

The Legacy of Tom Wolfson  
Cunningham has a boy  
we can never change (rumors) (superstition)  
Pimber road stop  
craft

To folks about, she was like a <sup>cloud of waiting</sup> ghost  
Looking through the <sup>plum branch</sup> fence house across from the  
safe <sup>her husband did</sup> more with living or ashamed or whipped by time  
something from the past. Like <sup>of course</sup> being Mrs. <sup>all</sup> <sup>that</sup> <sup>is</sup>  
Cunningham, she <sup>widow</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>the</sup> only <sup>home born</sup> doctor in Ech. Swano <sup>they</sup>  
Pamphlet County, <sup>then</sup> or <sup>now</sup>, to our <sup>best</sup> knowest, was like being  
the wife of <sup>widow</sup> ~~Elvis~~ <sup>Elvis</sup> ~~more or less~~, or God.

She didn't <sup>get out</sup> in the mid-1950's in <sup>Covington Ga</sup> <sup>Stateville</sup>, kept  
to herself <sup>after the doctor died</sup> <sup>maybe</sup> when we weren't looking <sup>she</sup> had  
the colored man <sup>raised by her & Dr. Cunningham</sup>  
to jump start her <sup>channel</sup> <sup>plain dusty Chevrolet</sup> <sup>Belair</sup> & back it out  
from <sup>under</sup> the shed out back & help her in  
wait <sup>patient</sup> faced for her to get in with her  
black-purse hanging from her wrist to <sup>ride</sup>  
twenty five miles to Valdosta with either of  
them <sup>speaking</sup> <sup>or</sup> <sup>chasing</sup> the expression of  
their <sup>pet</sup> faces. <sup>old, squat & dense fleshed</sup>

Nobody could imagine it anyway. Best-  
what we could imagine was <sup>or</sup> at Sunday  
morning her <sup>maybe</sup> waking from a shallow  
sleep to the double heel clack of <sup>Booth (Boogie)</sup> Tom's her 5  
boys and the wife <sup>like fine yoked oxen</sup> marching up the <sup>high way</sup> <sup>from</sup> <sup>a</sup>  
couple miles south of the city limits & the <sup>little</sup> <sup>farm</sup> <sup>place</sup>  
owned by the <sup>god</sup> doctor

craft  
road stop  
plum branch  
ghost  
cloud of waiting  
all that is  
left of their  
career  
a day  
reput  
only  
in  
industry  
that  
nothing  
spicy  
your  
you  
in  
the  
+  
see

(like orderly horse clopp)  
the good doctor left ~~Tom~~ in their way to  
church and how she <sup>her</sup> face must have beamed with pride if for  
timely, ~~that~~ <sup>giggled</sup> ~~white~~ ~~shorts~~ ~~and~~ ~~shiny~~ ~~healthy~~ ~~pressed~~ ~~smooth~~ <sup>reason</sup> <sup>than</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>others</sup>  
up from the ~~bed~~ ~~or~~ ~~the~~ ~~table~~ ~~and~~ ~~get~~ ~~dressed~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~service~~  
church (The <sup>Methodist</sup> church bell ~~method~~ ~~not~~ ~~church~~ ~~bell~~ ~~would~~  
done as if the old Hosier ~~American~~ ~~could~~ ~~hear~~  
waiting for the orderly rhythmic sound of the boys in  
shoes.

