

**CHAPTER EIGHT:
LAST WORDS: “FROM RABBITS TO REASONS”**



Bill Lippincott

But life picked up with an invitation from Bill Lippincott to Highlands. This time, however, I was invited as a faculty member, not a student who was a first string basketball player. The other faculty had not changed and the conversation with local men continued to center around guns, birds and rabbits.

“Hey,” said Dr. Hunter, “you use a shotgun on squirrels? All I’ve ever used was a 21.”

“I can understand why,” replied a local inhabitant. “We shoot to eat. There’s no Piggly Wiggly nearby, and if there were, we couldn’t afford to buy much. But don’t think that we are deprived. Homemade bread would cost a fortune if you could buy it, but you can’t. Mountain apples are the best in the world and we don’t have a mess of people curious about everything we do. We

live like we do because we like it. Bill has a house on this mountain because he thinks that living here is good, and I'll bet that if he quit teaching, he'd live right here."

While the talking was going on, I was busy eating steak cooked by a 6-foot-5-inch basketball player who was having as nice a time as I did way back yonder when I was a student. He had one advantage. Because of his height, he got the big bed with the thick quilts, and I was demoted to a smaller bed and shared a toilet with the rest of the faculty.

So the conversation went from rabbits to reasons for fluctuations in Coca-Cola stock. Peter Carodemus, a chemistry teacher, heard that Waters, by now a graduate student, was in trouble with the administration. I was not aware of the details. I wondered, of course, why he had not had trouble before but, remembering my black and blue bottom from my freshman year, was not unhappy that Waters was in trouble.

Dr. Hunter added that he remembered that Waters was a bully and troublemaker who knew whom to bully and to whom to kowtow. Bill remarked that Waters had tried to pass chemistry by catering to his instructor but, actually being bright, passed the course by the skin of his teeth.

The conversation went on for an hour or so when everyone decided that sleep was in order. In spite of the fact that I no longer had the room of honor, I slept well and awoke in time to take a walk around the lake before breakfast and return to school.

The next morning, things in the Registrar's Office seemed the same, an efficient organization created by Gus Metz. There was no talk of Waters, who, after all, was one of many cadets in trouble for one thing or another, from theft to raising Cain after long roll.

Late in the afternoon, Tirezah had organized a bridge game with a couple from Atlanta. The man had been sent by the Postal Service to be certain that the Lucien Vane Rogers mail incident had been thoroughly investigated. He admitted that the Rogers' incident was minor trouble but that it was the responsibility of the school to take action.

The afternoon went along pleasantly enough, but I was

still curious to find out what the investigator knew about the case. After the bridge game, Tirzah and I dropped by McCollum's drugstore and ice cream parlor. Margaret McCollum was working and wanted to know whether we had heard the news. Extracting information from her was like pulling a tooth, slowly. She knew that we were anxious to find out what happened, and gossip in the drugstore furnished more information than the investigator could. The truth seemed to be that Waters was seen entering Rogers' room while he was out, searching the room and finding a key in it. Waters believed that the key was somehow related to the affairs of the school. Waters reported this finding to his company commander, who promptly gave the key to the administration.

All of the drugstore gossip proved to be true. Waters had, indeed, ransacked the room until he found the letter and the key and gave it to his company commander. He told the reviewing officers that all of the story was true. However, he said, his only motivation was to save the school embarrassment, though he was vague when it came to what sort of embarrassment a cadet might cause, even if he knew more than his teachers. Waters was asked whether being knocked down was reason for vengeance. He replied that he did not hold grudges and that, of course, the parade episode had nothing to do with robbing the room.

The testimony of his company mates was all negative, indicating that he was a domineering bully who would get by with whatever opportunity be found. In due course, he was dismissed from Clemson. During the trial he had no defenders. Tirzah and our bridge-playing friends were all for Lucien Vane. During the trial, Lucien Vane was subject to considerable stress because of the mysterious key that, it was rumored, might somehow damage Clemson's reputation.

I talked to Lucien Vane during his inquisition, and he said, "I have done nothing wrong and am accustomed to students' reactions to rumor. This sort of behavior caused me to increase my strength (that only you know about). None of them have accused me of anything but have protected themselves from association with a possible criminal. I am, of course, unhappy that my classmates and I are even further alienated, but that will disappear with

time."

Once Waters was dismissed, all investigation came to an end. There was no mention of the cadet who fell from his barracks window. That had been forgotten, and I was the only member of the corps who knew what might have happened, but that will always remain my secret postulation.

Finally, the months of working with the registrar and playing bridge with Tirzah, Huff and Margaret were over and it was time to get ready for medicine.



Someone once asked why I went to medical school. For I did not have a burning desire to be a doctor; rather, it was because the hodgepodge of courses that I elected made me eligible to study medicine. Moreover, there was nothing else I was interested in.

So I left Clemson well prepared for graduate work though irritated by the fact that the school was nationally known only for its athletic teams. Academically, however, then and now, the school is tops, and much of the country runs on expertise originating there.

Tirzah and I remained friends and nothing more, chiefly because of irreconcilable religious differences.

Lucien Vane finished first in our class and disappeared. I have not heard from him since.

Shortly after I left Clemson, Bill Lippincott suddenly died. He was responsible for good advice as well as those memorable times in the mountains.

I have never returned.