postcards, and by turning in pop bottles and selling assorted junk he fond along the road. He told me he could get his goats hitched up and the whole outfit moving in fifteen minutes. The harness for a couple dozen billy goats was made entirely of junk. He'd put their necks through simple collars made from discarded car tire inner tubes. The traces attached to the crude collars were often sections of old garden hose, found pieces of rope or anything similar. He wouldn't ride in his wagon but would walk and herd his goats along. Another thing I found interesting was how Ches would gather a crowd when he made camp along the roadside. He would set a couple old car tires on fire to cook his supper. The black towering plume of smoke would attract people thinking a terrible fiery wreck had just taken place or a plane had crashed. Ches claimed he never minded the taste of burnt tires the smoke gave his food. As a matter of fact, he claimed he missed it when he would eat in. Also, he told me the tire smoke kept the mosquitoes away. I, for one, was glad we were using scraps of wood in his stove to cook with that night and not pieces of old tires.

ONE
MORE
ROAD
to
RETIREMENT

Ches McCartney

Goats
&
Guts



After supper a middle aged man came by to see if Ches was OK and to see if he needed anything from the store. That was invitation enough for Ches.

"Sure thing, Buddy, let me get my coat on."

Ches put on a bright red sports coat, donned his blue and yellow ball cap, and away they went. This new flashy attire seemed like quite a departure from the goat skins and later grubby overalls and cap he wore

during his days on the road. But then the Goatman never lived his life by anyone else's script.

I took the time alone to write in my journal about the events of the day. There was a lot to say about the Goatman. But there wasn't anything to say about Jan, because she'd never showed up. I'd gotten myself all cleaned up and shaved for the Goatman. How ironic. He was the one person I'd met that day who couldn't have cared less how well groomed I was.

The Goatman returned after awhile with his second sack of free groceries for the day. I retired to my wagon.

From the old school bus body I heard Ches shout out, "Goodnight Buddy!"

The next morning it was drizzling rain. By the time I was up and out of the wagon, the Goatman was ready to leave.

"I'm on my way to Macon," he said. "I've got a young thing who wants to do a life size sculpture of me to put on the University lawn. She also wants to marry me."

Ches was wearing a sparkling white blazer and burgundy colored dress pants held up by a light colored imitation snake skin belt. We said our farewells which were simple. There weren't any profound words of wisdom. Ches walked on up the road in the direction of Macon. Within a couple minutes a car stopped and picked him up.

I never heard anything from the Goatman as to what became of his son, Albert Gene McCartney. Later from secondary sources, I learned that his son turned out to be as shiftless and lazy as they come, and became an alcoholic. He eventually quit traveling with his father about the time he came of age. He was found shot dead on the Goatman's property in 1985, not long after the Goatman had moved into a nursing home.

At Jeffersonville I bought a C-clamp and some carpenter's glue at the Western Auto store. The rain let up in the afternoon and the clouds parted enough to let a little sunshine through. I stopped in a grassy clearing to let Brownie get caught up on some grazing. I glued the broken wooden parts of my camera back together and clamped them tight with the C-clamp. The pieces meshed together surprisingly well. That was one of the beautiful things about using an old ancient wooden view camera. I could fix it fairly easily myself with simple tools. This was more than I could say about any modern camera I'd ever owned.

It started raining again later in the day and continued for the next two days. Three days away from the Goatman's, by afternoon, I was feeling wet and miserable. As the clouds thickened even more, I passed a nice grove of pecan trees with fine grazing around them. I thought I might ask about

pulling into the grove and making camp. But I thought I saw a patch of blue ahead in the sky and wasn't sure if the rain would finally let up. It didn't. A stiff wind blew into us. Brownie turned his head partially to the side so the rain wasn't driving into his face so much. I noticed a small herd of black steers lined up along the fence by the side of the road staring at us as though in disbelief. My pants clung to my legs and feet were soaked, cold and feeling numb.

Brownie wasn't feeling too well himself. He had diarrhea and lots of gas. It was about 2:00 in the afternoon when I decided to call it quits for the day, I pulled off the road by a little abandoned shack and barn. There was some grass around the yard, so I staked Brownie out. Then I made a little nest for myself in the barn. It wasn't the cozy home one would crave when tired, wet, and hungry. But, I was determined to do the best I could with what I had. I used my feed bag as a cushion to sit on and my folding chair as a desk. As the daylight left and night came on, I lit my kerosene lantern and hung it on the back of the chair. The rain continued to beat down on the old rusty tin roof over me. After I ate a supper of salad and cold canned pork and bean sandwiches, I made my entry for the day in my journal. Then I got out my trusty cub scout pocket knife and carved "Penn- Flor, 1978 J.C." on one of the barn's cross beams. Also that evening I filled my water barrel and wooden bucket up with rain water off the edge of the roof. I slept soundly that night. The weather was so unpleasant I was sure no one would ever notice I was camped there without permission and run me off for trespassing.

