



Who's Afraid of L.D. Brown?

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Harper's magazine held a kind of show trial the other day at the National Press Club. The burden of the apparat's labored efforts was that the *New York Times's* Jeff Gerth gravely exaggerated the Clintons' wrongdoing in his pioneering reportage of their shaky Whitewater Development partnership with James C. McDougal of the failed Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan. Bearing in mind that the *Times* is famously sympathetic to the Democratic Party, one has to wonder why it would be turning on a Democratic president with charges that, according to *Harper's*, are almost fabrications. Actually *Harper's* nit-picking over Gerth's work does nothing to discredit Gerth or his reporting. The evidence that he has amassed clearly reveals very questionable dealings by the Clintons and the McDougals.

One of the charges raised by the Clintons' defenders at the *Harper's* show trial, and by other Clinton apologists in and out of the administration, is that "the press is out to get" Bill Clinton because he is doing so many progressive things. Well, we have had other progressive Democratic presidents, and they never found themselves entailed in the vast web of scandals that have been discovered by the press this past year. For that matter, even the hellish Republicans have not faced allegations of campaign finance violations, bank fraud, real estate fraud, obstruction of justice, trafficking

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in government jobs, and, as raised in the *Economist* magazine, dealings in illicit drugs. At least Republican administrations have not faced all these allegations at once.

Actually, it is not the press that is out to get the Clintons but the Clintons who are out to control the press. The October 31 issue of *Time* magazine reports that "David Kendall, Bill Clinton's private lawyer, has been working very, very hard to keep Whitewater out of the headlines. On Sunday, October 16, he flew from Washington to New York City to persuade ABC News not to air a piece about Arkansas state trooper L.D. Brown, who says he has given information to Whitewater investigators that may help substantiate a former Arkansas municipal judge's claim that Clinton pressured him into making a

fraudulent small-business loan." Kendall is not the only one putting pressure on the media. My spies report that the tireless George Stephanopoulos recently was hounding the *Washington Post* to treat a news story unflattering to the president just so. And of course Betsey Wright, Clinton's loyal henchperson, is always on the prowl to see that unfavorable news stories are spiked and that those who claim to have knowledge of the Clintons' errancies are maligne.

As the ABC News story on L.D. Brown has not yet been broadcast, though it was ready about the time Kendall flew to New York, what have the Clintonites been saying about Brown that has kept the piece off the air? Once again I resort to my spies. They tell me that Betsey Wright told ABC that Brown is a "pathological liar." ABC found that the charge was false. Brown is an experienced police officer, one of the best state troopers in Arkansas, and the possessor of a file abundant with superlative commendations, some from Governor Bill Clinton, one from Dr. Joycelyn Elders.

Then ABC was told by Kendall that Brown failed a psychological test. ABC went to Brown's boss, Colonel Tommy Goodwin, retired director of the Arkansas state police, and was told the charge was false. All commissioned officers had to take the test, which Goodwin confirmed Brown passed easily. Now the charges became lurid. ABC was asked to look into the death of Brown's mother, the implication being that Brown might have had a hand in it.



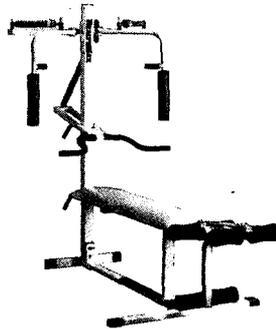
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ABC discovered that the mother died in a domestic firearms accident twenty-three years before, when Brown was a boy. The next charge was that in the mid-1980s Brown flunked a CIA exam. Brown produced letters demonstrating that he was nominated to a CIA position and obviously had done well on all CIA examinations.

Of course, these last two charges had to come from none other than Brown's erstwhile boss, who knew him well back in the 1980s—Bill Clinton. The last one suggests that Clinton has actually sent aides back into Brown's CIA personnel file for dirt on him. This would not be the first time that Bill Clinton got involved in attempts to muzzle the press or shape news stories. It is widely known that in 1993, when Clinton got word that troopers from his

security detail were talking to the press, he picked up a White House telephone and called trooper Danny Ferguson. All Washington was amazed that he made that call. Now that he has put his lawyer up to making false allegations against trooper Brown, Washington ought to be equally aroused.