Some said they wore taps on their shoes  
heels - - lots of ~~colored~~ ~~did~~ ~~back~~ ~~their~~ <sup>But</sup> <sup>they</sup>  
were 7 the regular <sup>full</sup> <sup>wood</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>timber</sup> ~~colored~~ who congregated  
in the quarters ~~behind~~ ~~the~~ ~~white~~ ~~school~~ ~~or~~  
stood ~~back~~ ~~in~~ ~~one~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~two~~ ~~grocery~~ ~~store~~  
across from the court house - at the crossing  
till all the whites ~~were~~ ~~been~~ ~~served~~  
helped & ~~were~~ ~~cleared~~ ~~the~~ ~~walk~~ ~~space~~ ~~between~~  
the <sup>cash register</sup> ~~counter~~ & the wall. Not that Tom had  
family were uppity; they were humble & thrifty  
& so neat that when <sup>white</sup> <sup>trash</sup> <sup>commented</sup>  
on how they kept up ~~the~~ ~~old~~ ~~seasoned~~ ~~wood~~ ~~house~~  
& the sheds & yards they said how you  
have to hand it to ~~that~~ ~~boy~~ ~~of~~ ~~Dr.~~ ~~Cummins~~ ~~family~~  
he <sup>was</sup> a credit to his race. Not haughty,  
but ~~firm~~ ~~steppy~~ ~~with~~ ~~their~~ ~~heads~~ ~~up~~.  
(see notes)

Of course, what they meant by "that boy" <sup>old Dr. Cunningham's</sup> was that Mrs. Dr. Cunningham may not have bon him heirs but they'd let a nickel to a doughnut that Tom's mother <sup>who kept house</sup> for the old celebrated couple, did. Any <sup>left-spins, cleaning</sup> blood person with light skin had to be half white, and Tom & his boys looked as bleached as their white ~~law~~ church shirts, as stiff as their creased ~~for~~ chinos. The wife was darker & more timid, ~~but~~ deathly quiet, which made up for a ~~lot~~ the other. When the old lady died, all the timber & farm land the old Dr. had accumulated suddenly & commonly known became was bequeathed to Tom Wilson. And we're not talking about an acre or two, like ~~some~~ a handful of other coloreds in the county, in which land ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> more of a ~~status~~ <sup>power</sup> symbol ~~than~~ <sup>than</sup> cash money, CDs or stocks. I said ~~with~~ everything in the SE corner of the world, where outsiders drive thru on the way to Florida & roll up their car windows to keep out the mosquitoes & gnats & who-know-what ~~folk~~ might come lurking out of the flat pine woods of <sup>Wakulla County</sup> ~~Wakulla County~~ <sup>broken & broken</sup> ~~land~~ <sup>land</sup> ~~divided up among~~ <sup>300,000</sup> ~~less than~~ <sup>300,000</sup> ~~290~~ <sup>people</sup> ~~thousand~~ <sup>people</sup> ~~people~~ <sup>maybe</sup>, and

Power - - not status  
old Dr Cunningham the owner of at  
least a third of it. The way he came  
into it, the land, some said, was  
during the <sup>depression</sup> & <sup>people</sup> would  
pay him in <sup>deeds</sup> & there even a  
~~the widow~~ or widow on 2 or 3 would leave  
him their entire farms; not because  
they thought the world & all of him or  
sometimes would <sup>just death</sup> ~~the~~ on the ~~into~~ with their  
families & for revenge & because the  
the old dr. handy they would will over their  
land to him. (Must have been a hundred bobbed  
same day Winston after him.)  
Regardless, somebody, the tax commission  
at the courthouse, say, must have known  
that Dr Cunningham ~~had~~ had accumulated  
half the county. ~~an~~ an acre here, an acre  
there, <sup>significant</sup> a <sup>death</sup> <sup>of</sup> a <sup>birth</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>born</sup>,  
~~who~~ ~~had~~ ~~been~~ ~~known~~ ~~to~~ ~~own~~ ~~the~~ ~~county~~.  
Still, Sunday morning you could  
hear the tapping of shoe heels in the  
sun. bright glare of the white shorts (marching), full faces lifted  
but still not haughty. Blessed, maybe, on their way to church. Every  
Monday Tom would impetate Mrs. Dr. Cunningham blue Belair, drive  
it around the courthouse square, then park it back under the shed behind  
the closed house across from the highway & walk home when he could  
have ridden in the car she had left him, along with the house.

