

*Thomas Clay is a political commentator raised in Kentucky. His family tree has generations of prominent lawyers, whose conservative proclivities molded him into a liberal rakehell with a following of over 500,000 people. **Pocket Full of Pie**, a collection of essays about Clay's extraordinary life, is his first book.*

## **Pocket Full of Pie**

By Thomas Clay Jr.

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# POCKET FULL OF PIE

*A collection of essays*

THOMAS CLAY, JR.

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## **Meadowmark**

You have to have a certain kind of mind to put your finger on something that's hard to understand. This isn't easy for me to talk about either because it forces me to look back on my youth when I was as ignorant as I could be. I was very much a product of my southern White Anglo-Saxon Protestant upbringing.

The first black person I ever saw was when we were on our way to Danville. I was four years old and we stopped for gas, and I saw this old black man walking in. I followed him in and asked if I could touch him. He put his arm down and I asked, 'does it wash off?' He had a deep bass voice that sounded like a rumble, "Oh no, Son. It don't wash off."

That was 1974 and that man must have been in his 70s or 80s. He had thin, wrinkly skin and deep crevasses in his face. He was wearing dark blue bib overalls. I can hardly fathom what that man had seen in his life. He saw an Agrarian society switch to an industrial society. The first road and automobiles.

The first airplanes. Two world wars, jet airplanes. And more horror and depravity from the era of Jim Crow.

I wonder what he made of a little white boy asking him that.

Danville, Kentucky is a railroad town where the poor white trash was on one side of the viaduct and the rich people lived in town. It's a very beautiful place, actually. Centre college is there, where it churns out the children who will soon become the bourbon gentry.

There was an old country store about two blocks from my grandparent's house. Pop kept a coffee can full of pennies and when we were kids, we'd get the pennies and go get some candy. There were about 20 jars full of candy. The root beer candy canes were my favorite. They were a nickel. There was an RC cola bottling plant less than a mile away, so they were just a quarter.

Garnet lived just across the street and he had some blue tick Coonhounds that he would sell for over \$1,000 each and this was in the 70s. He shipped them to the Philippines, strangely enough. If you've ever heard the commercial for Purnell's Old Folk's country sausage, the man in that video sounded exactly

like Garnet. Garnet always smelled like tobacco because he chewed this stuff that came in a yellow package. My great grandmother also liked it. It was disgusting. One day my uncle Chuck came over drunk -as he always was- and sat down next to Garnet.

Chuck was just a hateful man. He hated everything. He couldn't get anything to ever work. Pliers and remote controls seemed to give him the biggest fits. He was my Pop's brother. Pop never took a drink. He was in 7th grade when he had to quit school and take care of everyone. Chuck, on the other hand, collected Nazi flags, a couple of Rugers and a few Hitler youth knives he took off of Germans he killed in the Battle of the Bulge. He was the opposite of my Pop. So, Chuck is piss drunk and Garnet is sitting there on the cinderblock wall and Chuck picks up Garnet's RC Cola spit bottle and takes a big swig of it. You've never heard such a commotion when he started puking it back up. We nearly pissed ourselves laughing.

Uncle Chuck landed in Normandy on D-Day. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He had slick red hair that he put tons of Brylcreem in. He got shot a couple of times and stayed in the Army until those "goddamn Commies took Berlin." Chuck was

a real son of a bitch and a mean drunk. I knew to avoid him. Pop only had one eye, so the Army rejected him. Pop told me: "he was never right in the head when he got back."

I had already raided the penny jar and was bound to get my RC cola and some candy canes. The store was only a block from Garnet's house, so he came with us. I walk in and if you've ever been in a country store, you know that heavenly smell it makes. Like biscuits and candy all mixed together with old wood. I am eyeing the candy selection as I am gnawing on a Bit-O-Honey when I hear a big ruckus in the back.

"GET THE GODDAMN HELL OUT OF HERE! Get out before I sick the dogs on ye!"

It sounded like a stampede running from the back to the front door. Four black kids go sprinting out. Mary was the old woman tending the store. She lived upstairs. She had a sweet southern accent.

"Oh Garnet they just keeds."

"Mary, you cain't let these little N-words in heah!"

"They ain't done nothing but get them some pop and candy like these heah."

