

**CHAPTER TWO:**  
**DR. LIPPINCOTT'S ANALYSIS AND HIGHLANDS**



*Professor Bill Lippincott*

**I** kept thinking about the brief conversation with Dr. Lippincott and his jocular remark that athletes ate well. My only experience in athletics was at the Charleston YMCA where I played basketball, ran track and boxed. The thought of basketball against Flathman and his fellow giants gave me the cold chills. While all the mile runners (my best event) were trying to get to the 4-minute mile, I was more of a 5-minute-mile man who could occasionally break by 4:50. The best miler at Clemson could do a 4:18. So, it seemed that my only hope was to make the boxing team. I had sparred with Louis Lempesis in the Charleston High

gym. He was the best local boxer and had done well in the Golden Gloves in New York. I didn't do badly but was outclassed. My strong points were strong shoulders and a very hard head, so Louis's punches to the head were no problem. The short, strong boys were not able to push me around. Clemson was quite different. This training was exhausting. It began each afternoon with a run of several miles with a 5-pound weight in each hand. Then, after calisthenics, we boxed a man of lower weight, one of the same weight, and one heavier. Fortunately, the heavier boxers were nice guys. For instance, I boxed our heavyweight, Warren Wilson, who could have destroyed me with a punch but didn't. He was 80 pounds heavier.

Bob Jones, the boxing coach, paired me with Teddy Boselli for the first match with someone my weight. I could have sworn at times that he had an extra pair of hands because the number of punches received must have been twice the number delivered. But, all in all, it was a respectable demonstration of my mediocre ability.

My next trial horse was Milton Berry. He was not a swarmer and continual puncher like Boselli, but his strategy was to move the opponent around with his left arm and shoulders until he could get a solid shot to the opponent's head. His strategy was effective because he could hit much harder than the average boxer in his weight class. So boxing with Berry wasn't bad until his right hand pounded me, usually in the temple. As a matter of fact, I thought that I could out-point Berry if he didn't knock me down. That's why my hard head became so important.

Boxing him nearly every workout for two years, I was never knocked down. Neither Berry nor Boselli had lost a college fight, so I was considered by Bob Jones as an everyday sparring partner and occasional bantamweight in an intercollegiate match. Most important, I was made part of the team and was able to eat with the athletes in their own dining room. Goal accomplished! Well, almost. The coach considered me a bantamweight, about 120 pounds, and my normal weight was 130, so I had to limit my steak and, through the training routine, keep 120 pounds my target. But at meals I knew the cream of the athletes and considered myself

to be one of them.

I now could turn most of my attention toward the academic program.

My favorite student was Ben Yarborough, who lived down the hall. He was from a small town north of Columbia. I asked Ben how things were going in math. "Well, down home we deal with mules and cattle and such, and sometimes you have to work like hell to make them behave. But I'll treat math like an ornery mule until I can do what I want with it. Now things are discouraging." Ben had a life-and-death struggle with calculus during the early months of his freshman year, but by the end of the semester he had caught up with the Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville students and was ahead of most of them.



Amongst the reading I did after turning my thoughts toward academics were newspapers, and some of the printed words alarmed me.

Al Smith announced that Roosevelt's "New Deal" needed fundamental changes. A politician's anti-Roosevelt tirade was common, but other newspaper items were not. Smith, nearing the end of his life, denied that security was the essence of freedom. According to that logic, there was no difference between a dangerous animal and one whose teeth had been pulled. His greatest contribution to American politics early in his career was documenting the fact that he, being Catholic, was considered for significant national appointments in spite of his religion.

And then there was an article alleging that Jews backed Bolsheviks and that those who came to live in Germany introduced pestilence into spiritual life.

I talked to Dan about some of the anti-Semitic articles.

