

Vagabond

From Indiana—Ernie Pyle

That Monument to the Boll Weevil Isn't a Weevil, but a Lady and a Wisecrack Started the Whole Thing.

ENTERPRISE, Ala., March 18.—This is the town that has become semiautomatic because it put up a monument to the boll weevil—the insect that destroys cotton.

That's like putting up a monument to a hurricane, you'd think. But the story behind it is that when the weevil wiped out the only crop these parts ever knew, they woke up and turned to other things, and were better off than they were under cotton-raising. There is some truth in the story, and a lot of fiction.

In 1919, new street lights were installed here. While things were torn up, the town put up a circular pool and fountain with the statue of a woman something like "Liberty" in the center. It's in the middle of the main street.

So many passersby stopped and asked the workers what they were doing that finally one of them, just wisecracking, said, "We're putting up a monument to a boll weevil."

Mr. Pyle

He went on to Montgomery, called at a newspaper office, and told them Enterprise was putting up a statue to the boll weevil.

The paper came out with a big story next day. Then the town had to live up to the story. So they put a bronze plaque on the statue base which reads:

"In Profound Appreciation of the Boll Weevil and What It Has Done as the Herald of Prosperity, This Monument Is Erected by the Citizens of Enterprise Dec. 11, 1919."

So much for the monument story. The real story I came for—of how the citizens turned to varied farming and got rich—would make a good story for this year's Liars Club contest.

After cotton, the farmers did turn to peanuts. And true, Coffee County's annual peanut crop soon became worth \$5,000,000, in contrast to cotton's \$1,000,000.

But that didn't keep up. Peanut prices went down.

The depression came. Farm tenancy kept increasing.

So the story I came to Enterprise for doesn't exist. But I found another story. This story is what Government discovered here in 1935, and what they're trying to do about it.

Design for Better Living

When the Government took a hand here in 1935, things stood as follows: Six out of 10 schoolchildren in the country had hookworm. Every other baby died at birth. One mother in every 10 died in childbirth. The average mentality was third-grade. One out of 10 adults couldn't read nor write.

Three-fourths of the farmers were tenant farmers. Most of them had never been out of debt in their lives. They averaged only one mule to three families.

And this is in Coffee County, which stands third among all the counties of Alabama in the value of agricultural products.

Coffee County has become a sort of experimental station in Alabama. Federal, state and county agencies all have a hand here. To prevent overlapping, they are co-ordinated under a council, with the county school superintendent as chairman. They say it's the only thing of its kind in America.

These agencies cover most everything from typhoid shots to fruit-canning. They like the agencies in your home town, only the need is greater and I suspect they are a bit more enthusiastic. The work is climaxized in the Farm Security Administration, which actually owns thousands of acres of land and plants these down-and-out farmers on its acres. The 600 farmers on FSA are scattered over a county 25 miles square. What they're doing is simply a general and wide-stretching process—starting almost from zero—of trying to get people to living better.

My Day

By Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt

Visits San Antonio and Lauds the Spirit of Its Needlework Industry.

SAN ANTONIO, Texas, Friday.—We boarded the train at Harlingen last night and arrived in San Antonio at 8 o'clock this morning. The last time I saw this city was during a trip with the President, when he visited the Alamo and drove through some of the streets. It was easier to see the city today, when Mr. and Mrs. Maury Maverick and Mrs. Harry Drought brought us to see certain industries and places of historical interest. The needlework industry here is in some ways comparable to the needlework industry in Puerto Rico. I wanted to see some of the work and conditions under which it was produced.

The organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union took me to a shop where the owner is in full accord with the Wages and Hours Law and feels that over a period of time there will be able to adjust by making more machine-made garments and new designs. The difficulty, of course, is in the home-work situation and in the completely hand-made garments.

I visited one shop where they make infants' wear almost entirely by hand and they are, of course, finding the adjustment more difficult.

The root of the whole problem is, I think, the fact that we as a country are not educated to the value of handwork. Those of us who have an appreciation of it, have been brought up in the tradition that it must come from France. Just as beautiful handwork is being done by our own workers, both here and in Puerto Rico, but it cannot be done at the same price of machine work.

