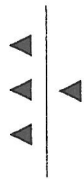


P A R T 2

An Island



David Brower, who talks to groups all over the country about conservation, refers to what he says as The Sermon. He travels so light he never seems far from home—one tie, one suit. He calls it his preacher suit. He has given the sermon at universities, in clubs, in meeting halls, and once in a cathedral (he has otherwise not been in a church for thirty years), and while he talks he leans up to the lectern with his feet together and his knees slightly bent, like a skier. He seems to feel comfortable in the stance, perhaps because he was once a ski mountaineer.

Sooner or later in every talk, Brower describes the creation of the world. He invites his listeners to consider the six days of Genesis as a figure of speech for what has in fact

been four billion years. On this scale, a day equals something like six hundred and sixty-six million years, and thus "all day Monday and until Tuesday noon, creation was busy getting the earth going." Life began Tuesday noon, and "the beautiful, organic wholeness of it" developed over the next four days. "At 4 p.m. Saturday, the big reptiles came on. Five hours later, when the redwoods appeared, there were no more big reptiles. At three minutes before midnight, man appeared. At one-fourth of a second before midnight, Christ arrived. At one-fortieth of a second before midnight, the Industrial Revolution began. We are surrounded with people who think that what we have been doing for that one-fourth of a second can go on indefinitely. They are considered normal, but they are stark, raving mad."

Brower holds up a photograph of the world—blue, green, and swirling white. "This is the sudden insight from Apollo," he says. "There it is. That's all there is. We see through the eyes of the astronauts how fragile our life is, how thin is the epithelium of the atmosphere."

Brower has computed that we are driving through the earth's resources at a rate comparable to a man's driving an automobile a hundred and twenty-eight miles per hour—and he says that we are accelerating. He reminds his audiences that buffalo were shot for their tongues alone, and he says that we still have a buffalo-tongue economy. "We're hooked on growth. We're addicted to it. In my lifetime, man has used more resources than in all previous history. Technology has just begun to happen. They are *mining* water under Arizona. Cotton is subsidized by all that water. Why

grow cotton in Arizona? There is no point to this. People in Texas want to divert the Yukon and have it flow to Texas. We are going to fill San Francisco Bay so we can have another Los Angeles in a state that deserves only one. Why grow to the point of repugnance? Aren't we repugnant enough already? In the new subdivisions, everybody can have a redwood of his own. Consolidated Edison has to quadruple by 1990. Then what else have you got besides kilowatts? The United States has six per cent of the world's population and uses sixty per cent of the world's resources, and one per cent of Americans use sixty per cent of that. When one country gets more than its share, it builds tensions. War is waged over resources. Expansion will destroy us. We need an economics of peaceful stability. Instead, we are fishing off Peru, where the grounds are so rich there's enough protein to feed the undernourished of the world, and we bring the fish up here to fatten our cattle and chickens. We want to build a sea-level canal through Central America. The Pacific, which is colder than the Atlantic, is also higher. The Pacific would flow into the Atlantic and could change the climate of the Caribbean. A dam may be built in the Amazon basin that will flood an area the size of Italy. Aswan Dam, by blocking the flow of certain nutrients, has killed off the sardine fisheries of the eastern Mediterranean. There is a human population problem, but if we succeed in interrupting the cycle of photosynthesis we won't have to worry about it. Good breeding can be overdone. How dense can people be?"

More than one of Brower's colleagues—in the Sierra Club,

of which he was for seventeen years executive director, and, more recently, in his two new organizations, Friends of the Earth and the John Muir Institute for Environmental Studies—has compared him to John Brown. Brower approaches sixty, but under his shock of white hair his grin is youthful and engaging. His tone of voice, soft and mournful, somehow concentrates the intensity of his words. He speaks calmly, almost ironically, of “the last scramble for the last breath of air,” as if that were something we had all been planning for. “There is DDT in the tissues of penguins in the Antarctic,” he says. “Who put the DDT in Antarctica? We did. We put it on fields, and it went into streams, and into fish, and into more fish, and into the penguins. There is pollution we know about and pollution we don’t know about. It took fifty-seven years for us to find out that radiation is harmful, twenty-five years to find out that DDT is harmful, twenty years for cyclamates. We’re getting somewhere. We have recently found out that polychlorinated biphenyls, a plastic by-product, have spread throughout the global ecosystem. At Hanford, Washington, radioactive atomic waste is stored in steel tanks that will have to be replaced every fifteen years for a thousand years. We haven’t done *anything* well for a thousand years, except multiply. An oil leak in Bristol Bay, Alaska, will put the red salmon out of action. Oil exploration off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland will lead to leaks that will someday wreck the fisheries there. We’re hooked. We’re addicted. We’re committing grand larceny against our children. Ours is a chain-letter economy, in which we pick up early handsome divi-

dends and our children find their mailboxes empty. We must shoot down the SST. Sonic booms are unsound. Why build the fourth New York jetport? What about the fifth, the sixth, the seventh jetport? We’ve got to kick this addiction. It won’t work on a finite planet. When rampant growth happens in an individual, we call it cancer.”