When you're a kid, you don't know when you're being poisoned, that's just the way it was. My Pop was as poor as those kids and he was just as ignorant as Garnet was. Pop got kicked by a mule when he was just a kid, that's why he was blind in that one eye. He would 'slick up' some bikes and give them to the kids, the black kids. People would bring him their old bikes to fix up for the kids. Garnet would come in and say: "Ed, why you wasting your time fixing up them bikes for them little monkeys?" He'd leave in disgust. Whenever pop wanted me to listen, he'd put his arm on my shoulder and lean in so only I heard him.

"I wasn't nothing once just like them kids. They cain't hep it that they's poor."

Then he'd pull away and say, "You never know son, one of them might grow up to be Meadowmark Lemon."

When Pop was a cab driver, the Harlem Globetrotters came through and broke down. He took them to the only hotel in Danville. This was in the early sixties. The guy at the front desk told Pop he couldn't let them stay.

"What's the trouble?"

“We don’t let N-words stay here Ed. Take ’em to Lexington.’

So he did.

They were in two station wagons. Cousin Arnie was driving the other cab. No hotels in Lexington either for the same reason. The two white guys with them got rooms after making a spirited protest. The alternator had gone out on their bus. Pop couldn’t pronounce Meadowlark so he was Meadowmark. His ‘main man’ Curly was ‘poison with a basketball, son.’

Meadowlark said, “Well boys, it looks like we’re sleeping on the bus.” It was snowing bad by then.

My granny was a seamstress and her mother did nothing but quilt. So bedding was never an issue at their house. “Oh no son,” Pop said. “Y’all gonna have to stay with me and Gerl.” Geraldine was my granny.

“Oh no sir, we couldn’t do that.”

“It just wouldn’t be Christian of me to let you fellas freeze to death out heah.”

It was already past supper when Pop brought in the biggest men Granny ever saw. She had the best fried chicken there was

in Danville ready and a mess of biscuits and gravy when they pulled in. She had just been to the Piggly Wiggly and she fired up the skillet and proceeded to feed these men.

That night they were laid out on the floor and Lawd hab mercy, you never heard a ruckus like these fellas snoring.

Granny woke up at 5 am her entire life. So she went back to the Piggly Wiggly to get some more bacon for breakfast. 5 pounds of bacon, fried taters, eggs, toast and coffee were her standard breakfast.

Pop went by to get an alternator that would work on their bus and put it on for them. At this point in the story that I heard at least a thousand times, Pop would put his arm around me and say, “And that’s when Meadowmark pulled out his billfold and laid five \$20 bills on me.” That was big money to Pop. They came back a few years later when they were passing through just to have some of Granny’s cooking again.

There was a poor black kid from Akron who grew up to be something. He’s been married to the same woman. He has beautiful kids and he built a school for the poor black kids just like he used to be. He bought them uniforms, shoes and bikes so they can get to this beautiful school he built for them. Some

people call him LeBron. Others call him King James. This is what Donald Trump said about him:

“Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, Don Lemon. He made Lebron look smart, which isn’t easy to do. I like Mike!”

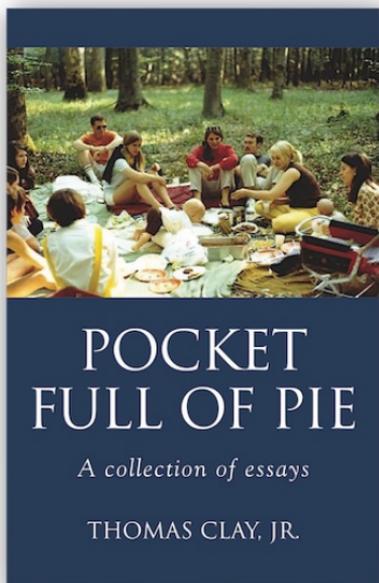
Dehumanizing people is the vulgarest tool every debased ignorant racist has used to inject their vile poison into the consciousness of any other dull-minded simpleton who is dumb enough to think they are better than Don Lemon or LeBron James. The difference is that the President is supposed to be the best of us.

Trump defiles everything we are as a country and he is teaching children that it’s okay to dehumanize the very best of us because of the color of their skin. He has debased every noble notion that has made our country great. But what is most disgusting about this menace to society is that he is telling black children that two exemplary men they look up to are not worthy of praise, even when they are celebrating opening a new school for kids just like them.

The damage that racist imbecile does is incalculable.

*Pocket Full of Pie*

When he is gone, the collective sigh of relief will echo off of Jupiter.



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