Housing Program Planned

Of course, when home-work is done, it is far safer in an organized industry and, unlike Puerto Rico, here the industry is organized. Where the union supervises conditions in the homes as well as the manufacturer, it is safe from the point of view of health.

Sad as it may seem, San Antonio has the highest tuberculosis rate in the country and it is not far behind in social disease. There is a housing program of some size which will make a great difference in the living conditions of the Latin-American citizens when it is actually finished, but it has not as yet begun. I am told that there is some opposition, but after driving through the district and going into some of the houses, I can only feel that out of purely selfish interest all opposition will disappear, for a district which breeds disease and shelters crime is harmful to the whole community.

The moving spirit in this housing project is Father Tranchese, who shows his deep interest in the real social questions of his people by his determination to see a change in the surroundings in which they live.

Day-by-Day Science

By Science Service

THE new chemical, nylon, which can be fashioned into silk-like fibers that make beautiful and amazingly tough stockings, is the first truly synthetic fiber which man has ever created.

But, you will ask, aren't rayon and this new wool-like fiber made out of cow's milk also synthetic fibers?

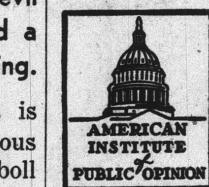
Chemists will answer, however, that of all the present-day fibers created by man and which do not occur naturally in nature, nylon is the only one which is strictly synthesized by science.

Rayon has as its basic material the cellulose of trees or of cotton. What the chemist does is to reconstitute the cellulose into a fiber material. The chemist is making a chemical fiber when he makes rayon.

Similarly the new lanital "wool" of Italy, made out of the casein of milk, is really a chemical arrangement of the protein occurring in the casein.

Glass, metal and asbestos fibers can be called physical fibers because they contain some original mineral material whose shape and, in some cases even appearance, have been altered by physical means.

In the creation of nylon chemistry has started out with coal, air and water and built up, by an intricate process, a material that can be spun into fibers finer than silk, stronger and more elastic than silk.



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Religion Gains in Cities But Gallup Poll Indicates Declining Interest in Rural Areas

By Dr. George Gallup
Director, American Institute of Public Opinion

NEW YORK, March 18.—A stock-taking survey conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion among church members and non-church members in all parts of the United States shows that while country and small town people think that religion has been losing its hold somewhat in their communities, a surprisingly large number of city dwellers believe that interest in religion has been increasing "during the last few years" in their communities.

The substantial number of those interviewed say that they do not go to church as often as their parents did, however.

The survey, which is the first of its kind to be conducted, included men and women in all sections and all walks of life—from Negro people in the South to taxi drivers in New York and retired farmers in California. A scientifically selected cross-section of the American public was asked whether they thought interest in the churches had been rising or falling, what the churches could do to increase interest, whether or not people listen to radio sermons, and other questions.

The Institute found that 50 per cent—or exactly half of those interviewed—are not attending churches as often as their parents did. The Institute's question and the answers are:

"Do you go to church more often or less often than your parents did?"

Less Often 50%
More Often 18
About the Same 32

In the last fifteen years, however, the radio has brought a new scope to American churches, and the Institute's survey found that 31 per cent of all those interviewed said they had listened to all or some part of a church broadcast on the preceding Sunday.

Almost two-thirds of these persons had not gone to ordinary church services, their answers showed.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT stressed the relationship between religion and democracy in his opening message to Congress this year, and the Institute survey has attempted to find out how well the general public thinks the churches have been playing their part.

"Do you think interest in religion in this community has increased or decreased during the last few years?" the Institute asked.

The vote for the country as a whole divides evenly, but a closer look shows an important difference between rural and urban Americans. The largest number of city dwellers report that interest in churches is increasing in their communities. The largest number of farmers and small-town people, living in traditional strongholds of American religion, see a decline.

The percentages for the three groups are:

Interest About	Increasing	Decreasing	Same
Farmers	27%	40%	33%
Small Towns	29	46	25
City Dwellers	42	32	26

Some reasons for an increasing interest in the church and in religion, the comments of typical voters show, are (1) the influence of the depression, (2) growing apprehension of another world war and (3) disturbing news from other parts of the world in general.

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