Finally, the press corps might begin to wonder why Bill Clinton is so alarmed about the testimony of L.D. Brown. What does he think Brown might say? And why after so many of the false charges against Brown have been refuted is ABC still reluctant to broadcast its story on Brown? One thing I am fairly confident of is that the answer to these questions and to the questions raised by Jeff Gerth will all come out, and soon. □

of function for the CIA. Too late, the CIA discovered that Seal was still a drug merchant. Then, according to Seal's associate, "the Dixie Mafia was blackmailing the CIA" and for a while drug shipments became rampant. Evans-Pritchard has documents implicating Arkansas authorities at Mena, and one of his witnesses claims Arkansas state troopers saw him fly drugs in the state.

Clinton's attempt to distance himself from Mena appears disingenuous. What Clinton knows is unclear, but he must know more than he told McClendon. There were at least three inquiries into drug traffic at the airport and all appear to have been obstructed. The first, a joint investigation involving the Arkansas State Police (your state was not involved, Bill?) and the Internal Revenue Service, lasted from 1985 to 1988. The IRS investigator, Bill Duncan, claims that important evidence was denied the grand jury. He quit the Treasury in protest. Another investigator, Russell Welch, suffered a mysterious bout of anthrax poisoning. His report is in the possession of the *Sunday Telegraph*, as are supporting documents from the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Another investigation was begun in 1988 through the General Accounting Office at the behest of Arkansas congressman Bill Alexander. After that investigation foundered, Alexander tried another investigation involving Congress and the Arkansas attorney general's office. Again the investigations were obstructed.

The Arkansas depicted in the London *Sunday Telegraph* is a sordid place. By 1986, Evans-Pritchard writes, "there was an epidemic of cocaine contaminating the [state's] political establishment from top to bottom." He claims that Clinton pal Dan Lasater "gave parties at which cocaine would be served like hors d'oeuvres and sex was rampant." He claims that some of these revels are documented in police records, and that "Bill Clinton was in frequent attendance." Now I wonder where those "police records" might be, and will there be more investigations into Mena airport? For some reason Bill Clinton attracts an awfully wide range of allegations for a man professing to be a moral paragon. □

Mena Spirited

At his press conference on October 7, President Bill Clinton momentarily took on a ghostly pallor when queried by that stalwart of the Washington press corps, Sarah McClendon. She asked him about nefarious activities that took place in the 1980s at the Mena airport in southwest Arkansas. She claimed that the Bush administration and the CIA established an operation there to ship arms to the contras. Drugs got involved. McClendon's question was not the most carefully worded, but the gist was that the CIA was flying arms through Mena to the contras. When the airplanes came back they carried drugs into Arkansas. McClendon wanted to know what Clinton knew about these dark doings.

In the idiom of Arkansas, Bill must have said to himself, "Well, ah'd lahk ta die." With typical Clintonian chutzpah he approached the question boldly, implying that all sorts of red-hot information was about to tumble forth: "Well, let me answer that question." And then he said he knew nothing. Nobody told him anything. It was a federal matter, not a state matter: "The state really had next to nothing to do with it. . . . We had nothing—zero—to

do with it, and everybody who's ever looked into it knows that." Then the color crept back into his boyish cheeks.

Unfortunately two days later somebody who has "looked into it" wrote a lengthy report alleging that officials in Bill Clinton's Arkansas knew a good deal more about drug and arms shipments in Mena, Arkansas, than Clinton allowed. The writer is the indefatigable Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, Washington bureau chief for the *Sunday Telegraph* of London. Writing in the October 9 *Telegraph*, he reports that Arkansas was a "major point for the transshipment of drugs" coming into the United States from abroad in the 1980s. In the middle of the decade, Arkansas, he asserts, "was perilously close to becoming a 'narco-republic'—a sort of mini-Colombia within the borders of the United States."

