

Perf. Copies - Blackburn  
Reunion

August 26, 1983

Blackburn Reunion

August 20, 1983

I once wrote an essay in high school about "What Americanism Means To Me." I am glad no one will ever have to read that essay again, though it is around somewhere. I'm sure I thought I was being honest and sincere in it. But that is one of the beauties about maturity; we can laugh at our youthful pompousness. Anyway, I thought I'd compose a very short essay about "What Blackburnism Means To Me" on the occasion of this reunion.

Well, certainly being a Blackburn does mean being honest, at least with others -- if not always with oneself. Anglo-Saxon integrity is socially learned, a conditioned response, and a cultural and familial trait. Adverse conditioning can be most effective. I recall a painful episode at age 8 of having to kneel at the altar in Bradenton with both parents to seek forgiveness for the heinous theft of the rings from a church office ring binder. Just the guilt and pain of such a penalty make honesty a better choice in this family than dishonesty!

Yes, integrity is the watchword. A Blackburn is "a man of his word."  
(Funny why we don't say "woman of her word." Certainly Blackburn women are as honest and perhaps more forthright than Blackburn men. Maybe it is just because providence gave the female of the species the tendency and the right to change her mind so that she can still be honest but not have to stick to her word!)

But being a Blackburn, and being honest, doesn't necessarily mean that a Blackburn can't bluff or even be deceitful about the card hand they are holding (of course, I don't mean Playing Cards, just Rook, or Old Maid). It doesn't mean that they can't be sneaky, even mean and avaricious in playing a Sunday afternoon game of Monopoly. It also doesn't mean that they can't put on the most dishonest if "beautific" smile, as preacher, presiding elder or bishop -- while harboring very unsmiling thoughts about some crone whose hand they are pumping and who says, "That's the finest sermon I ever heard" -- after being prime witness to the fact that she slept from the very beginning to the end of it!

Being a Blackburn is being courteous, with a pleasant nod of the head, a tip of the hat, a slightly deferential bow, an "after you" in doorways, or insisting others speak first. All those gentle characteristics are very Blackburnian. Of course, that doesn't mean that a Blackburn would likely tolerate the disrespect of someone sitting in their usual pew or that they would not make such a person aware of this discourtesy! And, of course, it doesn't mean that there will not be an occasional lapse in attentions and courtesies. Do you know the famous story in the Henry Blackburn family? It had come to pass in those days that my mother Mary Frances had arrived at the vulnerable female age of the mid 40s, the age where all ladies must arrive and forever thereafter harbor wee doubts

about their femininity or the devotion of their spouses, etc. It was part of the daily routine for Henry and Mary Frances to get in the old Chev and drive the six blocks down East Main Street to the U.S. Post Office in Gainesville which blocked the street at its south end.

Whereupon, Mom would jump (literally jump) out of the car and with her remarkably expeditious gait, fly up the steps, deposit the mail, check the Post Office box, and fly back out -- so that she would be on the opposite steps by the time Dad had made his tour of that small block. Well, one day she made her postal rounds in record time and was standing pert on the opposite corner just as Dad came around. He drove right by! In fact, he drove all the way home! Only on pulling in the driveway did he suddenly realized something was amiss. I learned about this not from him, but on inquiring after my mother's health when for several days thereafter she'd have a bit of moisture around the eyes -- and blow her nose rather often.

Being a Blackburn is being generous. Yes, a generosity of spirit, kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity to the poor and the sick and faithful tithing are certainly Blackburn traits. But that, of course, needn't always apply, say, to red caps, busboys, or waitresses or, for that matter, to small boys who serve as their golf caddies. I remember my father and his happy gang of preacher buddies who would take three whole hours on a hot summer Saturday morning to play just nine holes of golf. They didn't pass out handicaps as large as they needed. As an eleven year old, I lugged their heavy unfashionable ancient golf bags up and down dale -- with visions of generous reward for grueling labors. Their generosity was characteristically a single, frosty bottle of Royal Crown Cola -- for a whole morning's work! And being generous to the

church doesn't mean Blackburns don't join the grosse bourgeoisie -- being comfortable is a Blackburn characteristic if there ever was one.

Calmness, quiet reflection, and turning the other cheek are Blackburn characteristics. Can you imagine a Blackburn shouting, carrying on, stomping out of the house, venting spleen or cursing; no, simply unimaginable! But their very tiny, quiet remarks, carefully dropped at breakfast or on the way to church may be the equivalent of bamboo splinters inserted under the fingernails. The only real violence you'll get from a Blackburn is explosive glee -- when one finally lands his first hit on your dreadnaught in a game of battleship!

Duty, devotion, obligation, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness are all Blackburnian characteristics of the first order. "Give it to good old Blackburn. He or she will get it done." This Blackburnian sense of duty has resulted in substantial recognition and responsibility for many of our family. It is an attitude which we still try to purvey among the young: do a good job of what is in front of you; that's really all you need for a good career. If you do your best, your career will open up "naturally" with greater interest in your work and greater opportunity for new responsibility and reward. Ah, yes, good work just means more work for a Blackburn. But all good things that happen this way come as a pleasant surprise, not out of burning ambition, scheming, or goal-oriented behavior. That makes Blackburns easier folks to get along with -- that is -- as long as everybody realizes they're the boss! And no question about it, these characteristics make Blackburns useful citizens. They -- we -- really live the credo: "Leave the world a better place than you found it." These things are part of what being a Blackburn means to me.

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May I now toast the 87 great years of my father and the 39 plus of his close collaborator, Mary Frances, and in closing may we each take a moment to think about those we wish were here -- and who would have been if they could!

Henry Jr.

/jml

Mrs. Hugh M. Martin  
710 Parkview Road  
Arcadia, Florida 33821

Personal  
Corresp.

August 30, 1983

Dear Henry,

Before thanking you for your interesting and introspective essay on "What Blackburnism Means to Me", I want to thank you for the music at our reunion. It was so delightful and placed us in the right mood for having a party and a "fun time."

My little thanking you for the music has been discarded. I wanted to tell you how much I agreed with your feelings of the Blackburn members. I would not be capable of expressing

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it as you did, but it certainly was  
a commendable way of expressing  
our traits.

I enjoyed seeing Heidi so much.  
She is so attractive and do wish I  
could have visited with her a little  
more. Maybe there will be another  
time.

As I close I want to thank you  
again for being with me when  
we gathered for Keylin's funeral. With  
your busy schedule I know it was  
not easy.

Thank you for your essay.

Love,  
M/Martin