

Morning View Kentucky
8 January 1958

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

I am in hearty accord with your dislike for the ugliness of rock & roll. Furthermore, I am downright allergic to the burp-beller-gag-gurgle-strangle-and-hiccup vocalizing therewith. Seems pathetic that, after spending untold centuries perfecting language as a means of communication, we should now revert to the animal sounds of our neolithic ancestors.

Your mentioning the inherent music of the deep South reminded me of a moment of long-ago enchantment which will forever remain vividly beautiful.

Weather information to pilots was exceedingly sketchy in those days, and violent rain storms trapped me in a little plane over the desolate swamp lands of the Carolinas. I bumped and bounced along barely above the tops of the tall long-leaf pines, peering hopefully for open ground through the sheets of water that drove against the windshield. My map showed a minor railroad a few miles to the left and I worked toward it in search of cultivated fields.

I had not been following its single track very far when I passed over a tiny town, and just on the other side of it, found a grassy field where I could land safely. After tying the butterfly to a convenient fence, I went spattering through the smothering rain down the narrow, sandy road to seek shelter in the sodden little town over which I had just flown. In those distant days, the arrival of an airplane at a small town was usually cause for excitement; but no one had noticed me in the storm.

The town possessed a tired general store and a railroad station. The station was the only building which had ever known paint, and that had not been recently. The main street consisted of the railroad and the little sandy road, running side by side. Along the road side, houses of a few white folks sat in wide, desolate yards, and the rest of the town was made up of the little cottages of the colored people who worked in the surrounding cotton fields and endless pine woods. No large town was near, so I arranged to stay in a home and settled down to wait out the rain.

The rain stopped about dusk and shortly thereafter the clouds quickly scattered, revealing a rising full moon. The evening was warm and still and rich with the scent of pine burning in stove and fireplace, with the odor of unseen flowers, and of the moist earth itself. Years before, some one had planted a row of swamp magnolias in front of the houses, and they stood now in majestic prime. Moonbeams glittered on their satiny leaves and touched the great, pale bowls of their bloom