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STAYING ON IN MACON ~~HAS~~ <sup>HAD</sup> ITS REWARDS

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In April of 1931, The New York Sun asked Mark to come back as a "special writer" at a much <sup>higher</sup> larger salary than he was ~~getting~~ <sup>earning</sup> on the Telegraph ~~and News~~, and, ~~con~~ <sup>that</sup> sidering he had a wife and three children to support, he accepted. ~~Mr.~~ <sup>W.T.</sup> put ~~his~~ <sup>the</sup> resignation <sup>(announcement)</sup> on the front page, with a generous account of ~~his~~ <sup>Mark's</sup> civic accomplishments since coming to Macon.

There was a considerable to-do about our leaving. A lot of friends gave farewell parties and the Macon Writers' club, which took itself seriously and had what it called a "breakfast" one noon every spring, to honor a writer or two whom they considered worthy, had Mark and me as "celebrities."

Then, after all the parties and tearful good-bys, Mark decided not to go.

He wrote his mother his reasons for at first accepting the New York offer and then changing his mind. One reason for his wanting to leave was the disappointing <sup>Salary</sup> amount of money the Telegraph was paying him. However, that was secondary. The main reason was he thought he detected business-office domination coming into the editorial rooms. ~~Mr.~~ W.T. had been worried about finances as almost everybody was, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Mark felt he was cutting down ~~so~~ drastically on the news content of the paper and Mark wasn't willing to see something he had worked

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for so hard shot to pieces. <sup>Besides</sup> ~~Then, too,~~ ~~Mr.~~ W.T. had a brother, ~~Mr.~~ P.T., a little younger than he, who was business manager of the papers and had only one concern ~~to make money and lots of it.~~ He was constantly trying to get ~~Mr.~~ W.T. to "buddy-up" to the rich people in Macon, especially the big bankers and advertisers who ~~talked against~~ <sup>affected/opposed</sup> the paper's liberal stand. ~~So far Mr.~~ W.T. had withstood the reactionary pressure of ~~Mr.~~ P.T. and his friends; nevertheless, Mark was uneasy.

"I don't think Mr. W.T. thought I was going for some time after my resignation was in," he wrote his mother. "On Thursday, after I resigned on Saturday, he began to talk with me. He made every reasonable promise I could expect. He gave me a much freer hand than I had had before, so that my position is definitely improved. In addition, he intends for me to come into half the paper at his death. That will be quite a fortune for me. I would be foolish, in the light of the new circumstances, to go."

Mr. W.T.'s version of ~~his~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~about~~ ~~face~~ was somewhat different from Mark's, ~~which~~ <sup>and it</sup> is quite interesting, ~~con-~~ sidering future developments. ~~Mr.~~ W.T. ran the follow- ing announcement <sup>page</sup> on the editorial ~~page~~:

"It gives me great pleasure to state that Mr. Mark Ethridge has reconsidered his plans with reference to joining the staff of the New York Sun,

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and will remain permanently with the Telegraph in the work heretofore so ably and acceptably done by him....

"Only by actually having his resignation accepted and being confronted with the severance of all Macon ties, was he able to decide conclusively and for all time what was best for him to do.

"After further consideration he took up with the editor of the Sun the matter of his release, and the reasons for asking it; that he was making his decision once and for all to remain in Macon permanently, where upon the Sun very generously wired him by all means to stay and good luck."

Editor & Publisher, the house organ of the newspaper profession, (carried on May 9, 1931, an article headed: "M.E.'S DECISION HAILED IN EDITORIAL" and proclaimed in the "bank" ~~meaning the second or sub-headline~~ "Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser (no doubt, Grover Hall, the editor) Waxes Poetic in Praising Mark Ethridge's Plan to Remain in Georgia." After an opening explanatory paragraph, Editor & Publisher quoted in part the Advertiser's editorial:

"After resigning from the Telegraph and getting his black valise packed to go to New York, Anderson outtalked Ethridge and pledged him to spend the rest of his life down here where figs, honeysuckles, the tar on cotton ties, dogwoods, magnolias, cotton blossoms,

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peanuts, sugar <sup>I</sup>cane, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, black <sup>J</sup>berries, chicken pies, turnips, snap <sup>#</sup>beans, hawg chitt'lin's, sugarless corn bread, hot biscuits and pleasant neighbors are the ingredients <sup>that</sup> which go into the magic anesthesia <sup>that</sup> which carries us through hard times without cracking up, and makes summertime <sup>me</sup> even in Macon worth enduring.