Then Evans-Pritchard summons his evidence. He has spoken with a convicted drug pilot who claims that he flew cocaine into Arkansas from abroad. He quotes an associate of the infamous drug smuggler, Barry Seal, who admits that Seal did indeed bring vast amounts of drugs through Arkansas while performing some sort



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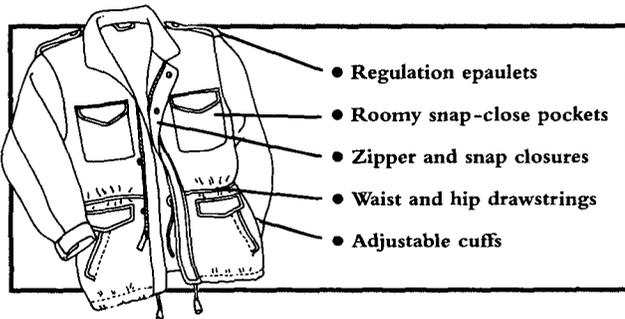
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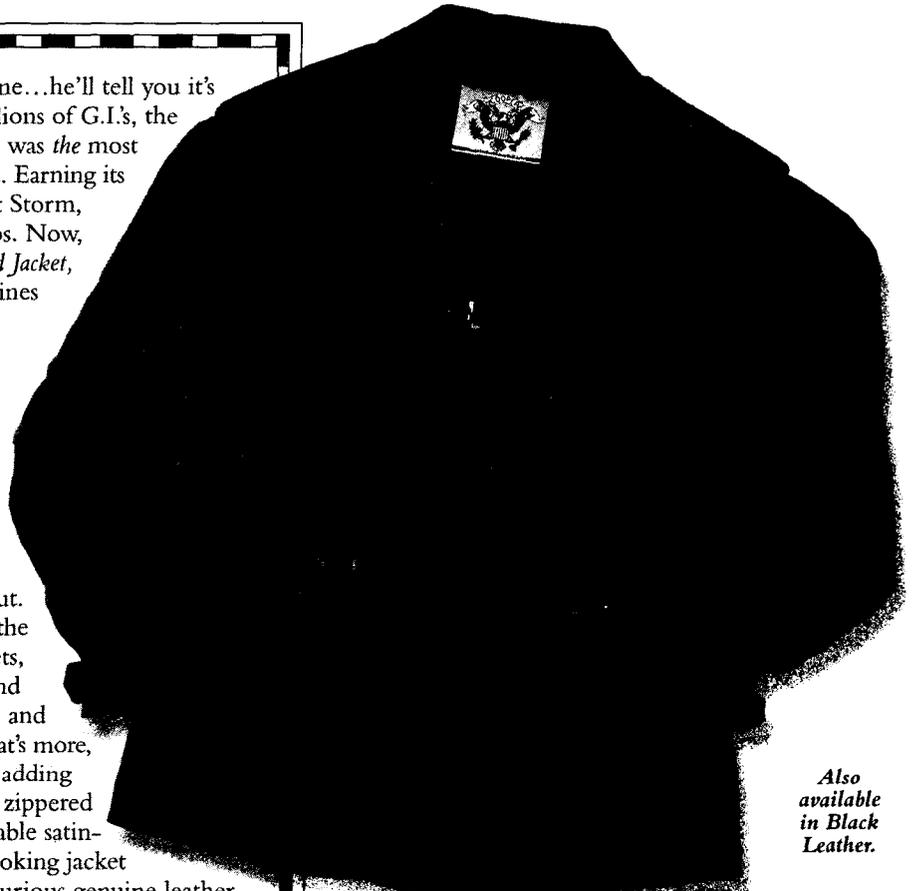
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Renaissance Weakened

by Tom Bethell

I don't bother much with the newsweeklies anymore. Jazzy graphics and ever-larger photographs try to disguise their predictable rehash of the conventional wisdom, and to compete with television. But this only accentuates their irrelevance. The other day, nonetheless, a *Time* cover story really did catch my eye: "Black Renaissance: African-American Artists Are Truly Free at Last."

