

[Walter Smith]

October 25, 1939

Walter Smith (Salesman)

422 North College Street

Charlotte, N. C.

Mary Brown, Writer

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser Original Names: Changed Names:

Kings Mountain Ferguson

Charlotte Riverton [???

“In 1909 the stork visited Ferguson, N.C. and left me at a place where some would say now there was already a big family; two boys and two girls. Of course it did sort of upset a nice family balance but what was I to do? I am thankful to say my parents never thought of the family as too large, I have often heard them say they wished they had twelve children. You see, we never caused them any trouble but there was never a dull moment at our house.

“Living in the country as we did, there were always the chores to be done, and in the hunting season brother and I felt the urge to go out and shoot at the birds and rabbits; it was many a year before we killed anything. I think the first rabbit I killed was accidental, for I always closed my eyes when I pulled the trigger.

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“My sisters were older than I, and of course every time I came into the house they looked for dirt behind my ears, and when their beaux came they would want me to scat—but they always had to pay me.

“Father was a mining engineer—not from going to school, but by experience. He was away a lot of the time and mother thought we boys were supposed to assume the responsibility of the farm, we had a few tenants but they had to be looked after. In that way I learned to farm and I like it a lot.

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“I graduated from high school and came on to Riverton to take a business course. I took everything they had to offer but shorthand. I find now that is what I needed most. If I had taken that course I might have had a better position now, but I had the idea that only a sissy would want to write shorthand. I think today is the age of specialization and the boy or girl without even a high school education has no more chance than one of these blind men we see walking up and down the streets led by some of their friends. I have been on this job for four months. In order to get the position I had to buy a car, but to my mind a home should have come first with everybody. To own a home gives such a sense of security.

“I am at present working as salesman for a Sewing Machine company. It's a commission and small salary basis. When I started to work with this company I thought my people were going to disown me. They had heard so many stories about the 'SEWING MACHINE AGENTS'. Mother said, 'Son come on home and farm, or try to got something else; anything but becoming a machine agent'. I think she changed her mind when I went home last week-end and she learned I had made a little over \$53.00 in one week. I would say an adequate income for a single man would be around \$1800 a year, and I am doing everything in my power to make it, and I think I will.

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"I like my work very much; there are a lot of things I don't know about a machine, and still more I don't know about people. They will meet you at the door and declare they are not going to buy a machine when they know they are not going to let you leave until they have bought. I get a big thrill out of fighting for a sale. I feel like I have worked for what I get then, but these easy sales are the ones that are hard to collect on.

"My company is all right. I am proud to be connected with a big concern, and I want them to be proud of me. I guess I have hitched my wagon to a star because some day I want to become manager of a shop; I believe they will promote me when I am qualified. You know there is always room at the top for good men. In the last three months I have sold over \$2000 worth of machines, which isn't at all bad when you take into consideration the cheap dresses the shops have to offer and the number of women who wear ready-made clothes.

"I vote for the Democratic party, not because father votes that way; but because I think its the right party. I remember once when I was in Charleston, S. C. I saw two negroes in the custom house, and I knew they were put in there by the Republican party, since then I couldn't get the consent of my mind to vote for the Republican party no matter who they run.

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"I attend the Methodist church. Rather hate to admit that I haven't been going as regularly as I should since I came here but I am going to get started. Its at church you find the best people and I want to be identified with that class. It also does something to your morals; you feel the church influence all the next week. All churches should have a fund set aside to aid their poor, then we could do away with some of the welfare and Community Chest business.

"Its very little the poor gets from the different organizations grouped together to make up the community chest, because each organization has a head and that head has to have a big salary. I have heard the Superintendent of Public Welfare gets two hundred and fifty

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dollars a month; then there are the interviewers, the case workers and so forth; in a year's time their salaries amount to a big thing. Then the Salvation Army, Red Cross, YMCA, YWCA and numerous other agencies, don't you know by the time all the officials are paid there is very little left for the poor? Oh yes, the business men are going to contribute to it as long as they are called on to do it, for it is a good advertising scheme. How many times have you heard about how generous Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones were when he gave so and so to the Community Chest. What about that man giving the crippled show girl here in Riverton a check for \$100.? Do you think he would have given it if he had been sure no one would find out about it? Not on your life. Isn't that contrary to the Bible, doesn't it say 'Take heed that you do not your alms before men?' If the people would only tithe and do that faithfully, then the churches could take care of their poor in a Christian-like way, and I don't think they would be caught sending women out in the fields to pick cotton when they had three months old babies at home, as they did here a few weeks ago, some of them even fainting in the fields. I tell you I hate to give a dollar of my money to any organization when I feel that the larger portion is going to pay salaries to people who, if they really had to get out and work for a living like I do, would think it was a disgrace to sell Sewing Machines.

“My health is very good now. I have had a great deal of sinus trouble, but since the operation I have been better and this fresh air is fine for me.

“I stay pretty close around the boarding house all week; some nights I have to make some collections on accounts where husband and wife each work. On week-ends I usually go home and I date a little. Me and my girl go to the show and dance, or maybe to a ball game. One thing is certain, I am not going to let anything come between me and my work. I am in this business to make all I can. I hope some day to reach my goal, build a nice little home and with the only girl settle down.”