

WPA Alabama Writers Project
Short Stories/Sketches by:
Marie Porter, Madison Co

Douglas C. Martison (White)
1000 McCullough Ave.,
Huntsville, Alabama
Justice of Peace

Marie Porter
Madison County

DOUGLAS C. MARTISON

Douglas C. Martison is a nice looking, soft spoken and mannerly young man with pleasant smile. Of medium height and neatly dressed, he looks as though he keeps himself in good physical trim. He is twenty-six years of age, has been married six years, and has one daughter four years of age. He believes that size of income should decide size of family.

Douglas' father was a Norwegian and an auditor by occupation. His sons follow a diversity of occupations, one is in the dry cleaning business, one is an auditor and another runs a bar in Texas. One sister that is married to an engineer and the other will graduate from high school this year. The mother is of Irish, Dutch and German stock and came from Wisconsin. Her people were farmers.

"My limited education is due to lack of money," Douglas said. He is a graduate of a high school but would probably not have been able to go the last year if it had not been for the fact that the football coach bought his books. "I had my first job while going to school in the eighth grade and I made twelve dollars and fifty cents a week. My mother took my check, gave me a dollar and deposited the rest in the bank," he said. He studied law at home while clerking in his father-in-law's grocery store. He also attended Jones' Law School in Montgomery finishing two years work in three months and has an L. L. B. degree.

Douglas says that he thinks the present school system is fine but the teachers are not paid enough. School training is a great advantage but practical experience is valuable as well as education, he thinks, "I once had a teacher who told the class that we had better learn our lessons

if we didn't want to dig ditches, but I don't think that that is true literally," he said.

At present Douglas is a Justice of the Peace in the Dallas precinct but that is only a side line. He is also studying higher accounting. He thinks he should have business training as well as professional training. Douglas said that he practiced law for two months with Brickell and Johnson, and then he was offered a place with the State liquor store, so after talking it over with them, decided to accept the offer. He says that there is a waiting period that young lawyers have to go through. He doesn't think anyone should work at anything they don't like if they can help it. He sold insurance for six months and made pretty good money but quit to finish his law studies. "The person that took my place in the insurance business thought that I would be sorry and he came around me showing how much money he was making to make me feel badly, but I am still glad that I quit selling insurance," Douglas said. He also says that when he started studying law some of his friends said "You are studying to be paid to tell lies," but he thinks the law is the best of all professions.

Douglas is a Methodist. His wife is a Baptist and they attend the Presbyterian Church but not regularly.

Douglas says he enjoys a good picture show but does not dance - is a member of the Y.M.C.A. and spends some time there.

Douglas expressed himself as desiring to give his daughter the best guidance and as much education as he is able and as much as she will take, but thinks that is for her to decide what she wants to do and be.

The Martinsons do not own their home or a car but they live in his father-in-law's home and would prefer to own a home before they own a car.

Douglas will tell you that he would like to live on a farm and have plenty of money to run it and have some modern conveniences.

His idea of a good life is a contented life - that is to be satisfied with one's family, lead a straight and Christian life, with many friends, so you can go around in your own town calling your friends by their first names. As he expressed it, "It is mostly up to a person himself to be happy, as happiness comes from within."

Douglas declares that he votes independently and that every one should vote for the best interest of the people. When his father-in-law heard him say this he said, "Yes, if it doesn't hurt you any," but Douglas replied "You know how many arguments I have had about that and I don't feel that way about it; this country has plenty of politicians but not enough statesmen." His father-in-law had previously expressed pride in him. Health is the most important thing in life Douglas thinks, and he believes in the Socialization of medicine. "There are thousands that are not receiving the proper medical care and the government should help," he says. He knows something of a balanced diet, having been a sergeant in the Army, but he does not follow it - usually eats what he wants. He considers \$1500 a year a fairly adequate income. He believes in exercise and thinks that to overwork is detrimental to health, has tried to carry out this belief himself as he has played basketball, football and baseball. He is trying to store up health now as he expects most of work in later ye years to be at his desk.

2/14/39

Washington Copy.

MS.

Marie Porter
Madison County, Ala.

The Clay House, 440 Eustis Street, is on left side of street between Lincoln and White Streets.

The Fackler-Cynchon House, 518 Adams Avenue, is on right side of avenue between Williams Street and Cruse Alley.

St. Bartley's Primitive Baptist Church, Oak Avenue, is on right side of avenue, between Bank and Davis Streets. No number on church building but house next to church is numbered 408. Building was erected in 1872.

2/14/39

MS.

Reverend W. L. T. Howze (Negro)
227 Church St.
Huntsville, Alabama

Marie Porter
Madison County, Ala.

