

## [Joe Matheson]

August 15, 1939

Joe Matheson (Salesman)

Hickory, N. C.

Ethel Deal, Writer

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser Original Names Changed Names

Joe Matheson John Matthews

Duke Power Co. Dutch Power Co.

Troutman Trent

Phyllis Pamela

Charlotte Riverton

Hickory Hadden

Lenoir-Rhyne College Lane-Macon College C [9?] [1/22/41?] — [?]

“I’m John Matthews from the Dutch Power Company. I have a paper here I wanted you to sign. It’s a right of way to bring the the power line through.”

“Sure, I’ll sign it,” I said, “and I want your life story while you are here.”

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“Well, of course I'll be glad to help you any way I can. I've always tried to do anything I could to be of service. So here goes- If I don't give you what you want, just stop me.

“I was born on a farm [near?] a little town Trent. My father was postmaster there seven years, but he kept the farm and us boys went back and forth and farmed it. He still owns it.

“I finished high school but could not go to college on account of the family finances. It was up to me to get out and do what I could about it. In 19123 I went to work as a section hand on the railroad at one eighty a day. In 1924 I entered college. I didn't have any money, only what I had managed to save on the railroad job, so I started working my way through. It was quite a fad at that time for students to work. You will wonder what I did. Well, I washed dishes, mopped floors, and waited on the tables. That 2 meant every day and [Sundat?] Sunday too. At home I was used to going to church. When you are working at a boarding house you don't have time to go. Fact is, there is always work to be done in church hours.

“When school was out that first year I went back home. I got a job with an automobile concern. I greased cars and worked as an all round handy man at two dollars a day. I'll never forget that man, he's dead now. He gave me that job to help me out.

“In the fall of 1934 I went back to college, and took up my work at the boarding house. I had to work hard there and had no leisure hours, but it was the only way. The money I had earned during vacation, I had to spend carefully. I got through another year and came home. That year it was hard to find anything to do. Finally I got in a cotton mill stripping cards five nights a week, twelve hours a day. The pay was eleven fifty a week. I only worked three mouths, and then went to Chicago. I got me a job in a gas producing company. They worked three eight hour shifts, two thousand men [on?] the shift. My job was to operate the ammonia distillation plant. I made good on that job. I liked Chicago fine but I wouldn't want to make it my home.

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"I'm a methodist. The first thing I did after securing me a job and boarding place was to look up the minister. There 3 was a methodist church in the suburbs where I boarded. I went to sunday school and preaching: taught a class of boys, joined the league and had a nice time. The little church just had four hundred members. Once a week the young folks met at some members home for a social gathering.

"Swimming was a form of recreation everyone seemed intereste interested in. A drive to Lake Michigian on the beach was the thing. You had to furnish your own swimming suits. There were no bath houses, you changed your clothes in the car with the help of your beach robe.

"Here in the south, the millionairs are about the only ones who can afford to play golf. There, the poor people played: thirty five cents is all it cost them to play all day.

"When I first went to Chicago, I was appalled at the number of people who drank. There were no prohibition laws there, and people made and drank anything they wanted. It was kept in the homes, losts of folks made beer. They drank in moderation, you seldom saw anyone intoxicated.

"My pay was good out there. I'm not sure, but I think it averaged about eighty two and a half cents an hour. I drew forty dollars a week.

"I had saved eleven hundred dollars and I didn't go 4 back to the boarding house this year, I stayed at the dormitory. When vacation time came around again, I went to Atlantic City and worked as a [buss?] boy in a cafe. Lots of the boys did this. Three friends I had made in Chicago had come back to college with me. Their funds were low; I explained to them how I was working my way through, they decided to do the same. Two of the boys were twin brothers. They all three worked hard at anything they could get. They finished after I did and are making good. The twins went into electrical engineering after finishing school. The other ented law school. He's now with the diplomatic service in Washington.

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“When I finished school, I had nothing in mind I wanted to do. I had not studied for any special thing. Being on the loose, I went back to Chicago and worked another year. I'd simply spent everything I could get at school. After working there another year, I came back home. I had no idea of making my home in the north, the south suits me better. The people here are more free and easy. I like their ways best.

“I met a lovely girl in my home town- she was teaching school there at the time. Pamela was a college graduate. We planned to be married as soon as I could get something permanent. I took a job in Riverton with Mill Power Supply Company at a salary of one hundred and 5 thirty five dollars a month. I worked there three years, and I got married in 1931. I came to Hadden eight years ago and am now a salesman for the Dutch Power Company. I like it fine. It's a good firm to work for and I hope to continue with them. I sell electric stoves, irons, frigidaires, hot plates, percolators, in fact, anything you want. I'm down here today getting people to sign up for this line.”

Mr. Matthews turned around in his chair, crossed his legs and said:

“About that story, now. I'm not through. I've told you what I've done to get through school, but I've not told you yet what I hope to do. I don't own my own home but I'm going to build; I've already bought my lot. We have two children, a boy and a girl; Pamela is seven, John Junior is four. We hope to have two more, a girl and a boy. That's not a large family compared with what people used to have, but we want more than two. I'm planning a right nice home close to Lane-Macon College. I want it close enough so the children can stay at home and can walk back and forth to school.

“As for activities, my wife and I don't go much . We play bridge once in awhile and attend church regular. We both teach a Sunday school class and have lots of friends. Our life is very quiet, we prefer it that way. About once a 6 year we go to a dance, not because we enjoy it so much; we do it to keep in touch of the younger set. We want to have our family now before we get too old to enjoy them.

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“We're both Republicans and we both vote. I believe in women having equal rights with men. I like the president but feel like he has make some mistakes. One of the biggest he can make will be to run again. [Now?], about this old age pension and social security, that's fine. This relief business is a thing that is a necessity or had been. How it's to be worked out I don't know. I guess that's about all I can say. I'm glad if I've been able to help you any.”

“Thank you, Mr. Matthews,[“?”] I said. “I know you'll make good. I can see the new home and the four children already.”

He laughed and said, “I hope you're right.”