

Changing Times



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What a beautiful view out of the window of the small apartment house right across from the Jackson Zoo for a five-year old. Three elephants made of wood, holding tails, they appear to be walking as a family, westward on West Capitol Street. Late springtime is here and no more foot-long icicles hanging down after a freezing rain from the rooftop. (That's something you never see anymore. It's probably due to gutters rather than Global Warming.) It's the last day of school, just a few blocks away and then graduation from the 1st grade to the much-anticipated 2nd. It's 2:30 and the school bell rings as Ms. Ball, our 1st grade teacher, reminds me I only have 15 minutes to hurry to the corner of West Capitol Street to meet my weekly City Bus run to the downtown area near the train depot, King Edward Hotel and the Mayflower Café. (All still there after seventy years!) I had forgotten my token to drop in the bus driver's box by the huge steering wheel, but, no problem...I would give him two the next trip. Then, something took place that was perfectly safe for a five-year old in 1940, that no sane, single mother would allow today in Jackson, Mississippi. As always, I got off the bus alone, then casually watched the

trains go by, looked in the windows of the Hotel admiring the model Delta Airline passenger plane that was on display in the travel office. I then walked in and asked if he would sell, knowing he would not, since I asked him the same question each week. I also knew with so little money that a WPA working mom had, it was an impossibility any-

from house to house in Jackson, taking pictures. Of course, the bill for \$1.00 would be sent to you later.) I skipped along the block southward toward the tallest building in Jackson, (and probably in Mississippi at the time) The Standard Life Building, (still there, also, and, by the way, is not evenly parallel with Pearl Street! Check it out!) 18 stories high, where my Mom, Mabby, I called her, worked as a secretary on the top floor. I



way. It was. It was at that moment I wondered what she would say about the picture I was taking to her. It was a picture of me, dressed in a cowboy outfit, taken by some photographer the Saturday before. (This photographer would go

always thought it was "her" building since I was given the run of the floor every Friday afternoon from three to five pm. I mailed all the business letters via the glass drop that sent the letters falling all those stories into the lobby mailbox.

But the most fun I ever had was making a paper airplane that would sail for "five" minutes across the City when released from the 18th floor. Funny, now, but in the eyes of a five year old when looking out the 18th floor window, the cars below seemed about twelve inches long! I never could understand why they changed to full size when Mabby and I reached the bottom floor by way of a man-operated elevator that took my breath away. The average day of this five-year old walking across the street to the zoo and Livingston Park where the red and white checkered water tower was a landmark for my domain all by myself, can never be repeated with such a safe haven anymore. Why? Changing times. My question is: Are times changing for the better in this City, in the county, in this State, in this Country, and, yes, even in the world? I think not. The bigger question is Why? My best answer is—not enough discipline from the parents. Not only to obey, but to respect one another. It can't be blamed on single parents because I had a single parent. Not that it was the best way, but she instilled all those values in my mind and heart and I knew better than to cross the line because loving, hard punishment would follow. It was very hard times during those days, but we made it. As I walk through the more modern, but still beautiful, Jackson Zoo, seventy years later, the workers still say, "Hey, Paul, how are you doing today?" Because of TV exposure, they know me now. Back then it was due to my frequent visits to the Little Train Ride and

talking to my animal friends in the cages and feeding the pigeons, monkeys and peacocks, and swimming in the lake with the tall slideboard and water fountain shooting water sky-high for us swimmers to enjoy. My Mother did not let me swim alone, by the way. I write this today while sitting on a park bench at the Zoo in Jackson, observing all the security measures that are necessary now, while reminiscing my childhood days in the early forties. These memories bring a tear to a 75 year-olds eye—not necessarily because times have changed, but because they have changed NOT for the better. The tear is for all the very young and maybe even older folks that will not have the wonderful, safe feeling in this beautiful city and state as we did back then. Worst of all, the question of what do we do about it? Can we get it back? I think so. It is up to us. People like you and me. My solution is to pray and to obey the Ten Commandments, for prayer is the most powerful source of strength and healing in this world and The Ten Commandments are just that...Commandments, from God...not suggestions.

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