REVEREND W. L. T. HOWZE

I opened my mouth for the Lord in 1912, and I can't stop now, said the Reverend W. L. T. Howze, pastor of the Missionary Baptist Church, colored, and he got up from his chair in which he had but a short time before been dozing, to point out his preacher's license, framed and hanging on the wall of his study. Reverend Howze is short of stature, inclined to fatness and beaming countenance of the true Negro who trusts implicitly in God. He has black kinky hair, dark eyes, dark brown skin and a mustache. His shoes were neat, although they were not slickly polished. His grey pin-striped suit was good with signs of hard wear and in need of pressing.

He was born in Marion, Perry County, Alabama forty-five years ago. He had three years schooling in the country and then went to Tuskegee Institute eleven years. He worked his way through school and as he expresses it "It was a struggle. I only had one five dollars help the whole eleven years. My father sent me that. I would work all day and go to school at night and then stay up late in the night getting my lessons. Nothing but struggle - I wish I could go to school some more now." Then he proudly showed his certificate of graduation from the Academic Department and Phelps Bible Training School. It also was framed and hanging on the wall of his study.

The study is not a very large room heated by a small round heater, which looks as if it had never been polished. Two large windows, the shades of which are kept rolled to the top, give plenty of light - window curtains are forbidden. In one corner there is a sewing machine

and above the machine are some shelves piled high with magazines, books, hats and a cap. There is a grate, which was closed up in order to put up the heater. The mantel is apparently a "catch all" for various things; a tin man that dances, a small brush, a match box, a toy gun, comb and hair grease, a pin cushion made in the shape of a dog, two tall slim glass vases, and sitting in the center is a comic valentine framed, which says "Don't tell such lies and expect people to believe them." A large calendar hangs above the mantel. The linoleum rug is of a conventional pattern with rose the predominating color. The imitation leather upholstered davenport is not a very comfortable seat. The Reverend Howze will tell you that he made his desk when he was in school. A large blackboard leans up against the wall and on this W. L. Jr., the eleven-year-old son, has drawn an outdoor scene showing a stream of water on which a boat sails. There is an organ that doesn't look old in spite of the fact that it is about to fall to pieces.

After asking Annie Lee if he should tell about the dog and having been answered in the affirmative, Rev. Howze said, "While I was in school I killed a dog that belonged to a white man. It had been sent there to the veterinary and I thought it was mad, so I killed it, - you see, it was out for exercise. Some men were after me until ten o'clock the next morning. They were going to kill me, but when they found out how it was, everything was all right. White folks have always been my friends. They have always liked me. I used to go around over the country singing with the college quintet. They have a quartet now. We had a manager and we had as high as a thousand dollars given us. That is the way the school made their money. I have won several prizes for speaking and singing, but I don't enter any contests since I have been in Huntsville because they all know I will win, and they won't enter the contest with me."

(7)

Reverend Howze's parents were slaves of the Tutwilders and after the slaves were freed they stayed on there as they had no other place to go. He has six brothers and five sisters. Oldest brother is in New York City in the Pullman service. Another brother is a contractor in the Virginia Mines out from Birmingham, Alabama, and another out from Chicago, running a boarding house. "One of my brothers was shot because of envy of his job. He made sandwiches and drove the truck for a sandwich company in Birmingham, and I have a brother in Nashville, but I don't know what he does. My baby brother is cook at a hospital in Birmingham. All of my sisters are married and keeping house," said Reverend Howze.

Reverend Howze married Annie Lee Chappell, while he was in school. He was preaching at the time and he says that all the girls thought that he was going to marry them and that before he married he used to get as much as ten dollars collection on Sundays and after he married the collection fell off about half. Her father was the best blacksmith in Tuskegee and a steward in the M. E. Church and he met and married her mother in the country. Her mother worked around some as a servant, then she got the place as matron in the laundry department of the government hospital which place she held about seven years until she died. She made one hundred dollars a month in the hospital laundry and built a home and left it for her children. One of Annie Lee's children lives there now. She never had a beau and didn't go to school much "just couldn't seem to learn" as Annie Lee expresses it. She takes in roomers and keeps up the home and her brothers pay the taxes and help this sister. Her other sister finished college, married and now lives in Detroit. Both of her brothers finished college and are in New York in the shoe shop business. Annie Lee finished high school. She worked out some before she married. Taller than the average, with straight black hair and dark eyes and thick lips, she is about normal weight and dresses neatly without much regard for style.