To put it mildly, there is something evangelical about Brower. His approach is in some ways analogous to the Reverend Dr. Billy Graham’s exhortations to sinners to come forward and be saved now because if you go away without making a decision for Christ coronary thrombosis may level you before you reach the exit. Brower’s crusade, like Graham’s, began many years ago, and Brower’s may have been more effective. The clamorous concern now being expressed about conservation issues and environmental problems is an amplification—a delayed echo—of what Brower and others have been saying for decades. Brower is a visionary. He wants—literally—to save the world. He has been an emotionalist in an age of dangerous reason. He thinks that conservation should be “an ethic and conscience in everything we do, whatever our field of endeavor”—in a word, a religion. If religions arise to meet the most severe of human crises, now and then religions may come too late, and that may be the case with this one. In Brower’s fight to save air and canyons, to defend wilderness and control the growth of population, he is obviously desperate, an extreme and driven man. His field, being the relationship of everything to everything else and how it is not working, is so comprehensive that no one can comprehend it. Hence the need for

a religion and for a visionary to lead it. Brower once said to me, "We are in a kind of religion, an ethic with regard to terrain, and this religion is closest to the Buddhist, I suppose." I have often heard him speak of "drawing people into the religion," and of being able to sense at once when people already have the religion; I also remember a time, on a trail in the Sierra Nevada, when he said, "We can take some cues from other religions. There is something else to do than bang your way forward."

Throughout the sermon, Brower quotes the gospel—the gospel according to John Muir ("When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe"), the gospel according to Henry David Thoreau ("What is the good of a house if you don't have a tolerable planet to put it on?"), the gospel according to Buckminster Fuller ("Technology must do more with less"), and the gospel according to Pogo ("We have met the enemy and he is us"). A great deal of the sermon is, in fact, a chain of one-liners from the thinking sector: "The only true dignity of man is his ability to fight against insurmountable odds" (Ignazio Silone), "Civilization is a thin veneer over what made us what we are" (Sigurd Olson), "Despair is a sin" (C. P. Snow), "Every cause is a lost cause unless we defuse the population bomb" (Paul Ehrlich), "The wilderness holds answers to questions man has not yet learned how to ask" (Nancy Newhall).

Brower has ample ideas of his own about what might be done. He says, "Roughly ninety per cent of the earth has felt man's hand already, sometimes brutally, sometimes

gently. Now let's say, 'That's the limit.' We should go back over the ninety and not touch the remaining ten per cent. We should go back, and do better, with ingenuity. Recycle things. Loop the system." When he sees an enormous hole in the ground in the middle of New York City, he says, "That's all right. That's part of the ninety." In non-wilderness areas, he is nowhere happier than in places where the ninety has been imaginatively gone over—for example, Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, a complex of shops and restaurants in a kind of brick Xanadu that was once a chocolate factory. When someone asks him what one person can do, Brower begins by mentioning Rachel Carson. Then he tells about David Pesonen, a young man in California who stopped a nuclear-power station singlehanded. Then he sprays questions. "Are you willing to pay more for steak, if cattle graze on level ground and not on erodable hills? Are you willing to pay more for electricity, if the power plant doesn't pollute air or water?" He taunts the assembled sinners. "You are villains not to share your apples with worms. Bite the worms. They won't hurt nearly as much as the insecticide does. You are villains if you keep buying automobiles. Leave these monsters in the showroom." Invariably, he includes what must be his favorite slogan: "Fight blight, burn a billboard tonight!"

The cause is, in a sense, hopeless. "Conservationists have to win again and again and again," he says. "The enemy only has to win once. We are not out for ourselves. We can't win. We can only get a stay of execution. That is the best we can hope for. If the dam is not built, the damsite is still

there. Blocking something is easiest. Getting a wilderness bill, a Redwoods Park bill, a Cascades Park bill, is toughest of all."

Brower is somewhat inconvenienced by the fact that he is a human being, fated, like everyone else, to use the resources of the earth, to help pollute its air, to jam its population. The sermon becomes confessional when he reveals, as he almost always does, that he has four children and lives in a redwood house. "We all make mistakes," he explains. His own mistakes don't really trouble him, though, for he has his eye on what he knows to be right. After he gave a lecture at Yale once, I asked him where he got the interesting skein of statistics that six per cent of the world's population uses sixty per cent of the world's resources and one per cent of the six per cent uses sixty per cent of the sixty per cent. What resources? Kleenex? The Mesabi Range?