A pine needle could fall from the sky  
yellow-jackets & somebody was there to catch it before it hit the ground

Before long, they said, the next to the biggest landowner in the county began to approach Tom about buying some of his land, his power that wasn't power because he had earned it & wasn't white; ~~and~~ they were doing it as a favor to old Dr. Cunningham, buying it cheap, to take it off Tom's hands, taxes being what they were, and timber buying next to nothing.

We could imagine how such deals might have gone -- the dialogue between the <sup>white</sup> other and owner of Tom -- because we could imagine him saying no, Dr. Cunningham left it to me & I'll just hang onto it like it is. But that must have been the way of, because the land near

chaged hands, and the white men were mad as hell. Out of the 2000 people <sup>scattered</sup> about the county, only 500

were <sup>black</sup> black, pulpwooders, farm help, yard men & clearing women. They had their church across from the Sanson Camp, <sup>north of the cross</sup> where the men dug stumps <sup>beyond ground</sup> to be processed for dynamite. They had their school, across from the Sanson Camp. They had their own kind to socialize with in the quarters behind the white school, and later at the ~~old~~ Sanson Camp, after the company transferred to another location. But Tom & his boys never mixed with the other coloreds; the mother slipped in & out to visit her kin without a wrinkle in her ironed skirt or on her <sup>blond</sup> face.

About the same time as when the Sanson camp disbanded, coloreds became blacker and were forced to go to ~~school~~ the white school. Some boys among them, or

the three left out of the five, two of them having graduated from the old black school & gone off to Valdosta, to college, or to work. Nobody knew for sure.

Blood would tell, they say, & the three boys now mixed with the whites would surely show their blackness. They would quit being humble

& either be scared & timid as their mother, or they would be haughty out of their element. People almost looked forward to it, much as they despised having to mix their white children with black children ~~whom~~ were rumored to have

seen & heard all manner of disgusting language & actions. Too, in Echols County, there was too little entertainment, and every bad entertainment ~~was~~ beat nothing. But they were the same boys, marching to the church ~~with~~ their heads high in white shirts, making all A's sit tight in the ~~back~~ <sup>front</sup> pews. A full crop of new timber had been felled

grown, or almost grown, almost ready for harvest on the land owned by the white owners. But old Dr. Pennington's timber, lightning struck, or wind blown, remained as it has been 10 to 20 years before, but with Tom Wolfson's name on the deeds to the various small & large tracts. It made no sense.

Even then Dr. Pennington's <sup>antique</sup> blue Belair stayed under the shed when Tom wasn't building the battery on his ~~do~~ weekly cruises around the courthouse square. The old 2 story hotel, east of the square was torn down, and the old high-floored

in and about had rotted down or been razed to  
make way for new houses & even mobile homes.

The house where Mrs. Dr. Pennington wandered,  
aged, and died was sagging from the foundation &  
the roof was caving in. The car shed too.

What did & change, what never changed, was the  
seat homeplace of the now aging Tom & his wife,  
that & their stubborn, celebrated humility & ~~like~~  
~~spite-like~~ which you could call spite full  
for lack of a better explanation. Real  
power to many of us, if nothing but in legacy.  
(Keep us wondering - unforgettable being being legacy)

and keeping us in a reverent & pondering

No child played <sup>Halloween</sup> truck or treat ~~on~~ ~~there~~ nobody ~~short~~  
cut through her yard <sup>the way to the river</sup> ~~over~~ ~~summer~~ Nobody stood  
outside the aqua concrete block cafe & peered down the  
musty hall hoping for a glimpse of the ~~Mr. doctor~~ <sup>But plenty</sup> ~~made up~~ ~~stove~~ <sup>with</sup>  
talked about her, inside the cafe, <sup>eyes filmed</sup> ~~behind~~ ~~the~~ ~~strange~~ ~~and~~ ~~EFAC~~ ~~hiding~~ ~~them.~~  
I truth ~~tell~~ ~~we~~ ~~hardly~~ ~~know~~ about her dull life and  
tried to pepper it up with lies.