



FRANKLY SPEAKING

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Editorial Columnist

Over the Christmas holidays I started reading a hefty book on the Ku Klux Klan written by the Klansmen themselves. I was always curious about the KKK and felt sorrowful that so many bigoted people resented them. As I read I discovered some wonderful things about this totally misunderstood organization. Allow me to share with you some interesting facts about the KKK.

The Klan organized themselves after the Civil War in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee as a social group for veterans of the Confederate Army. A few broke off and began to terrorize former slaves. That fad soon spread throughout much of the South, though, as all harmless fads (such as streaking), slave-killing also eventually died out. In 1867, however, the Klan formally reorganized themselves under the alias of the Invisible Empire of the South.

Frankly speaking, the "Invisible Empire" made their force quite visible. During the Reconstruction Era they gave friendly suggestions to Negroes, urging them not to exercise their right to vote. The 'urging' was sometimes accomplished through writing them, or by repeated blows on the head.

To the distress of all good colored folks, the KKK again dissolved in the 1870's. The quality of mercy, however, is not strained, as the Klan revived themselves in 1915, down south in Atlanta, Georgia. There once again, they began giving out the benevolent service they were reknowned for. This time, however, they were extended out to Jews, Roman Catholics, foreigners (in general), and radicals.

The Klan's wonderful programs include the burning of crucifixes, the forementioned hangings, slow torture, and the illustrious game for all fun-loving Non-White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, that is — B.B.B. (Bruises By Beatings).

The KKK, though actually under the assumed name, Knights of the Great Forest, again went extinct. In this case it was towards the end of the Roaring 20s. The extinction of the KKK probably occurred so as to allow minorities and the poor a chance to enjoy the Depression. It was also because they could not pay back \$500,000 worth of taxes to the government which they had evaded.

But do not despair, there is a happy ending. In 1949 after their leader had lost World War II, they came together in Montgomery, Alabama and formed the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Here they dedicated themselves to the cause of forever providing the acts of kindness they had in the past. And in '52 they proved their dedication. In North Carolina sixty Klansmen were convicted on assault, conspiracy to kidnap, and murder charges.

Through the entirety of this topsy-turvy history we find the Klan is still around. What are they like today? Are they still extending the amazing deeds they did in the past?

To answer these questions I found I had to do some "investigative journalism." So I put my book aside and soon discovered that Vidor is the home of one of the most Klan-dominated cities in the country, and that it is less than ten miles from my home. And also, that there was even a KKK bookstore that sold literature and paraphernalia on the Klan.

I then got the keys to the car, and went to inform my parents. For some particular reason they at first laughed, then grew angry and horrified, and later began to cry. In their sobbing I heard them say, "... fool ... crazy ..." I suppose they were scolding themselves for having acted so foolishly when I had first told them my plans for the evening. At any rate, my father told me to be in at 8 p.m. sharp! Furthermore, after I told him that was hardly enough time, he added that if I were not back at eight he would send the police or even the FBI to Vidor to look for me! It was at that point I was certain my parents were crazy

"Vidor or bust." was the banner I could have put on my car as I rolled down IH 10 Vidor-bound. Time is so nonsensical, for before I knew it, it was nearly 7 p.m. and I was just entering Vidor with no directions. It was then I saw three gaily dressed men locking the door of a building with the sign on it saying, "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Bookstore, 146 Main, Warehouse of Godly goodies."

What a finding! I pulled up alongside the curb of the store to ask them for directions, if they weren't going themselves; for if they were, they could ride with me and show me the way. After I got out of my car I went up and told my idea to them. During this time one asked for a gun, while another tried to unlock the door. The man of higher status among the three finally quieted them, and replied to me in a friendly tone, "So niggur, you wuz plannin' to go to the picnic? Well just so happens that's where we were goin'. Let us ride with you and we'll show you the way." I was quite pleased with his suggestion and along with them, piled into my little white Toyota.

In less than no time we had arrived at the gates of a wooded area where two guards were posted. During the trip my companions told me a few things about the Vidor-based Klan faction I did not know about.

They told me of one incident where a white girl ran off to Houston with a black—twice. Each time the KKK went after her and brought her back home. I asked them in what way did the Klan help the black guy. To that they explained that they had tried to rehabilitate him but that he was a chronic case and died during the program.

One of them also showed me the latest edition of the KKK's magazine, *The Crusader*. In it was featured the Book-of-the-Month, "The Joy of Nigger-Shooting." I, to this day, cannot understand why the Klan hates stinky people for that is what the definition of 'niggard' is.

It was at this puzzled point in my mind that a white hat with three holes in it, peered into my window remarking, "What in the h---," but he was cut short by the Grand Wizard seated next to me, who told him I was the Guest of Honor.

Soon enough I was walking past members of the KKK, of which an immediate silence fell upon followed by roaring laughter. (None ever let me in on the joke for some reason.) The GW who had been escorting me stopped and gave some instructions to some men. In a moment a cross was erected and some Klansmen began drenching it in gasoline. I was directed to step up towards it where two Klansmen awaited me with ropes. I then noticed the time was nearing my curfew.

Eric in Klanland



I thus told the Grand Wizard that I was sorry I could not stay longer but that I had to go home because my parents expected me back at 8 p.m. He insisted I remain but when I told him that my father would be calling the FBI he told me by all means to go.

I raced towards my car in the midst of yells, I guess because they wanted me to stay. In minutes I was home and only five minutes late. I crept in and to my surprise found my entire family there along with a representative from Broussard's Mortuary. He was making some sort of arrangements with my father. My mother was dressed all in black and crying. With this puzzling scene in mind I asked what had happened. And to that question, the answer my brother gave has baffled me to now. "Oh, nothing much," he said. "We just thought you had been burned to death or something like that."