The next day I crossed the Ocmulgee River into Hawkensville. I thought about calling the local police to have them follow me over the bridge. But I'd heard it was four lanes wide so I figured cars could easily go around me. When I was about halfway across the bridge I looked back over my shoulder and saw a car coming up fast in my lane. Soon I could see the driver's face but couldn't make any eye contact. He seemed to be in a trance and wasn't slowing down at all or acting like he would be turning into the left lane to go around me. To my right was nothing but a concrete curb and a steel railing. There was nowhere for me and Brownie and the wagon to go. For a split second I thought I might have to leap out of the wagon, over the railing and into the river not far below. But then as if my Guardian Angel had snapped her fingers in front of what I could clearly see now to be a very old man's face, he came instantly to his senses with a big-eyed look of surprise and swerved into the left lane, missing my left rear wheel by only a fraction of an inch.

Once across the bridge, I went on into town and tied up behind the old fashioned looking hardware store. I needed to buy a new glass globe for my

kerosene lantern. I had accidentally knocked it off a hook in the wagon and cracked the globe. I also had to get a few brass wood screws for the reassembly of my old camera's back. I picked up some groceries at the store nearby too. While I was gone, Brownie made a pile of manure. I was glad to see it was nicely formed. I shoveled it up into my wooden bucket per chance it would offend any townspeople. I'd pitch the manure along the roadside once we were out of town. With our business done we headed out.

Near a new looking race horse stable and track on the edge of town, a man in a small pickup truck pulled off and came over to talk.

He asked, "Hey, you here for the parade this weekend?"

No," I replied. "I don't know anything about a parade."

I explained what I was doing and where I was going.

The man said, "The parade is day after tomorrow. You ought to stick around and be in it. You'd probably get some customers for your photography too. There's a new harness horse training track just up ahead. I've got some horses of my own there and I'll make sure you get a stall and feed for your horse if you want to stay there."

It sounded good to me and so I spent the weekend at the harness horse training track. Brownie got racehorse class accommodations and feed. I slept nearby in an unused office room. Saturday afternoon we went in the Hawkinsville Christmas Parade like everyone wanted us to. Brownie behaved himself very well despite all the noise and people clapping with spooky balloons bobbing around over their heads. A local drug store wanted to sponsor me as their parade entrant. I refused, saying I'd rather be my own entrant. I had my Tintype Gallery banner tied to the side of the wagon top promoting my business, just like a Tintype Photographer would have done in a parade a hundred years before. I had on my fancy frock coat, striped vest and gray top hat to spiff things up even more. Other than my fancy duds and the banner, I looked like I always did going down the road. After the parade I headed back to the race horse stables to end my day with some peace and quiet.

3 Sections

TRAVELING TINTYPIST JOHN COFFER stands with "Brownie" and his mobile gallery at the new Hawkinsville harness training facility following Saturday's parade.
[Dispatch & News Photo]

Photographer Eyes Past

"Tintype Gallery," the side of the wagon reads, "Portraiture by J. A. Coffer."

The advertising is simple enough, hearkening back to earlier times for which Coffer has spent three and one-half months searching.

His adventure brought him to Hawkinsville, where he became a part of the Dec. 2 Christmas Parade by invitation of the Lion's Club.

The 26-year-old Coffer, whose first name is John, is a tintype photographer, a sort of relaxed relic in a fast food, fast car, fast paced time.

Beginning in Lancaster County, Pa. with his eight-year-old horse "Brownie" and a wagon stuffed with costumes, cooking utensils and antique photography equipment, Coffer set out to realize a fantasy.

"I fantasized about how a traveling tintype photographer in the 1800s would be like. After a while, it dawned on me that it was possible," Coffer explained, taking a break after unhitching "Brownie."

For those not familiar with tintype photography, it was America's first contribution to the art, the patent for tintype being granted in 1856 to Hamilton Smith of Gambier, Ohio.

Because tintypes were simple, inexpensive and durable, they were a sensation and traveling tintypists became a standard feature of the 19th century landscape.

In sharp contrast, Coffer is one of few, if not the only, traveling tintypist in America today to use a horse and wagon.

He is a photographer by profession, having had a portrait studio in Orlando, Fla., working a winter at a North Carolina ski resort and then opening a tintype shop back in Orlando.

In Pennsylvania last spring, Coffer purchased the lower part of the wagon and built the top himself based on photographs of old delivery wagons. The wagon is a composite of the type used in the late 1800s. "Brownie" was purchased from an Amish farmer. The photographic equipment had been his for two years prior to conceiving the trip.

This is not the first time Coffer has been a traveling photographer. He did basically the same thing in a Ford van during the Bicentennial Celebration.

However, he prefers his present mode of travel much more.

"With the van, it really wasn't as authentic as I wanted it to be ," he said handing "Brownie" a handful of hay. "This way, I have a feeling of adventure, of independence. I've gotten more accustomed to it than when I first started out."

The going has been slow. "Brownie" averages 15 miles per day. The wagon stays on back roads because traffic is slower and because of the scenery.

