

JOHN SAYLES, from page 8

colonize, American soldiers didn't. They thought, "We'll just straighten them out and then leave," but that wasn't the plan.

M.W.: *So the government had a hidden agenda?*

J.S.: The only reason we didn't take over Cuba was that Sen. (Henry Moore) Teller said, "Well, this isn't because you people want to take over Cuba and make it a territory or a state, is it?" and they said, "Oh, no, no, no, this is really out of the goodness of our hearts," and he said, "Well, put it on paper." But nobody knew where the Philippines was and the expansionists in the McKinley cabinet just decided this was too good to pass up.

M.W.: *What about Wilmington, N.C.?*

J.S.: Once black men got the right to vote, they voted in huge numbers. Then the Union troops marched out — one of those Bush-Gore elections where one guy got the popular vote and the other got the electoral vote and the compromise was, if you Yankees leave, we'll let the Republican be the president. The minute that happened, Jim Crow laws started being put in. North Carolina was the last of the Southern states where that happened.

In Wilmington, blacks had the majority. Blacks had a couple of wards, they had city councilmen, they had firemen, they even had policemen who had the right to arrest white men. This was a shocker for the old-guard white community. Blacks had political allies in the poor whites: It was called the Populist Party.

The old Confederates decided to break this alliance. The newspapers started printing stories — mostly manufactured — about black men raping white women. They made it very clear to anybody that if they sold guns to a black man their store would be burned down.

They bought a Gatling gun, demonstrated it to the black leaders and told them, "Go tell your people not to vote." Black people pretty much didn't vote in that mid-year election. The next day they came around with the Gatling gun, killed a lot of black people, rounded up everybody they didn't like, black and white, put them on a train and said, "Don't get off until you're in Philadelphia, because there's a lynch mob waiting for you at every train stop from here to there." President McKinley needed the votes, so he didn't really look into it and that was it for North Carolina — black people couldn't vote there either.

M.W.: *The book ends with the electrocution of an elephant. How did you choose that?*

J.S.: There was a phrase in the Civil War: "Have you gone to see the elephant?" That meant, "Have you been up to the front lines?" Later on, in Coney Island there was a hotel in the shape of an elephant that at first was a tourist attraction, and then became a house of ill repute. So to go to see the elephant at first meant, "Have you gone to see Coney Island?" Then eventually it meant, "Have you been to the whorehouse today?" It's about loss of innocence.

People like to not know things and so they try to ignore things. The scene in the book was something that was filmed by Edison. You can go online and see the elephant getting whacked. Edison was trying to prove that alternating current was more dangerous than the direct current that he had invented — to show it's so dangerous you can electrocute an elephant with it. To me this symbolizes that you can ignore things for a while, but eventually, it's the size of an elephant and you can't ignore it anymore.

M.W.: *So what's your next project?*

J.S.: A movie about the Rosenberg case. Their sons, Robert and Michael Meeropol, have wanted a feature movie about that case

for a long time. They've dealt with some new information very well, not what they've wanted to hear, mostly that their father was a spy, but he didn't have the secret to the atomic bomb. That was just our symbolic show trial: While Stalin was killing thousands of people in show trials, we electrocuted a Jewish couple from the Lower East Side.

Which of your movies was your favorite?

Every once in a while I watch a movie over, but it's more like watching a home movie, because it triggers memories of making it. Shooting on location gives you access to a community. I've been thinking of "Matewan" the last couple weeks, because Hazel Dickens, the great hill singer, died. We had her sing a couple of songs and appear in "Matewan." We formed an alliance with the people where we were shooting in West Virginia and they'd never had their story told before. They became the actors in small parts, and to this day you can buy copies of "Matewan" in hardware stores in West Virginia.

M.W.: *Anything else you'd like to say?*

J.S.: Check the book out if you like to read great, big historical novels. "Amigo" will be opening in the States in August, starting with communities that have a lot of Filipino-Americans and moving on to the regular art theaters. It'll play in the Pacific Northwest.

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There Comes a Time
Wallace E. High

There comes a time
When life must grant us pause,
A moment's deep reflection
On the efforts we have made,
The friendships come and gone,
The sweet loves won and lost,
The winning at all cost.

There comes a time
To cool brash ardors of youth,
Wave away the callow juvenile
Who would burn the sturdy bridge
Into our perception of the future
Where lies the specter of security.
Amid the blessings of maturity.

There comes a time
When we seek comfort in our slumber
But wispy hands draw upon our
senses,
Reaching out to us for respite,
The dreaming invades our peace,
The cries of dear ones calling fright
While we lavish torment in the night.

There comes a time
To weigh upon the scales
Our puny attempts at glory,
Summations of profound intent
That somehow fall far short
Of the monuments we desire,
Of the fame we must aspire.

There comes a time
To settle up the overdraws
Upon our sad accounts,
To atone mean acts of vice and greed,
Predations to soil and air and sea,
Dark things we know are true;
Repay to Mother Earth her due.

There comes a time
When the fiddler names his fee
And the landlord exacts his rents,
And we must pay or self-destruct
Before the juggernaut of pressure,
The cauldrons boiling up with
tension,
Troubles rising to great dimension.

There comes a time
To feel pressed upon our shoulders
The burdens of our past regrets;
Parades of sadden'd marchers cross
Our vision that we must blink away,
Before we yield to our emotion
At the mercy of a new devotion.

Now comes the time
When we cannot bear it all
And we call out for help Divine
With sincere entreaty to the Lord
Waiting for just such a cry,
For He gave His Son for our relief;
Let us live our lives in that belief.

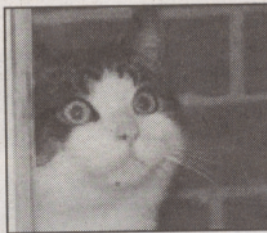
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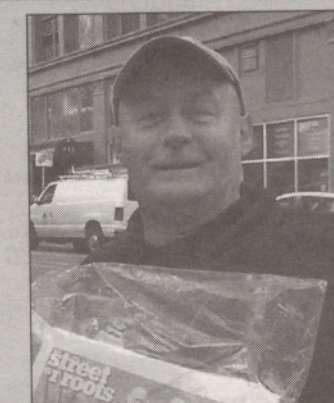
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