"Well," he replied, "all that really doesn't bother me. Some Germans are strongly anti-Semitic, but all that we know they have done is write letters to newspapers. I wouldn't get too upset if I were you. As a matter of fact, I was more interested in the court fight that declared that Sally Rand could dance with nothing on,

protected only by a balloon filled with helium, and that only the weather bureau could use the balloon to estimate wind velocity.”

“You are estimating the news in a happier light than I am,” I replied, “but Mussolini is mouthing off about other countries demonstrating hatred toward Italy and about the fact that he’ll go to war if they continue. Something bad seems to be brewing in Europe, and, although I once thought that countries on the two sides of the Atlantic were politically separate, I hope now that we won’t become involved, should a war come in Europe.”

Lucien Vane came ambling toward us.

“Lucien,” I admonished him, “how come you’re not in the library or in your room studying? You might miss some good stuff just wandering around without a book in your hand.”

“I’ve been memorizing things for the quiz tomorrow but I thought I’d take time out and shoot the bull with you guys.”

“Lucien, you won’t learn much from us. We were talking about the mess in Italy and Germany, about which we know almost nothing but think it is important.”

“That’s interesting,” he replied. “I have a cousin in the German army and have been corresponding with him. He’s pissed off with the Jews because they’re accumulating too much German money honestly and otherwise. No offense to you, Art, because that doesn’t seem to be true here.”

“Look, you pissant,” I answered, “the Jews in Germany and everywhere else are different because you bastards make them different. Everybody needs to hate something, and you’ve picked on the Jews. We hate South Carolina or anybody when we play them. We hate enthusiastically but temporarily.”

He replied, “Well, you may be partly right. Anyhow, let’s change the subject. I was listening to Ella Fitzgerald on the Carnegie library record player. When she sings ‘Miss Otis Regrets’ and improvises with Dizzy Gillespie, she really turns me on.”

By this time I was getting madder regarding his anti-Semitic remarks and interjected, “God damn it! Why in hell don’t you go to your room and read or masturbate or do whatever amuses you and leave us the hell alone.”

He left, not flustered by my tirade.

Dan and I finished our ice cream and returned to our room. There, we were greeted with a message from Dr. Lippincott to have lunch with him the next day.



Dr. Bill Lippincott taught qualitative and quantitative analysis. He had close rapport with his students and taught best about living happily and fruitfully and this in spite of the fact that he was single (and always had been). He enjoyed the company of groups of men, was seldom seen with just one man, and had never been known to date women, although he had a home in the mountains where he had complete privacy and could have done what he wanted.

His invitation was not unusual. He preferred not eating alone while discussing whatever most interested the visitors.

Dan and I were a little nervous about meeting the professor, but he quickly put us at ease with, "Hi, Art and Dan. How's the college treating you thus far? I know you haven't had a lot of time to meditate on your personal reactions, but what can the faculty do to make things more bearable?"

"Nothing I can think of," I replied, "but the faculty, not just the professors in chemistry, try to teach more than we can easily absorb."

"Well, Art, that's what we're paid to do. But learning, in the long run, is a happy experience that, hopefully, will last a lifetime."

"My chief gripe," Dan added, "is the pseudo-military system. I've seen no reason why first-year students should be second-class citizens. Moreover, some of the military is time-consuming and leaves us less time for the subjects that interest us."

About that time we heard a racket from the adjoining room that sounded like "crash, bang, crash, bang" and went on for at least five minutes before I remarked about

it. “Dr. Lippincott, what’s that noise?”

“I can’t tell you the name of the perpetrator, because that’s his room and what he does there is his own business, but the truth is that he is too bashful to exercise in public, so instead of jogging, he jumps repeatedly from the bed to the floor and back. In addition, he does the usual exercises. This is an old hotel, and, hopefully, the floor will stand the hammering. Sometimes I think that the smarter a person is, the more peculiar things he can devise.