Because he is enjoying it so much, Coffer doubts he will ever return to the life of the Interstate or the fast pace he left behind in Orlando.

I'll always have a horse and wagon. I won't depend on a car again. I don't like them," he confessed. "After traveling in a horse and wagon, it's not right to travel in a car. I'll probably end up settling down in Pennsylvania, in the Amish area, where everyone drives a horse and wagon."

Despite inconsiderate motorists, the hassles and rare inconvenience, Coffer feels he's found that elusive "purpose" that most spend their entire lives in search of.

"I feel like I've found what I was put on earth to do. I'm contented with what I'm doing. I have the feeling that no matter what, I'll make it. That's what keeps me going."

Coffer stayed at the new harness training track while in Hawkinsville.

From Hawkinsville, Coffer headed toward Tifton and the Agrirama exhibit. He hoped that state officials would be more receptive to him setting up shop for a few days. He said that he would be on his way by the time this paper was printed.

Following Tifton, Coffer's road will lead him back to Florida cities including Tallahassee, Gainesville and Ocala.

From there, he isn't certain.

The idea of traveling west to the Dakota Badlands to photograph Indians entices him.

The cycle would then be complete: an 1800s-style photographer recording ancient tribal customs and dress that contemporary Indian youths are resurrecting.

Perhaps it then is appropriate, knowing of Coffer's search to experience the life Matthew Brady (the great Civil War photographer) led 100 years ago and of his desire to head west to photograph the Indians of the past, that every tintype ever made and ever to be made, is printed backwards.

Serving The Finest People In the World For 111 Years

December 6, 1978 Hawkinsville, Georgia, 31036

Between the exposure I had gotten from being in the Christmas Parade and the story that Macon Eyewitness News did on me the day before, I had a lot of visitors and Tintype portrait customers the rest of the weekend. One special visitor was an elderly black lady. She told me that her father had been a traveling tintype photographer back in the early 1900's. He'd gone

door to door in the black community making tintype portraits of any takers. She remembered how they'd hang up a quilt behind the sitter as a simple background. The exposure was usually made on the family's front porch, where the light was good and bright. What I was doing brought back a lot of fond memories for this lady and she was thrilled to see someone was still doing tintypes.

People continued to shower me with hospitality. The man who'd first stopped me by the race track and helped me get settled there was always checking on me to make sure everything was alright. He invited me over to his large upscale house to meet his wife and eat dinner. He was sure that what I was doing would make a great movie. He knew a guy who had an "in" out in Hollywood and he was going to speak to him about me. He was sure he could get something started for me. I told my host there was not enough sex and violence in my story to suit the movie makers. But he was adamant. He was certain that the movie trends would swing back towards more wholesome content soon.

The next evening I ate supper with a different set of people. They were two of the low paid grooms at the training track stable. They lived in a little travel trailer they rented nearby. The guy was about my age and his girlfriend was a few years younger. They both loved the horses and the guy was hopeful of making it to the position of trainer someday. We shared a great tuna casserole together. Afterwards we sat and talked and I told them about my wagon adventure so far. Then, through the window I saw a new Corvette pull up out near the edge of the road. I heard a horn honk.

The grooms spun around, looked out the window, and with great excitement said, "Hey, he's here. Alright!"

They were all smiles. I wasn't sure what for. The guy ran out to the car and came back with a brown paper bag. I quickly gathered that the local drug dealer had just made a delivery. The grooms had just bought a half pound of marijuana for $150.

"Hey man, this is Columbian," my host proudly informed me. "Do you get high, man?"

"No, "I told him. "I'm pretty high on just life right now."

"Oh, right, for sure, man. You don't mind if we light up do you?"

"No, go ahead."

They had already rolled their joints and had lit up, holding the smoke in their lungs as long as they could.

I asked, "How long will what you've just bought last?"

"About a month," they answered.

We went on talking a little more about my wagon travels. They thought

my life was really neat. In fact, they wouldn't mind trying it themselves.

"I can see us now. Just kicking back, sitting on a big bag of weed, traveling through the country."

I kept my true feelings and thoughts to myself. There was a lot more to the life I was living than just "kicking back". I couldn't believe two adults who worked for minimum wage would blow $150 a month for something as unnecessary as marijuana. A couple of their friends from the track came over to partake in the new stash. I bid them all goodnight.

The next morning as I was heading out, one of the horse trainers at the track gave me a hundred pound bag of horse feed. I already had fifty pounds in the wagon and told him I didn't need it. But he insisted I take it. I knew I'd use it up eventually even though it made the wagon springs sag a little more than I liked.

It had been a good stay in Hawkinsville. It was our first time in a parade and it had been my best business location since Virginia. But it was the last time I'd call or write Jan. Using a phone at the track, I called her again to try and get her to come see me that weekend. She had other plans. I'd had Jan on my mind for years and it was hard to accept that I'd go through Georgia and never see her. I consoled myself with the thought that it was a big wide world out there. If I found the right woman, that was fine. If not, my love for the adventure I was having would be enough.