



**WITH A LITTLE PORK**

**FROM OUR FRIENDS**

**by Barbara Herbert**

When Jack Weatherford came to court in July 1970, he was probably the best liked and most trusted person in the movement in South Carolina. He testified that his job for the previous year had been to infiltrate and report on radical political activities in the state. At the time of his testimony, he had just been accepted as a special applicant to the Venceremos Brigade. He had applied late (probably for the FBI) and had passed special screening by people in Atlanta and New York.

For me it was an extraordinary betrayal, mingling personal with political treachery. Jack had been one of my closest friends for a year. He had first played country music for me, taught me about Southern foods, even pretended I was his wife so that we could both visit his brother in jail.

His testimony in that trial resulted in a conviction and an 18 month sentence. His investigations may have helped convict three coffeehouse operators as "public nuisances"; they are appealing six year sentences. At least ten more of us face possible maximum sentences of 15 years each, rising from a university incident he helped provoke.

Columbia, South Carolina could be Anytown, Amerika. It has about 100,000 inhabitants. The black poor live in pockets sprinkled through the city, many on dirt roads without any municipal services like sewage or trash collection. The white poor tend to cluster near the mills, which are non-union and horribly oppressive. The mill owners and moneyed people manipulate the racism of the whites for their own ends. There are vestiges of the Klan, and violence is always near the surface. There is no liberal tradition.

Columbia sees itself as a cosmopolitan center in a country of rednecks — people so oppressed that they can't comprehend their oppression. Columbia is the state capital. Besides the state legislature, it harbors the state university and Fort Jackson, a major military installation and an economic pillar of the town.

Columbia, and places like it all over the country, supply the bodies to execute the Man's imperialism. Men volunteer to go into the Army (though not as much as before the Indochinese War) out of duty and boredom and lack of other possibilities, and their women, wives and mothers, proudly display gaudy, sentimental silk kerchiefs embroidered 'MOM' and 'When I die I'm sure to go the Heaven 'cause I served my time in Viet Nam.'

Those kinds of rednecks make up Jack's people. Because he's gone to college, he's a step above them, and he knows it. He is also more sophisticated. He is opposed to the war, and (now) describes himself politically as a liberal. He had relatives among the people who overturned the schoolbuses in Lamar, South Carolina last spring as a protest against integration.

Weatherford is the oldest of a poor, white, South Carolina army family. He worked his way through college in three years, always fearing his dad would be killed in Viet Nam and the burden of supporting the other kids would be on him. He was the first in his family to get a B.A. After college he served six months in the National Guard, married, made a downpayment on a house, went to work for the State Department of Mental Health.

In January '69, Jack went to the Nixon counter-inaugural, apparently at the height of his dissatisfaction with electoral politics. Shortly thereafter, he split with his wife, began several relationships with men, and got very involved with dope. Then his brother David was arrested with another boy for attempted robbery. The other boy's parents had money; he was released with a suspended sentence. David was held 180 days in pre-trial confinement because he could not raise bail, then given one to eight years. Jack claimed that injustice completed his radicalization. I found it all quite convincing.

We later discovered that sometime during David's arrest and trial, Jack became friendly with Columbia's SuperNarc, and they began a relationship.

Early in the summer of '69, Weatherford was busted for selling acid. The bust became the critical lever in the making of the pig. It is standard procedure to offer a deal — no prosecution in exchange for informing. But Jack got a special offer. The State Law Enforcement Division would hire him to be an undercover agent; they would not prosecute him or the friend he was busted with; they would pay his tuition so that he could build his grade point average for graduate school. They might have used David, already in prison and so completely under their control, as additional pressure. They could have threatened to move David to a less desirable prison, to take away his privileges and/or put him in solitary confinement. They might not have needed any threats.

Weatherford was bored with his old job; he desperately wants the security of a PhD. Too, his field was sociology and this seemed an interesting way to really learn the objective truth about political radicals, he later told me.

Weatherford had perfect qualification for his new role. Because he was covertly homosexual, he had had much practice hiding an important part of his life. He was from the area; people trusted him; his background story was believable. Under other circumstances he might easily have become a radical.

The pigs played on his chauvanism. He could exercise a kind of fatherly responsibility over the lives of innocent and vulnerable people, they told him. His main assignment was to "get Bursey" a local movement brother who had had the audacity to burn the Confederate flag publicly as a protest against racism some months before. In addition, he could help bust the pushers who were ruining people's lives with dope, and perhaps counter the growing radical movement on campus. They promised never to make him testify against or participate in the arrest of a person he knew.