“To answer your question in regard to the military, Dan, I agree with you as do most of the faculty. The only exceptions I know are the people who teach military science. We’re trying to get rid of it, but it is hard to convince the administration that they’re not helping to make real men of you. We point to the 99% of colleges who do without the students marching around with empty guns, but they turn a deaf ear.

“In the meantime, don’t let the bastards get you down. There always will be a military science or something else you despise as part of your life. Don’t make whatever it is you despise the cause of hatred or depression. Do your thing as best you can and deal with problems as best you can when they appear, as they will. If your primary undertaking doesn’t satisfy you, then change it. This can be very difficult, but you realize more and more as life goes on that it is brief, so do your damndest to enjoy the time you’re here.”

“Professor, I understand what you are telling us, but it seems to me that there are more people with nutty ideas around than I used to think possible.”

“Well, Dan, the problem is that everyone is a little different and his normal might seem abnormal to you. But he learned through multiple sources, as you did, and considers whatever you think peculiar to be perfectly acceptable by his standards. Who is to judge who is right? I enjoy the features of his personality that I think acceptable and try and forget the rest. All of us are a little nutty, but the world would not be possible for us to survive if everyone hated or resented the off-beat features of a personality.

“Well, lunch is served. Let’s change the conversation to food.”

He had brought in or made a lunch that was even better than that served on the athlete’s table, by far, and we talked pleasantly about very little.

In the meantime, the racket next door stopped and, as predicted, again the floor had survived.

We shortly gave our thanks and walked back to our barracks.



The students from the smaller schools caught up with us academically by our second year, and the competition was intense. Ben Yarborough, much to his surprise and ours, did well. He had kicked the mule hard enough so that he could manage it just as he had told us.

My problem began with quantitative analysis. Dr. Lippincott picked out a goat in each class to whom he gave particular hell if he fumbled on an oral question or made a laboratory error. The goat was always an athlete, usually a boxer, presumably because he could tolerate the stress of his classroom harassment. By virtue of being a third-string boxer and the only formal athlete in the classroom, I became Dr. Lippincott’s goat of the year. As time went on, I found that there might be advantages to being a goat. On written quizzes, Dr. Lippincott would ask, “Art, what do you think you made on the quiz?” I would think for a while and answer as honestly as I could “80.” “No,” he would say, “you got a ‘79.’ You owe me an ice cream cone.” So I would go to the dairy building and buy the ice cream of his choice. By the next quiz, I responded with “90.” He laughed and said, “No, you’re not that good-’89.” So



*Ben Yarborough*

off I would trot again to the dairy building for an ice cream cone. The rest of the year was the same, and I passed quantitative analysis with a respectable grade. This was in spite of my ham hands, which were damn near useless using the quantitative scales that could weigh a fingerprint. I would have graded myself “A” for effort and “D” for results.



When report cards came in, I found that my grade was determined entirely by examinations and that the ice cream was wasted as a grade-getter.

The great benefit of being the goat was that, from time to time, he was invited to spend weekends at the doctor’s house on the side of a mountain in North Carolina near Highlands. It was a rustic wooden house, all three stories clinging to the mountainside, or apparently so. From the bedroom assigned to me, there was a view through the trees of a blue lake down below. The bottom floor contained a living room and large fireplace designed to cook steaks and a small kitchen.

The lake was lovely but, since we were invited only during the cold months, the water was too cold for swimming. The first time I went down to it one October, I stuck my right index finger into it, and it almost froze solid on the spot. From then on, I walked along the lakeside carefully protecting other parts of my anatomy.

Bill was alone in the house when I came back and said, "Art, remember the ice cream deals. Never trust someone who promises something that seems to be too good to be true. And we know each other well enough for you to call me Bill."

For all of my life, avoiding ice cream deals has saved me grief.

The weekend guests began to arrive. Bill enjoyed the company of anyone who was bright. In a drawer in his dining room was a box full of wooden clothes pins with the names of anyone who might be invited burned into one side. These were used as napkin rings so that everyone felt that he was someone special. Sitting at the table might be Mr. Woodruff, head of national Coca-Cola, various professors like Fotsie Hunter, and six or seven mountain people who were relatively uneducated except in how to make a living and survive in the mountains, usually separated by miles from their nearest neighbor.



