

**CHAPTER THREE:  
GIGGING FROGS AND WAR OF THE WORLDS**



*Company C, Third Platoon*

**W**hen I was in my early teens, I blew the bugle for Boy Scout Troop 21 which represented the Jewish Community Center. It was my ambition to play the trumpet. After consultation with Earl Mazo, a talented violinist, I visited the studio of Mr. Wichman, Charleston's music leader, teacher of all instruments and leader of all bands, and watched Earl with his violin lesson supervised by Mr. Wichman. The music sounded fine to me but not to Mr. Wichman, who whacked Earl on the side of his head with a violin bow. I assumed a note had been missed. Apparently accustomed to this sort of treatment, Earl kept on playing. I looked on with amazement and apprehension and decided on the spot that I would confine my musical efforts to the bugle.

Earl continued playing the violin at Clemson. There was a band, of course, but no orchestra so that he could not continue the violin in a formal way. At the end of each hall of the barracks there was a tile shower and the usual accoutrements for the use of students on the hall. It seemed that the acoustics in this tiled area made it the most pleasant place to play his instrument. So, just

before long roll, we were often treated to Bach, the violin's tones reverberating between the toilets, urinals, and showers.



*Earl Mazo*

“Mazo, what the hell are you doing making all that racket while we’re trying to study?” yelled Waters.

“I thought that I was playing music with my violin.”

“Well, stop all that racket before long roll.”

During this tirade Lucien Vane looked on with interest or, perhaps, something more intense. He said nothing, but it seemed obvious that not only had the violin not disturbed him, but that he was upset with Waters’ irrational aggressive response to an attempt to break the monotony of barracks routine.

Life, then, went on as usual with roll call, none missing, then retreat to one’s dormitory room to study for the next day’s classes and talk to one’s roommate who had run out of conversation after the first week or two, except that particular night. Dan grumbled, “That son of a bitch! He does his best to act like a big shot and usually gets away with it, but that won’t last forever. Some-

body is going to kick his butt and that will be the end of his pseudo-dictatorship. Wish I was big enough to be that guy, but if I confront him, it would only be something else he could brag about. Wish Earl could do it, but he is too intellectual and too peaceful and, in addition, would probably get his violin smashed. So I'll try and jam some more math into my frustrated brain tonight and hope that someone will call his bluff tomorrow."



In addition to low-country cadets from Charleston, there was a crowd of students mostly from John's Island. All belonged to a fraternity called Beta Sigma Chi (Brothers of the Sea Coast). The islanders had strong low-country accents. When I first heard it, and understood it with some trouble, it sounded like Gullah. Then I recognized that they were speaking English with Gullah accents.

One of the Johns Islanders was Ike Grimball, a lanky, bright student with a yen for doing in Clemson the same things that amused him on the island. He was a hunter, a boatsman, enjoying everything in the outside world.



*Ike Grimball*

One twilight he came into our room with a pair of forked spears in his hands.

“What in God’s name are they?”

“Man,” he replied, “you never giggered frogs? You city boys don’t know what’s good. Come on, lemme show you. They’re in the college pond. You’ll see.”

Ike handed me a gig, and with very little hesitation I followed him. Couldn’t be much wrong with killing a frog.

He loped off behind the chemistry building, down a dirt road I’d never noticed before, at the end of which was a lake, the college water supply.

He had an eagle’s eye and quickly speared a frog. Floating on the surface was a metal can. Ike had one foot on the can and one on land when he speared his second frog. An alarm sounded! “Do, Jesus!” Ike exclaimed. “I stepped on the low water alarm. Let’s get up a tree. They sure gonna catch us on the road.”

Fortunately, there was a large oak nearby and we climbed behind a high limb hoping that whoever investigated wouldn’t spot us. Sure enough, a man walked from around the lake, looked casually around and went back to wherever he had come from. Obviously, students had swiped frogs before, and losing a couple more didn’t bother him. Frogs were not considered a university asset.

We waited a reasonable length of time, quietly climbed down to earth and jogged back toward the campus.

“Now, let’s eat ’em.”

“Where you gonna cook a frog? I don’t think that even you would eat one raw.”

“Lemme show you.” It was just after supper, and the back door of the kitchen was open. Ike had obviously done this before. He quickly found a small frying pan, and within a few minutes he had two fried frogs, which we took back to my room and ate. That was the first and last frog I ever had anything to do with.

We got back in time for long roll. I wondered what would have happened if the supervisor of the water supply had bothered to look up in the oak tree.

Several days later, I talked to Bill about the escapade. He laughed. “There are big crimes and little ones and giggering a frog is

about as little as they get. But how you had the stomach to eat one of those hopping little things, I don't know. Fried, sautéed, baked, or broiled, I think that they are in a class with things you done ate, not something you're gonna eat.

"Incidentally, even if you had been caught, the worst punishment you would have gotten would have been a talk by a faculty member. Killing a frog, even if he is in the college water supply, doesn't rate even a brief jail sentence, but just a chewing out which might be worse.

"Incidentally, I'm having more guests this weekend. When you help with the steaks, don't even think about frogs. If I even imagine one of those things being around, I'll taste frog-flavored steak."