"The South with its boll weevil, its charlatans, its illiteracy, its poverty, has its faults and <sup>#</sup>its troubles, but down here potash is guano and a soap ingredient and not a flavoring extract used by hillside manufacturers.

"And New York is money and brick and stone; it is noise and confusion; it is a great cavern where individuals are swallowed and you do not even know the name of the man who shoots at you. It is indeed the city of perfect strangers.

"The South is the South, Georgia is Georgia. And so the little black valise of Mark Ethridge has been pushed under the bed to collect dust till kingdom come. We are delighted."

Mark was happy about his new relationship with <sup>Anderson</sup> ~~W.T.~~. He had a freer hand than he had <sup>had</sup> before and he didn't have to think about what ~~me~~ W.T. would say about an editorial. Their personal relationship also was warmer. <sup>Anderson</sup> ~~W.T.~~, having no son of <sup>his</sup> own, took Mark to a father-son banquet and introduced him as

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the closest to a son he had ever had.

Then Macon itself made <sup>Mark</sup> ~~him~~ content with his decision. <sup>It was</sup> Macon, as he expresses it, "~~was~~ a hell of a good news paper town." Though it had a population of only about 65,000, good stories were breaking there all the time. Franklin Roosevelt's frequent visits to Warm Springs also produced excellent copy. Long before Mr. Roosevelt's four years as governor of New York were up, the bandwagon for his nomination as the Democratic candidate for president was <sup>already rolling</sup> ~~well under way~~. For instance, on October 1, 1931, almost three years to the day since he had been nominated for the governorship, the Meriwether County Roosevelt-for-President club had a huge barbecue at Warm Springs in his honor. Mark, ~~Mr.~~ W.T., George Burt, <sup>political</sup> one of the star reporters, ~~Mr.~~ Albert McKay, a prominent Macon citizen, and I drove over for it.

For Mark it was an eye-opening day. He realized for the first time what an exceptionally effective political campaigner Mr. Roosevelt was, ~~He~~ <sup>ing</sup> recognized <sup>in him</sup> ~~that Mr. Roosevelt had~~ that rare quality we later called "charisma."

The barbecue was going strong by the time we got there. Fifteen hundred or more people <sup>had</sup> ~~were there~~ gathered in a great grove of trees where the tables were set up. A band was playing; cameras turned in all directions; red, yellow, and blue balloons floated at

the ends of long cords; there were lapel buttons with the slogan, "Franklin for President" on them; girls sang, men made speeches, and everybody shook hands.

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Mr. Roosevelt was being served barbecue and ~~Buns~~<sup>Buns with</sup> ~~work~~ stew when we reached the grandstand where he was sitting with members of the press. Watching him greet the people who thronged ~~up~~ to shake his hand, Mark commented on his lightning-quick smile, his energetic handshake, his happy way of saying the right thing.

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Mark was also impressed with ~~his~~<sup>Roosevelt's</sup> gift for remembering names and connecting them with the proper people under the proper circumstances. ~~When a friend of Mark's, Andrew Erwin of Athens, went up to speak to him, an aide, standing by, said, "Governor Roosevelt, here is Mr. Andrew Erwin."~~

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~~Through~~<sup>When</sup> Mr. Roosevelt hadn't seen ~~him~~<sup>Erwin</sup> since ~~Mr. Erwin had made a speech at the Democratic convention in New York in 1924, his face lit up in a broad smile and as his hand grabbed Mr. Erwin's, he said jovially, "Andrew, you've stoutened up a little." And so Andrew had!~~<sup>1924</sup>

When ~~Mr.~~ W.T. went up, the aide began calling, "Gov~~r~~ ernor Roosevelt, here is Mr. W.T. Anderson of the Macon Telegraph."

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Instead of ~~Mr. Roosevelt~~ saying, "I know Mr. Anderson" or something just as trite, ~~he~~<sup>Mr. Roosevelt</sup> gave ~~Mr.~~ W.T. a great big wink as if to imply: "How foolish this fellow is to introduce us old friends." Then he grinned, shook ~~Mr.~~<sup>Anderson's</sup> ~~W.T.'s~~ hand vigorously, and said, "W.T., I'm glad you

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got here."

Until three o'clock in the afternoon, when <sup>Mr. Roosevelt</sup> he had to go to watch a golf match, he shook hands, said gracious words, and even led the band for the camera men.

When, nine months later, he <sup>won</sup> got the presidential nomination, the Telegraph supported his candidacy with ~~the most~~ enthusiastic, persuasive, ~~all-out~~ editorials ~~until the very day of his election.~~

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