*FRONT ROW (left to right): R. E. Gee, F. W. zurBurg, F. H. H. Calhoun,  
H. L. "Fotsie" Hunter, W. L. (Bill) Lippincott.  
SECOND ROW: G. F. Hawkins, K. R. Aull, B. H. Hodges, M. A. Moseley,  
Peter Carodemos.*

Somehow these diverse people made a lively conversational group. Mr. Woodruff asked Mr. Hollifield, "How is the pig business this year?"

"Well, I ain't no business man, and the money I make depends on the market when they're ready to sell, but so far as the pigs are concerned, they're the best I ever had."

"I'd sure like to see them," said Mr. Woodruff.

"Well, you're welcome anytime you can find time."

Footsie remarked, "I enjoy talking about farm animals, but I'm more concerned about the mess that is developing in Europe."

Mr. McGinty, another guest who ran a small farm, said: "I was in Normandy before the war and in Europe a couple of years after that. The German soldiers were mean, more than they had to be, and believed that they should own the world. Now, after playing nice for thirty years, they're beginning to act like Germans. It would surprise me if, after practicing in Spain, they didn't go to war with France, England, and any other country worth a damn. But, we'll see."

Footsie answered, "I hope you're wrong, but suspect you're right."

Professor Carodemus changed the subject. "I see they're building a parking lot for students. Times must be getting better with the number of student cars increasing."

The conversation went on, and, in the meantime, they devoured the enormous steaks bought from Helen's Sunflower Inn and cooked on the fireplace.

After dinner, the company gradually left, and, by dark, just the two of us were left. I went up to my third-floor room, covered myself with a down comforter that must have been a foot thick, read for a while, smelling smoke from downstairs and from chimneys down at the lake, and fell asleep.

One of Bill's great friends was Helen of the notorious Sunflower Inn, where you could eat, drink and satisfy any other need you might have.

"Where you been, you horny old goat?" Helen greeted us when we had bought the steaks.

"Same old thing. Trying to make little boys like this one

(pointing at me with a straight arm and forefinger) into something resembling a man. It's a tough job."

"I got some girls around who might help."

"No, the boy's parents might have my tail thrown out of school if I let them mess with your girls while he was with me in Highlands. I have enough troubles. What about the usual steaks. I'm having company again tomorrow, so what about eight big steaks?"

"If that's all you need, Bill, you've come to the right place. Just gimme a minute and you'll have the best meat since God made bulls. Hey, I didn't tell you that I was getting married, did I? Remember that old goat who lives up toward Mt. Mitchell—that old goat who comes in here for apple cider that just men like him can drink and walk away? Well, he allowed that he'd like to move here with me. He's made a pile sellin' that rot-gut he makes, and he ain't so bad lookin', and I ain't getting no younger, so I told him damn right. We decided to get hooked up next Sat'day at my place. If you ain't there, you're gonna have a knot on your head the size of a bull's balls."

"Helen, I'm delighted," Bill replied. "Just don't make me the flower boy."

"Drunk as my friends might get, ain't none of them gonna mistake your ugly self for a flower boy or girl. See you Sat'day, professor, and there's your steaks. Have a good time with them friends of yours. When most people has a party, they invite folks most like each other. Damn if you don't do the opposite and git people less like each other than anybody I ever seen, except I ain't seen no black boys yet. But it's your house, so enjoy yourself, and don't let the law get you."

"I'll tell you, Art, that girl throws a mean party, and it will be a wilder wedding. I wouldn't get within a mile of the place without a bullet-proof vest on, and would be reluctant to go even with that. But Helen's a friend, and I suppose I should stick my head in for a second and hope I can stick it back out again."

