

Along City's Third Avenue, Hillbilly Music Helps to Ease the Pangs of Loneliness

The thunder of cannon and marching of soldiers in World War II brought a tremendous influx of new citizens to Detroit from the southern hill country. They came to work in a strange city. They found it cold. But many of them have stayed. There was too little to go back to. With no organizations to rally them, no clubs, strange churches, strange ways, their adjustment was hard. In this series of articles the Free Press assesses the problems that remain, the gains that have been made.

BY EVELYN S. STEWART
Free Press Staff Writer

Lonesome hillbilly music stirred and soothed the listening drinkers at the Calumet Bar, 4301 Third.

Earl (Shorty Frog) Allen and Doyle Starnes drewled out, twanging their guitars, old favorites like "I'm lonesome for the whippoorwill," "The rain is a-fallin' down," Starnes' "She broke my heart in Tennessee," and Allen's "Detroit Waltz."

Tall, lanky young men with side-burns from the hills of Kentucky or Tennessee lounged about as if they were leaning on a rail fence or a tree.

Girls with long blonde bobs, in sweaters and blue jeans and bobby sox, joined them at the pin-ball machines.

Shorty Frog swung into his "Detroit Waltz."

Jet Crash Spews Gas on 7 Farmhands

MULLINS, S. C. —(AP)—An Air Force F100 jet airplane, screaming pilotless to earth after an in-flight collision with a Marine jet, crashed scant yards from a tobacco barn shed near here Thursday, spewing searing gasoline fumes over a group of farm workers.

At Mullins Hospital, attendants said the injured — three adults and four children — were badly burned. The attending physician said three of the patients were not seriously hurt but that three others were near death.

The pilots of the two planes, one from Myrtle Beach Air Force Base southeast of here and the other from Cherry Point Marine Base, N. C., parachuted to safety after their craft collided about 35,000 feet up.

"Waltzin' with you (he sang) Waltzin' with you Under the Detro-it moon . . . My dreams come true While I waltz with you Holdin' you tight in my arms . . ."

There was no moon. Only a blistered dingy ceiling in a barroom unadorned even by ashtrays. Not even a dance floor.

NOBODY PAID any attention to the sociology professor and the reporter at a side table.

"The phenomenon of migration," the sociologist commented. "Just migrants—homesick, friendless, feeling every other wave of migrants—rural people restless in the city."

The professor himself waxed nostalgic for his farm boyhood. He admitted, apologetically, he liked the music. "Authentic, of its kind," he called it. "Real Detroit hillbilly. Not phony. Made up on an old pattern—out of old tunes—about the old theme of loneliness and longing, love and frustration, death,

grief, remorse. Crude, but honest Detroit primitive."

When the musicians rested, the young men put dimes in the juke box to play hillbilly records.

MOST OF THEM work in factories, the bartender said . . . Live in bleak rooms, with no place to go and nothing to do when the shift is over. Back in the hills where they came from, he said, they'd be busy working their little farms—with no bars available at the Four Corners and only occasional spots for mountain dew.

"Childlike," added the professor. "Haven't had much fun in their lives. Pleased with shuffleboard and pin-ball games."

It was Wednesday, a quiet night. Many of his usual customers had been laid off and gone "home," the bartender said, to wait for telegrams notifying them of rehiring. He said most of the Third Street bars have hillbilly music only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights now.

Even the Shamrock, famed hillbilly spot, was nearly empty.

The Yale Bar, across the Expressway but lumped with the Third Street hillbilly bars, was sure to be going strong. It has a dance floor. But only one couple danced.

The quiet, you learned, was due to the fact that the bouncer had been badly cut up the previous Saturday. Anderson's, with a jazz orchestra, had a mixed patronage — mainly non-southern . . . Annie Ginsberg's "Sweetheart Bar," freshly paneled and its booths upholstered, is on the "tony" side for the migrants . . . Willis' "Workingman's Palace" no longer welcomes the southern newcomers.

"WEEKENDS ARE rough," said Inspector Fred Heath, in charge of the 13th precinct. "Busiest and bloodiest in town, practically." Two murders and a suicide, assorted break-ins, and a few bad cuttings last weekend.

More police per square foot are stationed here than anywhere in the city. They patrol Third Street in pairs, passing every bar on weekends approximately every 14 minutes.

"Barma Road" or "Tennessee Valley," some of them call it. The drinking southerners are quick to fight—over insults, fancied or real, or over women.

You can see all three of

these types in any Third Street bar.

What Annie Ginsberg, who runs the Sweetheart Bar and has made a living on Third Street for 25 years, wants to know is:

Why did they ever come?

SHE LUMPS THEM as "homesick — just like other human beings who leave the country for the city to find work."

She doesn't blame them for drowning their sorrows.

"If you ask me," she said, "they should never have left the hills. Even if they had one skinny cow to milk, or nothing but fatback to eat, their life was probably better. They had the hills and trees and creeks. What'd they change all that for? Third Street!"

(Next: Southern white teenagers at school)

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