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EDITORS' NOTE

Day of Farewell
in Flat Rock

Upon hearing of Carl Sandburg's death, Mike Silva, who is a correspondent in our Washington bureau, called Mrs. Sandburg in Flat Rock, N.C. and asked her whether he could come down to the house on the day of the funeral. "Oh, by all means, yes," Mrs. Sandburg answered. "Carl belongs to the world."

Last Monday morning Mrs. Sandburg welcomed Mike at the front door, introduced him to friends and family who were eating breakfast in shifts, then took him on a tour of the house. "This house was pretty high for us," she told him—"50,000! But when Carl came along and saw it, he slammed his hand down and declared, 'We shall look no further.' It seemed like a big plunge." Mrs. Sandburg showed Mike her husband's long-unused office. Downstairs there were plaques to be seen—one from the NAACP making Sandburg a life member at age 87; a social justice award from the United Auto Workers; another from the Girl Scouts. On either side of the fireplace was a basket crammed with walking sticks—"People who came to see him loved to bring him sticks," Mrs. Sandburg said. Closed in its case on the piano in the living room was Sandburg's guitar.

"It was perhaps," Silva told us, "the serenity of Mrs. Sandburg that pervaded the atmosphere most. She spoke of the joy she and Carl shared when one of their goats produced 5,760 pounds of milk in 10 months, establishing an all-time record. At the noon meal people gathered and, between bites of devil's food cake, Ralph McGill, the Atlanta newspaper editor, read aloud 'The Junk Man,' his own favorite Sandburg poem. Harry Golden, the author, and for the last two decades one of Sandburg's closest friends, spoke of the riots raging in Detroit that very minute, which recalled to him lines of a Sandburg poem titled 'Upstream.' It expressed Sandburg's belief that no matter how bad the circumstance, strength and belief will persevere. Golden quoted the poem's last line, 'The strong men keep coming on.'"

Margaret, one of the Sandburgs' three daughters, excitedly showed Mike something she had just come upon in the house—a 1906 notebook of her father's in which he had meticulously copied a long poem by Walt Whitman. At the funeral, held in a church built in the Carolina wilderness in 1830, the hymns that Sandburg had ordered up in his poem "Finish" were played—"John Brown's Body" and "Shout All Over God's Heaven." "John Brown," Mike noticed, "produced a quiver in some of the ladies of the community in the congregation. It was probably the first time it had ever been played in that Deep South town. It was as if Carl were having a final chuckle."

Back at the house Mike asked Mrs. Sandburg whether he could take some of the pictures off the walls to use in our tribute to her husband. "Please do," she replied. "You're welcome to anything we have." The one we like the best is the picture on page 50, Sandburg singing to his guitar. There is something about the everlasting devilment in his eyes that almost tells the whole story.



THE SANDBURG GUITAR

George P. Hunt

GEORGE P. HUNT, Managing Editor

LIFE

Negro Revolt: The Flames Spread

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