The Howzes have lived in a number of places. His first call as a pastor was to Anniston, Alabama. They were there six years and while there built a parsonage and paid for it. He next accepted a call to Piedmont, twelve miles from Anniston and remained there four years. From Piedmont they went to Fayette and while there the church built a parsonage, also some tenement houses to rent out. Illness and bad health overtook them while in Fayette, and they went to Birmingham and stayed with relatives and lived on their savings until they regained their health, after which a call to a church in Macon, Mississippi, was accepted. Remaining there five years, during which time a mortgage on the church was lifted, they next went to Okolona, Mississippi, residing there about two years, when they decided to come back to Alabama. He was pastor of Tuscumbia and helped complete a debt on the church there before coming to Huntsville. Annie Lee says that he is just working for brickbats and starvation. Reverend Howze thinks that his work in Huntsville has been the hardest struggle of all. This church also had a mortgage and they had raised about \$500 to pay on the church mortgage when some of the deacons began squandering it, so they had a "skirmish" a few months ago and "the deacons closed and locked the door in my face," said Reverend Howze. He further stated that the majority were for him and after being told by one of his white preacher friends that they couldn't lock him out as it was against the ordinance of the church, he went to the judge and succeeded in having the doors unlocked. Consequently the deacons have been expelled from the church. Meanwhile the congregation has dwindled and the collections have fallen off to about half. Reverend Howze is getting only about forty dollars a month at present and he says that he was tried out in a Chattanooga church - a nice church and was about to be called with a salary of one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month, but some of his enemies found out about it and by false reports prevented him from being called, then he spread out his hands in a despairing manner and in a contrite

voice said "When I was attending school I sometimes wore those white stiff front shirts with no back to them. Some people are like that today." Annie Lee thinks that the colored people of Huntsville go to church less than the colored people of any other place that she has been, but she says "just let them have a funeral and there will be the biggest crowd. The crowd comes out of curiosity to hear what the preacher says about the deceased. They have three preachers and the funeral lasts for hours. Each preacher tries to preach them into Heaven. My husband tells them that it isn't necessary to have such long funerals, but they won't listen to him."

The Howzes have been in Huntsville about three years. Huntsville, nestled in the Tennessee Valley among mountains, cherishes its history and fine social conditions. It is a typical southern town with an area of four square miles and is the textile and agricultural center of a county made kingly by cotton. They live in the parsonage which is adjacent to the church. It is a large frame building of nine rooms and sets close to the street. It is in need of paint and repairs. There are three churches, a barber shop, a funeral home and a few houses for Negroes in the neighborhood; a grocery store, which is owned and run by Italians with a pretty bungalow adjoining for their home. There is also a car shop and an empty lot or two. The street is paved and leads to the fair grounds, not all the sidewalks are paved, however. There are two children in the family, Annie Ruth, sixteen years of age, wants to be a music teacher. She has had some music lessons, but is unable to take lessons now. Annie Lee wants her to be a school teacher. She says that if she showed any talent for music she would give her music lessons if she had to get a job herself to pay for them. Annie Ruth is Superintendent of the Sunday School and leads the singing every Friday night when the choir broadcasts over the Huntsville station. Annie Lee hopes W. L. Jr. will be a doctor for says one preacher in a family is enough.

If you should go to their home Reverend Howze willingly plays the organ and sings such favorites as "Never Alone" and "Time's Gettin' Hard, Money gettin'

scarce" for you, and will invite you to bring your white friends and come to his church to hear the singing.

ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhood; mostly Negroes in the neighborhood, three churches, a barber shop and a funeral home for colored. A car shop belongs to a white man and a grocery store which the residence adjoining, belongs to an Italian family. Some houses occupied by Negroes. The street is paved but only parts of the sidewalk is paved. A Negro doctor lives in this neighborhood also.

House: Two-story frame building containing nine rooms. Living room on the right contains a davenport, library table in center of room, some chairs, cushions and picture or two on wall; study has an organ, desk, sewing machine, heater, davenport and two or three chairs; dining room has a square table, chairs, refrigerator; kitchen has a wood stove, table, cabinet and a safe; three bedrooms upstairs, one has a cream colored bedroom suite, another has a walnut bedroom suite and the other has an iron bed, dresser and chair. All have small scattered wool rugs and thin vari-colored striped window curtains. The house is clean and neat except the study. The walls are in bad condition.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION - W.L.T. Howze

Black kinky hair and dark eyes, dark brown complexion, not quite as tall as average, overweight, moves slow and easy, soft speaking voice, no gestures while talking. Good clothing but not expensive - striped suit, white, stiff collar, shirt, tan shoes, erect posture.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION - Annie Lee Howze

Black straight hair, dark eyes, thick lips, low halting speech, taller than average, about average weight, a little stooped, dark brown complexion, was wearing a tan crash skirt and cream color wool jacket blouse, apparently were sixteen-year-old daughter's cast-offs, torn, but clean apron.

3/16/39

S.J.