"Bill, she talks back-woody, but she looks like a nice lady."

“Art, she has a lot of good qualities, but you’ll find out that a lot of pretty ladies aren’t worth a damn. So don’t let a couple of handsome breasts get you into trouble. They’re the leading cause of grief in men.”



We were getting ready for another Sunday dinner. It was my job to build the fire, and there was always a pile of pine logs just outside the kitchen cut just the right size for the fireplace and a pile of kindling alongside that and wood matches on the mantel, so that chore was easy.

When the fire was blazing, the company started to arrive. Bill enjoyed company and the damndest people collected at his house on Sundays for steak and talk. Bill’s hospitality made these diverse people a lively conversational group. The first to arrive was Jed Hollifield. He was tall, slim with a gift for humor but not fashion. He wore an old sweater, no tie, a once-white shirt that looked like it hadn’t been washed for a couple of weeks, shoes that had never been shined and pants never pressed. Mr. Woodruff followed, a typical well-dressed businessman. He began, “Hi, Mr. Hollifield, looks like you got us a great pile of pine for the fireplace.”

“Yup,” Jed replied. “It was dry so I could get into the woods without mud sucking my shoes off. How’s things in Atlanta? Your people convincing everybody that Coca-Cola is good for their sex lives?”

“We haven’t gone that far yet because, I guess, we haven’t had to. We’re doing very well. How’s those pigs I saw last time I was down in the hollow?”

“They’re the hungriest critters I ever seen and won’t be long before they’re the best hams in the mountains.”

“It’s a shame that playful little things like that have to become hams.”

“Well, if we don’t eat hams, we’re going to eat something else before the worms eat us. That’s the way the Lord planned things. All critters live offen other critters. If it wasn’t

that way, there wouldn't be much alive. And, if you look at it, it makes the world keep on forever so far as life is concerned unless we kill too many animals including each other. I'm just helping the Almighty keep us going. The Lord sent manna, and I ain't looking for it to come again soon."

Mr. Woodruff chimed in, "Amen." He continued in a lighter vein, "Why don't us guys just eat corn flakes and Coca-Cola. Then you wouldn't have to plan how to take care of animals and let them take care of themselves."

"Oh, for God's sake," said Bill. "Isn't there something you can gab about except the welfare of pigs and drinking Coke?"

"Maybe we could talk about giving Helen a wedding present. Anyhow, Art, it's time to get the fire started."

Footsie Hunter threw in his comments. "Maybe politics is as amusing as anything to talk about with FDR messing with this gal in Georgia and Eleanor doing good for anybody without a dollar to his name, and here we are talking about pigs and Cokes. Incidentally, you hear 'bout the fire near Helen's? It was allegedly started by a bottle full of kerosene. At last it wasn't in the dense woods, and Helen's friends put it out at the cost of a few burned jackets and a lot of dirt. And old Luke's wife was messing around and got bird-shot in some embarrassing places. That's the making of a Sunday afternoon's conversation, not some damn pigs."

"For God's sake, Arthur, would you please get the fire started, or I'll recite poems in Latin and put a stop to this foolishness. I don't know why you come to Highlands. None of you bother to look out the window and see the lake and the reflections of hills and trees. That's why I come here because it is the loveliest place in God's whole world and Helen gets the best steaks in the state and, I must admit, I cook 'em better than anyone else I know or heard of."

While the meal was cooking, the conversation varied from how FDR was going to ruin the country to the best rifle for deer hunting, to the place for blacks in society, to the importance of the difference in taste between colas so that everyone had a piece of the conversational action.

Afterward, with everyone stuffed, the talk slowly trailed off. I cleaned the table and the kitchen and the company filed out, still talking.

I happily made way to my third-floor bedroom and crawled in under a down comforter about six inches thick and awakened in the morning ready to go back to our Clemson room where I was more comfortable with Dan and Ben than with the potpourri of people in Highlands.