

experience in Georgia; it was ignored or minimized in most of them, even though race relations comprise the core of Georgia history.

Beginning in 1973, when Dad wasn't teaching or doing research in Latin America, he worked on the book. He retired from teaching in 1985 but pressed on with his history. In the spring of 1987 he sent chapters covering Georgia's history from the 1500s to the mid-1960s to an academic press. He kept working on subsequent chapters until July 1987, when he and Mom left Fort Valley to teach American history and the English language at a university in the People's Republic of China. By this time, he had put in nearly twenty thousand hours on the book. Although he planned to update the book, Dad never got back to it. Soon after he returned from China, Dad died of heart disease.

My involvement with Dad's book actually began when I was a nineteen-year-old student at UGA. During spring quarter 1975, I did some research for him in the Georgia Room of the main library—reading through house and senate journals, taking notes on Georgia's particularly nasty Reconstruction experience, and wishing I was somewhere else. The most important thing I learned was that the Georgia General Assembly expelled its black members due to their race shortly after they took their seats in 1868. Not a pretty picture of the state's race relations.

I graduated from the University in December 1976 as an English major. (I liked the idea of reading Hemingway for credit.) I became a journalist—first as a reporter in Warner Robins, then later as an editor and bureau chief for the *Macon Telegraph*. For six years (1982-1987) I served as spokesman for the Georgia Public Service Commission. Then I resigned to write my novel. In terms of finishing Dad's book, I figured I had three things going for me: I knew how to edit copy, I

knew the state and its government very well, and, having just finished a book-length manuscript, I believed I could handle a project of this size.

There were complications, of course, for the scope of Dad's project was mind-boggling. My initial calculation about how long it would take me to complete the book was wrong—it didn't take a year, it took nearly two.

A colleague of Dad's once noted that "he was nothing if not encyclopedic"—and, in the case of his book, he had written enough to fill an encyclopedia. This was a labor of love, and it had grown beyond the bounds of a publishable work. I realized that getting the book published would mean cutting the manuscript considerably. Moving, condensing, and cutting the text also meant modifying the footnotes—or more properly, endnotes. There were close to 10,000 of them on individual notecards.

Dad's title for the book, *The Way It Was: The Black Experience in Georgia*, was overly modest, for he placed "Georgia's blacks in a national and sometimes international context," as he informed would-be publishers. Then he would

tell them how long his manuscript was. Big mistake.

Dad was the King of Interrelated Facts. His account of slavery began in Africa in 1440 with Portuguese slave traders. Before long, he'd gone off to Jamaica with pioneering black minister George Liele, formerly of Georgia, who set up Baptist churches following the American Revolution. His narrative also led readers to Brazil, where fugitive slave owners had fled during the Civil War in hopes of keeping the institution of slavery intact there.

Dad's absence meant that we couldn't have the usual editor-author arguments. So I would rant and rave at my computer screen instead.

*We're supposed to be in Georgia, Dad! Can we keep it in Georgia?*

To keep the book at a manageable length, I had to trim the story around Georgia's edges. But I also had to keep in mind that this was still Dad's book, and I wanted to be true to his message. Thus, it was often necessary to show the outside world's influence on Georgia—and vice versa.

What's scary is that, based on the unused notes I saw, Dad could have



Jonathan Grant (shown at left at a book signing) was more than an editor on *The Way It Was* in the South. His father's completed chapters ended with the civil rights movement, so Jonathan wrote the last few chapters, which deal with events such as the Forsyth County brotherhood march of 1987.