

## THE EDITORS INTRODUCE . . .

### *James Hines*

**J**AMES HINES' short story, "Will Whomper's Last Sermon," marks THE MERCURY's introduction of what we feel to be one of the country's most promising and sincere natural writing talents. For a closer view of the young author, we let Mr. Hines speak in his own words. . . .

"I am twenty-four years old. Now at present I am working in the Chicago Steel Mills where I have been for two years, writing in my spare time. I plan on writing a book about the steel mills. I am building me a little writing place back in Horse Branch, Kentucky, where I was born, and I plan on going back there and devoting my time to writing.

"I spent the first sixteen years of my life in the Kentucky hills. I ran away from home or my father kicked me out. My father can't read or write. My grandfather can't read or write. And they didn't like my reading. They said I was lazy. I was in Evansville, Ind., Chicago, Atlanta, Memphis, Los Angeles. I worked in Hollywood, a minor judge on a Heart's Desire radio program, also in California clearing forest trails. I worked as an electric welder, bolt and nut machine operator, deck-lay

man, blueprint-clerk, and a number of other jobs in the Steel Mills.

"I attended the University of Kentucky for almost two years and left without money and without grades. I took night classes in night school here and there. I went to the library. I got my first typewriter when I was thirteen years old, worked in the lumber camps and worked in hayfields to pay for it. I suppose I've always wanted to be a writer, to write, and have always done this. I believe education is where you find it. I was in the army for a while. I have traveled around by train, by bus, by plane, by boat, and hitch-hiked and hopped freight trains.

"I took a short course in Creative Writing under A. B. Guthrie, Jr., at the University of Kentucky. Guthrie said I was no good and he gave me a C in his course. He did admit that I'd come someplace, go someplace, but he didn't see how I managed to do it.

"I've had an interesting life. I've written some stories that have appeared in the Western and farm magazines, not anything important. I feel swell-headed having a story in THE MERCURY."

James Hines

# Will Whomper's

## Last Sermon

A STORY

I KNOCKS ON the door of Uncle Will Whomper's cabin at Muddy Water Forks on Skelton Creek. Uncle Will meets me at the door with a gun in his hand.

"Lo, Burlap," he says, as he eases the hammer down on his forty-five. "Come in and jine me in a drink and listen to my sermon I'm a-workin' on."

I follow him into the shanty.

"I'm a Man of God now," says Will. "I'm thru' fightin' them Pryors with guns. Yessir, I'm a Man of God. I'm a-trustin' the Lawd to the limit. He'll give me Power to whip 'em."

Uncle Will is one of them fighting Whomper clansmen who have been having war with the Pryor tribe, who have lived up Skelton Creek, ever since early bunches of both families settled here in Kentucky in 1854.

I sit down on a block of wood that

Will offers me for a seat. Sitting down is a dangerous business. Will has only one chair and it has the back out of it. He has a block of wood turned upside down that serves as chairs for any company that he might have. Uncle Will don't care, as he is an old bachelor.

"Have a sample of my Honorable Herbs?" Will pulls a black and white stone jug from under the bed covers of his bed, holds it up to his ear, shakes it, and hands it to me.

I turn up the jug and take a deep swallow. "This is good lickin'," I says, smacking my lips. "Make it your ownself?"

"Nawsir," Will says. "Bought it from the Martin boys up Cat Track Hollow."

I light my pipe and take a deep drag of smoke to get the taste of moonshine liquor out of my mouth. I can feel the stuff going down in my insides. It feels like someone is