The next morning, I bumped into Lucien Vane, who wanted to know what had happened to his mail that day.

I was known as the campus mailman. I'd take bags of mail from a second barracks room left by a minion of Mrs. Goodman, the Clemson postmistress. I would then take the bags to the second barracks balcony, read the addressee's name and throw out the letter or package when I saw a raised hand. Crude as it was, the method worked and paid enough so that I could indulge in a weekly 15-cent milkshake at McCollum's.

Answering Lucien's complaint, I told him, "I'm no Ty Cobb, but I throw things toward a raised hand, and, remarkably, I haven't had complaints about lost letters or packages. Today, you just didn't get any. I certainly would have recognized your name if I'd tossed out a letter addressed to you. Today, no mail came through me."

"I write lots of letters to other countries," he said, "and I wonder if the replies ever get out. I know that there was an enormous explosion in Cuba and that, obviously, it had something to do with Batista. The story of the explosion was in the paper, but I don't know whether it was intended for Batista or people who didn't like him."

"I can't help you. Clemson beat P.C.; the Citadel won; and

Sylvia Sydney and Spencer Tracy are playing in a movie in Anderson, but that's not the kind of news you're interested in."

"As a matter of fact, it isn't. My problem is I see trouble and stupidity all over the world. Roosevelt has said that to balance the budget would be a crime against the people. The *News and Courier* editorialized that then there must have been a crime to have balanced our personal or business budgets, a non-answer to a statement that reflects what goes on in the world. And that's better than what I hear from the rest of my correspondents. France hates Germany; the Poles are trying to decide if it is possible to defend against the Germans; the English are trying to be peace-keepers; and the Russians want the whole thing. Doesn't that bother you?"

"I'm interested in Lou Gehrig's completing 800 games at first base and Hubbell out-pitching Van Lingle Mungo. To say that I'm interested only in things I can do something about, that wouldn't be true. There's nothing I can do about the athletes but cheer them on, and that doesn't accomplish much. What happens in the rest of the world is inevitable. If things get worse we'll be in the army.

"Have you talked to the people who were at Ft. McClellan last summer? They were on the firing range with World War I rifles and mortars that were nearly as apt to blow you up as the target. There were no tanks at all. There might have been planes somewhere, but nobody saw one. I'm surprised the pols haven't issued slingshots. Ft. McClellan gave six weeks of 1918 training. It would take God's interference to keep us alive, and He'd have to use several miracles.

"You might be right about things heating up in Europe and our doing nothing to prepare, but Roosevelt and the other politicians in the know have a lot more information than I do. I don't think they would lead us into disaster with no preparation. I'm optimistic because I honestly feel that things will work out."

Lucien Vane replied, "That's the longest oration I've heard from you about anything, ever, not even about the football team. So you are not as unaware as I thought. Tell you what, I'll buy you a strawberry ice cream cone for suggesting that you lost my mail."

That suited me. I'd rather eat ice cream than argue any time.

He said, "But you just watch. Hitler is killing Jews now to get their assets. Watch what he'll do to the rest of Europe when he thinks he's strong enough. If you think my feelings are ambivalent, you're right.

"Come on, man. You know that I know in general what's going on, so let's go and eat ice cream and worry about things we can do something about, like the calculus exam."



I had not seen Bill in several days and things were dull.

We lined up outside our rooms for long roll and Waters was missing. He never missed anything military or the chance to beat a freshman, so it was likely that something significant was wrong. We heard loud, confusing noises coming from below. Ike Grimball went into Waters' open room, and nothing was amiss. He yelled, "What's going on down there?" A voice replied, "Waters is down here on the ground. He's out. Looks like he fell from the window."

There was a sidewalk next to the building, then a grass strip that rose six feet or so until it met the concrete walk that led from second to third barracks. Fortunately, Waters had landed on the grass strip three stories below. We all ran down the steps to see if we could help with the catastrophe. Someone had called Dr. Holtzendorff, and he had sent a pick-up truck with a mattress in the bottom to transport Waters to the university hospital. His arms moved a little when he was lifted into the truck, so at least he was alive.

A few of us, including Lucien Vane, walked to the hospital to tell the students, back in their rooms, what was happening and to listen to the theories as to what had happened.

Waters was big, strong, aggressive and certainly did not seem to be a suicidal candidate. He also had the habit of wandering into empty rooms to pick up small items that might have been of some use to him or to embarrass the room's resident. He had

too much good sense to lean out of a third-floor window, lose his balance and fall, although this seemed the popular opinion. Then, there was the idea that he was pushed out of the window, but none of us was strong enough to try.



*What goes up must come down, let's don't go up now!?!?*

When could it have been done? We were gathering for long roll at the time standing at the doors to our rooms, which would have made violence difficult.

The Clemson police, represented by an officer named Smith, appeared and took fingerprints around the room. He found that at least a dozen cadets had touched tables, chairs, walls and

windows but that all had reason to be there. No strange prints appeared.

The discussion went on into the night until we were all exhausted and, finally, the last man had gone to bed.