In some ways, Jack represents to me what it would mean to be crazy. His life seems a study in disintegration — categorized in little boxes which do not go together. Being an agent was just one particularly destructive box. My understanding of his pigdom now is as an expression of confused self-hatred — the kind of self-hatred which can come from internalizing oppressor's values. One of his techniques of survival was to develop a very 'together' facade, to repress all the contradictions in his life which might hurt him.

The fundamental contradiction was of course political. In one box he kept all that he knew about the 'problems' of Amerika;

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his family's poverty, the injustice done to David, rampant racism, the War. In another, he kept his belief that with enough school degrees and property he could make a good life for himself.

Similarly with his sexuality. He kept his involvements with men secret and separate from his more acceptable relationships with women.

His participation in dope culture is an even better example. Although he was engaged in a moral crusade against dope he was very much a part of the dope world, sometimes tripping four or five times a week. At one point a close friend and fellow doper worried that Jack would completely flip out he was so heavily into drugs. Around me, however, Jack talked about how destructive drugs like acid and mescaline and feared they could destroy a person's spirit.

I was opposed to drugs for political reasons — I thought they provided an excuse for political busts. Weatherford agreed with that position and may have saved me from a set-up bust. It is ironic, to say the least, that Jack may well have saved me from a dope bust out of friendship, and set me up (by provocation) on political charges out of duty.

Sometimes the contradiction merged on simple hypocrisy, however. As when the city narcs were having a race with the county narcs about making the most dope busts, and Weatherford helped set up several 'grass' busts for his lover in the county division.

If we had known about the contradictions, we might have been alert to the more serious tip-offs that he was an agent. I feel that during many of the first months he was infiltrating us he was moved by much of our analysis. But he was not involved in any sort of consciousness raising; in that time he never made the vital connections between 'abstract' politics and his life.

I remember a conversation we had immediately after Christmas last year, when Jack talked about how useless political effort was, how we should all give up. I was struck at the time by a particular desperation in his voice. I remember the conversation well because it was the last of a series of good conversations we had had through the fall. Although we spent some time together through the winter and spring, we were never again so close. Then I attributed it to increased pressure from external political events. Now I wonder if that conversation (he disappeared to the beach for several days after) marked a turning point. If he had come almost to believe in our radical politics, and had become almost too fond of us to continue being dishonest, he might have had to move our box farther away from his feelings to continue his job.

It is tantalizing to think how close we might have come to converting Weatherford. I tend to believe, if he had been a woman attending consciousness raising all fall we would have won him over. The idea is not far fetched; four men who had originally gone to the UFO coffeehouse as agents for Military Intelligence came forward to testify for the defense. On a main street where merchants went out of their way to bilk soldiers, the coffeehouse had been remarkably non-exploitive and the concern and commitment of the coffeehouse folks had won them over.

After his bust in July, Weatherford did discreet dope busts all summer. He registered at the university in the fall, and then became co-chairman of the local SSOC/SDS group. He seemed really tied into the spirit of the group; he wasn't interested in running things, or being a star; he was always around doing shitwork and talking to people. People respected him; he (accidentally?) recruited some really good people to the movement. He also played on the doubts of the alienated. He helped convince one guy to drop out of school, politics, and our commune.

In January, city, county, and state pigs (probably with federal encouragement) busted the coffeehouse. They arrested the operators, padlocked the door. It was such clear repression that all "fairminded" people in Columbia were outraged. For the next few months most political energy went into defense and efforts to reopen a shop. Jack wasn't very involved with that, although he became very fond of some folks from Boston who came down to help in the emergency. He even asked one woman to stay and live with him.

At the end of 'End the Draft Week,' Weatherford took part in a draftboard trashing. Four guys threw a brick and a can of paint through the draftboard window. The following day, Jack was arrested with Bursey, the brother he'd been sent to get, at the university. The pigs clearly knew exactly what had happened within hours after the action. It was scary, and we were all somewhat shaken. We decided another of the foursome (who wasn't arrested) was an agent (he may well be).

Immediately after Jack's arrest for the draft board action, David was thrown into solitary confinement. It was just at the time he should have been coming eligible for parole. Fifteen days later he was moved to a different prison and released (as it turned out) on special orders direct from the governor. David did not go through the ordinary pre-release procedures.

By the beginning of May, the campus was tense. Students had seen 'John Doe' warrants with names to be filled in after dope busts, state legislators were pressing the school to keep GI's and longhairs out of the student union; the coffeehouse trial had just ended with six-year sentences and \$5,000 fines. Nixon's Cambodian invasion was a last straw. There were explosive rallies and a sit-in; the National Guard was called on campus. Finally, during a rally before university disciplinary hearings, people occupied the Administration Building and trashed the treasurer's office. Weatherford was a major voice urging people to take the building and trash the IBM cards. ~~arm-~~ Damage was not very extensive. The university replaced the cards within a few days.

