

Melton A. McLaurin. *Separate Pasts: Growing Up White in the Segregated South*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987. Pp. ix, 164. Cloth, \$13.95; paper, \$7.95.

Melton McLaurin, chairman and professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, has written a poignant and evocative memoir of growing up in the American South of the 1950s. His hometown of Wade, North Carolina, seemed to possess all of the certainties of the segregated social structure inherited from the early twentieth century: Blacks "knew their place," happily did the menial tasks of the world, lived their own separate (and presumably equal) existence, and were inherently inferior to the white master class. "I was . . . well versed in racist dogma, having been instructed from birth in the ideology and etiquette of segregation. . . . It was unimaginable that mine would be the last generation to come of age in the segregated South."

Working part-time in his grandfather's store while a high school student, McLaurin knew all of the town's whites and many of the blacks as well, at least superficially. He uses a series of reminiscences of different individuals in Wade to illustrate the hypocrisy and falsehoods that lay behind the prevailing social mores and dogma of the times. There was Bobo, a black playmate with whom the author shared a normal boyhood friendship, until a seemingly innocuous incident one day of inflating a basketball with a needle lubricated with black and white saliva. "Instantaneously an awareness of the shared racial prejudices of generations of white society coursed through every nerve in my body." One of the most intriguing characters in Wade was Clarence Street, a black laborer and Jehovah's Witness, whom McLaurin came to know as a man of prodigious knowledge, wit, and intelligence. Dismissed by whites as a "crazy nigger," Street in fact "was the intellectual superior of most of Wade's white residents" and challenged "all the stereotypes" of white assumptions about blacks. For a young white male in the segregated South, coming of age sexually involved not only forming relationships with girls of one's own race but also coping with the temptations and restrictions of interracial sex, and here are some of the most revealing (and occasionally hilarious) pages of *Separate Pasts*.

McLaurin's paternal grandfather is an object of special affection, a storekeeper who dispensed groceries, credit, wisdom, and profanity in equal doses to both races. While harboring the basic racial prejudices of his society, he nonetheless treated blacks decently and never demeaned or joked about them, and his enigmatic behavior sometimes flew in the face of the accepted racial stereotypes of the white community. One of the most dramatic incidents in the book is the account of "Granddaddy's" heated confrontation with the bureaucracy of the county welfare department over an injustice done to a black woman named Viny Love with a handicapped child, whom he had recommended for support. "I didn't understand how he could so outrageously flout accepted standards of behavior on behalf of a black, even a good black, while simultaneously subscribing to segregationist doctrines and racist beliefs. . . . At the time I was too in awe of Granddaddy to understand that he had not acted solely because of his desire to help Viny, that, to some degree, he had acted because his word had been challenged [by the welfare department]."

McLaurin reveals much of the social and intellectual fiber of the recent small-town South and also modestly reveals himself to have been a young person unusually observant of the world about him. At the end he briefly sketches in the political, legal, and educational changes wrought in Wade by the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-60s. In the area of personal and social interactions, change came more slowly, but come it did. Elegantly written, this little book would be an excellent addition to courses on black or southern history or recent U.S. surveys. Especially for today's younger students



who take for granted the often easy interaction between youth of both races, *Separate Pasts* unveils a time and a world not so long ago that in fact has not entirely died.

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**Allen Guttman.** *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports.* Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988. Pp. x, 233. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$10.95.

For Jacques Barzun, to understand baseball was to understand America. Although Barzun might have exaggerated his point, baseball and sports do reflect a great deal about our society. Lately, the undeniable presence of sports in everyday American life has attracted the attention of many scholars, often resulting in condemnatory critiques of sports as corruptive and alienating.

In contrast to these outcries, Professor Allen Guttman of Amherst offers a moderate and thoughtful view in his latest of a series of books dealing with sports, *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports*. Guttman's "interpretation" provides both an outline of the development of modern American sports and an evaluation of the current state of sports in America, at all times maintaining a realistic and moderate stance.

The study begins with Guttman's well accepted argument that modern sports, in this case American sports, developed along Weberian lines from religious ritual in pre-modern times to the secular, bureaucratic institutions of today. The sports of the American Indian are introduced as examples of pre-modern activity dominated by religious ritual and symbolism. Puritan and early Southern sports are then dealt with as parts of an initial, although not complete, movement toward modernization. For Guttman, modern sport arrives in earnest with baseball and finds its "prototypical" form in the perfectly rational and scientific game of basketball.

While Guttman's vision of modern day sports is essentially positive, the fact that they are laden with problems and contradictions is not overlooked. The continued difficulties and restraints that minorities and women often encounter in the sporting world are dealt with sympathetically. What Guttman refers to as the "cocaine culture" surrounding modern athletes is also explored.

The author's toughest criticism, however, is aimed at intercollegiate sports, which Guttman quite rightly describes as "the academic equivalent of the international arms race." Here Guttman leaves his pragmatic base and suggests that colleges give up their profitable semi-professional teams and turn them into a private club system, as is the practice in West Germany.

At his best when chronicling and repudiating Marxist attacks on sport as an exploitative mechanism of modern society, Guttman concedes that while modern sports can enslave, it can also liberate. Guttman points to evidence that female athletes tend to have higher levels of self-esteem than non-athletic females. Black athletes have overcome racism to such a degree that they now come close to dominating some sports. Millions of Americans share in the exhilaration and enjoyment of sports, and virtually none of these participants or spectators find their experiences dehumanizing or alienating.

For better or for worse, modern sports will remain with us. Guttman recognizes this, and has the patience and maturity to urge us to enjoy its good points, while at the same time pushing for much needed reforms.

As a tool in the classroom, Guttman's book would be ideal for the sort of "Sport and Modern Society" course begun by the late Robert Wheeler at the University of