Bill had heard of the catastrophe and believed that with the almost universal animosity of the student body and no immediate clues, the fall would remain a Clemson mystery.

Everything seemed to start at long roll. One night, we missed the radio introduction to a piece of fiction warning that men from Mars in a space ship were on the way to earth to take over the planet. The possible landing place was not known, but its general direction was toward the New Jersey and New York area. The presentation was in typical radio-news-story mode without hysteria.

We had no reason to disbelieve the story except for common sense, which none of us seemed to have at the time.

Earl Mazo, Ed Schmidt (who lived on our floor and who was from New Jersey), and I raced with a group of three cadets to the first floor, where rifles and ammunition were stored. We armed ourselves with the rifles, stuffed our pockets with ammunition and headed for the parade ground, where we could view the cloudless sky and any space ship that might be headed toward Clemson. Schmidt, a loyal Jersey man, knew that a bus for New Jersey would make its stop at the Clemson downtown station and took off toward the bus to protect the northeastern United States from the invaders. It was at the bus station that he learned the truth.

Earl and I, heroes beyond belief, stood ready with rifles pointed at the sky, ready to destroy the ship before Clemson was attacked. This went on about five minutes when a loud voice came from the area of the third-floor barracks.

“Get the hell in here and put those rifles where they belong!”

We were astounded, and wondered whether a man from Mars had avoided us and, surreptitiously gaining entrance to the barracks, was trying to avoid shooting and, perhaps, wanted to take us back to Mars. The voice began again.

“Get back in here! There are no men from Mars coming.

That was a radio program aimed at jackasses like you!" This time the voice sounded like our first sergeant's. So Earl and I cautiously approached the barracks and went to the gun room, where we found a group of guys laughing at us.

"That was an Orson Welles story that scared half the school," we were told. We just missed the announcement of the program at long roll, and guys swallowed it whole. Back on the floor, we received more ribbing and finally took refuge in our rooms.

The next morning, I told Bill what a fool I'd been.

"Well," he said, "you're absolutely right. You were a jack-ass, but it could have been worse. Someone might have been hurt or killed with you and your cohorts holding loaded rifles and pointing them at an imaginary target. So thank your lucky stars that the only thing hurt was your dignity. If I were you, I'd try to forget it and go on about your usual duties."

Since there seemed no alternative, I went to class, did the usual military things, and did my usual business with nothing hurt but my pride.



Dan had been attracted to a very pretty girl from Anderson and was seriously considering marrying her. He thought he would like to talk to someone about marriage and, of all people, decided on the single Bill. He was too bashful to talk to me and would have gotten no information other than that which I had garnered from books.

"Well, Dan," said Bill. "You've probably come to the wrong man. All I know about marriage I've seen in the relationships of my friends. But there are a couple of things about women I learned as a young man that might be helpful.

"In the first place, we are attracted to women because they have pretty faces, lovely breasts and curvaceous behinds that you'd like to get your hands on. I've been through that desire multiple times. If you are lucky, the gal you pick will have all three.

"Marriage begins with sex and should because that's the

reason for marriage. But not many marriages survive because of sex alone. As you know, half end in divorce.

“The most important thing about picking a woman to live with is not the fun of going to bed. You can have intercourse without marriage, but you can’t have a happy marriage unless you and the lady have a lot in common. I’d pick a wife because she can survive with my screwy friends and peculiar habits and who can put up with my talking shop at home. She would have to put up with my religion or lack of it.

“On the other hand, you must adjust to her peculiarities and survive her social desires. A happy marriage can exist with a woman who loves parties or one who would rather stay at home. The important thing is to pick someone with enough in common so that you can live happily together when the sexual desire begins to fade, and that’s an old man’s advice with no personal experience with marriage.”

Dan was not aware of anything that Bill told him, but he was impressed by the organization and thought that comprised the advice from a senior faculty member who was organized about even minor matters and more thoughtful about major matters.

There was no doubt that he was strongly emotionally attached to his contemplated fiancée by a pretty face, magnificent breasts, a fanny, and even more personal areas that he loved to touch. He could be sure that the first few years of marriage would be sexually magnificent.

But what else did they have in common? She was from a small town. How well would she get along with the other wives in a large city? She was not a particularly model dresser, and most of the wives were fashionable and might be unsympathetic to someone who didn’t dress with style. On the other hand, his girl might enjoy changing her pattern and dressing along with the most stylish wives, or she might think that attention to dress superficial and elect to stay her old self.

Would she feel at home with the variety of people that he brought home, some of whom would be Bill’s mountain friends or the much more sophisticated head of the Coca-Cola company and probably other business leaders as well? Would she feel at

home talking to that variety, or would she be unhappy with them and with him for inviting them? Was she a person who rigidly followed the tenets of her religion, or would she be unhappy with his inability to adjust to the rigid requirements of whatever church she chose to join after marriage? On the other hand, could he happily survive multiple parties or live with a woman who preferred staying at home?

All of these questions should be at least looked at before marriage, and Dan decided to postpone proposal and enjoy their present relationship until it was clearer what they had in common other than sex.