A film picked up by national TV showed Jack and Walker (the woman he lives with) climbing out a window of the administration building. There followed a series of almost random arrests. I was picked up; Jack wasn't.

After the university explosion I saw little of them. Jack seemed somewhat edgy around me. His talk now was constantly that we needed to change people, not systems. Whenever we talked about my upcoming trial he advised me to split. "They" were sure to get people this time, he said, and we both knew how bad the prisons were from David's experience.

He applied to go to Cuba and was accepted but didn't go at Walker's request. Then in mid-July he was called out of class unexpectedly and put on the stand to convict one of the other participants in the draft board trashing. There is some evidence that he was called to testify as a kind of petty re-crimination because he had refused an assignment to do an investigation of a 'homosexual ring' at the university.

When we first learned of Jack's double role, he took on an aura of SuperPig. There had been few discrepancies in his background, none in his finances. His discovery was largely a fluke? If he had been in Cuba, he might have returned with excellent movement credentials and done more damage.

After he surfaced some of us went to talk with him. We took a lawyer with us because we were apprehensive about talking to the Man — even if he was your friend. Most of what Jack said was standard liberal talk. He saw himself as being responsible for saving the country from the violence of a few wild-eyed crazies and the destruction and chaos they could create. He knew I was sincere, he told me, but so were the fanatics on the other end of the political spectrum. When I said to him, "Jack, you may send me to jail for several years," he responded that perhaps jail would do me good.

He believes the country has problems and that we need change. But it musn't come so fast as to challenge the existing order, at least not before there is an alternative system which is just as workable as the old. After all, he said, we do have the best, most stable and most equitable system of government the world has ever seen.

Too, he said, being an undercover agent is a disagreeable task, but in times like these, when the orderly fabric of Our Nation is threatened, someone must do it. Better to have a liberal than a fascist pig. Liberals have enough integrity not to plant dope on us but not enough to miss the excitement of a provocateur.

The shock of his discovery brought our community closer together. We consciously fought the inevitable paranoia that came with the shock. We knew suspicion is the Man's game, that if we let ourselves be divided by Jack's discovery, we would be letting him do yet more destruction to our community. We came together to talk about Jack; we talked in pairs and groups.

As we talked we found chinks in his story. Perhaps the most serious was that he had been busted on a serious charge (selling acid) and not brought to trial (a sure give-away that he was an informer, at least). His cover had been that he was coming up next session of court. After several sessions we should have been curious. Also, although Jack had served six months active duty in the National Guard, he never attended weekend reserve meetings after his bust. He claimed his drug arrest made him unfit for service, but as he had never been convicted, that was clearly not the truth. Too, David was released from prison without going through the ordinary pre-release procedure. Our ignorance of the workings of the prison system hurt us.

Weatherpeople write of a "yoga of alertness, a heightened awareness of activities and vibrations around us — almost a

new set of eyes and ears." That seems to me very much to capture the spirit of the new security. We have too long been bound by old forms, intense verbal confrontations which tell us more about the emotional responses of people to strain than about certain people's connections to the Man.

We need to develop clear techniques of checking out background facts, and tailing people. We need to be comfortable with those techniques so that we use them efficiently. We should be realistic about energy allotment. We cannot do absolutely those checks on everyone; but when we have suspicions we must be able to check them out.

Many of the people who had boarded at Weatherford's house recalled him going off into his room and typing for hours. As we all talked, we discovered too that he had disappeared for weekends (usually to the beach, ostensibly to "straighten out" his head) at fairly regular monthly intervals.

When we talked about his politics, several of us spoke of being confused about how he integrated his objective, social scientist, school thinking (which included belief in people's natural competitiveness, avarice, and aggressiveness) with his radical political commitment. One woman had accused him of being a spy for the Young Americans for Freedom, but she had never mentioned that to anyone else. Weatherford had once admitted, while tripping with a man he loved, that he had to do a number of dope busts to "pay off" his own. The other man, out of loyalty to Jack, had never told anyone, and when Weatherford told him he was no longer obligated, the other man had believed him.

How might we have caught him? Probably only by tailing him to a weekend meeting or an evening report. But we would only have done that if we had had reason to distrust him, which would only have come through greater responsibility to each other and our common beliefs than to our friend.

My sense is that security ultimately depends on a different mind-set about each other. That it is a measure of our responsibility, care and concern for one another and ourselves that we be upfront about doubts and inconsistencies. We must develop ways of working through honest misunderstandings collectively. Routine background checks are undoubtedly useful; in Jack's case we might have become suspicious from his military or arrest record.

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