Here was no bad news about the inner city. *Time's* team (themselves all black, judging from the photograph) had found that black artists were embarking "on one of the most astonishing outbursts of creativity in the nation's history." First, there was Quotapoet Maya Angelou at the inauguration, then Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize for literature. Now there's much more, including choreographer Bill T. Jones's "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin," depicting the evils of slavery. Admittedly, during a performance last summer, Jones "dropped his pants and exposed himself while standing near two children." But that was for Art's sake. He is in the business of shocking people, *Time* reassured—"trying to test the boundaries of propriety." That's okay, then. In a companion essay, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. of Harvard's Afro-American Studies Department concluded that "today's may truly be the renaissance to end all renaissances."

I went to a record store in Georgetown in search of this new outburst of creativity. As I entered, something not too bad at all was coming over the loudspeaker. But it turned out to be a Bobby Bland oldie, circa 1962. To say that record stores have become venues of nostalgia is putting it mildly. In the realm of American music, the treasures of the last seventy years have been engraved compactly on silicon, whole libraries and eras of music miniaturized,

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shrink-wrapped, and stored in racks. One is reminded obscurely of the monastic scriptoria, in which monks assiduously copied the wisdom of the ancients onto parchment, even as the Dark Ages approached. This impression is strengthened in the classical-music departments of large stores today, where the shelves are filled with Gregorian chant, and new recordings on old instruments more precisely capture the performance standards of earlier centuries. It's enough to make you wonder if we are preparing for our own Dark Age.

Or renaissance to end all renaissances. I asked the shop assistant, a young black woman, if she could help me find one or two of the best black popular groups; something current, something that everyone was listening to, admiring, talking about. She gave me an odd look—something about my request didn't quite "compute," evidently. But she recommended two groups, one called Boyz II Men, the other Public Enemy. The latter album was illustrated with a skeleton holding a pistol to its head, and was entitled *Muse Sick-N-Hour Mess Age*. (Hey, that's not bad: *Music and our Message: The Muse is sick in our messy age*.)

If I may be permitted a personal digression: in a way it was black culture that drew me to America. The music specifically. I was intrigued that the European classical tradition had petered out in the nineteenth century (discounting the avant-garde stuff as a muse-sick corpse, kept going by grants, governments, and music departments), and that something new and "democratic" had magically reappeared in the United States; the year of renaissance being almost exactly 1900. As far as we know, jazz, ragtime, and the blues all started up in different places at the same time. There was a peak at some point in the first half of the twentieth century—no one quite knows when, exactly. In World War II, recordings were made in New Orleans

dance halls of black bands nonchalantly playing a three- or four-part counterpoint as complex as the Brandenburg Concerti, and similar to them in other respects. (Recently this was issued on CD—check out Bunk Johnson and George Lewis on the American Music label.) Just about all the best musicians throughout this period were black.

I arrived in 1962—too late. Some of the old timers were still alive, even playing, in New Orleans, but they couldn't tell you much. They knew nothing about "art" and wouldn't have wanted to talk about it even if they did. We know less about the origins of jazz and the blues than we do about the life of Shakespeare. The crucial early years, c. 1895-1915, are a blank; no recordings, and hardly anything written down. All we have are a few recollections and hazy photographs.

But in 1962 there was still some pretty good music around. John Lee Hooker was playing in Chicago at or near his peak. On the hit parade: Esther Phillips's "Release Me," which today evokes a golden age. Music in the black churches was often outstanding, and what a pity more recordings were not made in the churches, as opposed to studios. At that point you could walk around the black neighborhoods of cities like New Orleans in the middle of the night if you wanted to. I distinctly remember the change—I think it was in 1966 or 1967. I made some recordings of the old-timers myself in those years, and I was looking for a particular musician. The old drummer Cie Frazier, then playing at Preservation Hall, told me that my man lived in the Desire housing project. But he told me not to go there because it was unsafe—"worse than a gang of rattlesnakes." Three years earlier I had been out there many times.

One unfashionable statement I am prepared to make is that black music, pre-civil rights, was artistically greatly superior to what came later. Explaining the cultural dynamics of this change