Brower said the figures had been worked out in the head of a friend of his from data assembled "to the best of his recollection."

"To the best of his *recollection*?"

"Yes," Brower said, and assured me that figures in themselves are merely indices. What matters is that they feel right. Brower feels things. He is suspicious of education and frankly distrustful of experts. He has no regard for training per se. His intuition seeks the nature of the man inside the knowledge. His sentiments are incredibly lofty. I once heard him say, "It's pretty easy to revere life if you think of all the things it's done while it was onstage." He is not sombre, though. Reading a newspaper, he will come upon a piece by

a conservation writer and say, "I like that. He's neutral the right way."

Brower is a conservationist, but he is not a conservative. I have heard him ask someone, "Do you like the world so much that you want to keep it the way it is?"—an odd question to be coming from David Brower, but he was talking about the world of men. The world of nature is something else. Brower is against the George Washington Bridge. He is against the Golden Gate Bridge. He remembers San Francisco when the bridge was not there, and he says the entrance to the bay was a much more beautiful scene without it. He would like to cut back the population of the United States to a hundred million. He has said that from the point of view of land use the country has not looked right since 1830. There are conservationists (a few, anyway) who are even more vociferous than Brower, but none with his immense reputation, none with his record of battles fought and won—defeater of dams, defender of wilderness. He must be the most unrelenting fighter for conservation in the world. Russell Train, chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, once said, "Thank God for Dave Brower. He makes it so easy for the rest of us to be reasonable. Somebody has to be a little extreme. Dave is a little hairy at times, but you do need somebody riding out there in front."



The office of Charles Fraser, the developer, is in a small building about halfway between an undeveloped jungle and

an alligator pond on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Alligators sometimes crawl along the sidewalk between the jungle and the pond. The alligators are natives and Fraser is not. Fraser was anxious lest the alligators be disturbed when, in 1957, he began building roads and golf courses and clearing homesites on some five thousand acres of the island, so he fed them great hunks of raw beef to lull them into acceptance of his bulldozers. The alligators swallowed it. They live now in water hazards and other artificial ponds throughout Fraser's Sea Pines Plantation. On his office wall Fraser has a picture of himself, in a white suit and a panama hat, walking an alligator. Signs along the fairways say, "Please do not molest the alligators." Fraser tried something similar with the bald eagles that were there, but the eagles would have none of it, and they flew away.

Fraser is a short man, heavyset, prominent in the forehead, dark curly hair wisping out behind. The first time I saw him, he was standing on a floating dock at his Sea Pines marina, drinking Portuguese rosé and wearing tennis shoes, white trousers, and a blue striped shirt. Those who know him would not instantly recognize such a snapshot, for although Fraser has built one of the creamiest resorts in America, he himself is not the resort type. He drinks little and plays less. Recreation is his business, and business seems to be his recreation. He almost always wears a plain dark suit. He tucks his chin in and sits straight when he is saying something important, and the more important it is, the straighter he sits. He talks about "marketing-acceptance factors" and about how "public money floats better than

joint-venture money." His conversation is predominantly about money—its flows, its freezes, its cataracts, its sources, its deltas. He speaks in a clear, authoritative voice, very slowly, as if he were writing a contract as he goes along.

When Fraser first saw Hilton Head Island, rimmed with beaches and the ocean, it was a wilderness of palmettos, live oaks, Sabal palms, egret rookeries, and tupelo swamps shimmering with rattlesnakes and cottonmouths. What he saw there horrified him. Fraser is a visionary. He did not see the rattlesnakes. He saw Coney Island rising from the swamps. He saw what he calls "visual pollution." He saw Myrtle Beach, Asbury Park, Seaside Heights, and Atlantic City. He saw the whole sorry coastline of the Atlantic states—two thousand miles of used flypaper. The flies had missed here and there—Blackbeard Island, Cape Fear, Hilton Head—leaving pristine and visible some segments of one of the longest and most beautiful chains of barrier beaches in the world. Fraser, who was twenty-one, felt that development of some kind was inevitable at Hilton Head, and that it need not look like Myrtle Beach, and need not be done in dissonance with nature. He went to Yale Law School, and the course that most absorbed him was Myres McDougal's Land Use Planning and Allocation by Private Agreement. The gist of what McDougal had to say was that the use of property ought to be planned, because when development is allowed to occur without control the result can be a form of destruction. Throughout his years in New Haven, Fraser was obsessed with a desire to create on Hilton Head Island a resort community over which he would retain absolute

aesthetic control, and he was in a position to do so, since his family owned much of the island.

Fraser's father, Lieutenant General Joseph B. Fraser, was a lumber king in Hinesville, Georgia, whenever there was not a war. He and several partners had bought the island for its timber and its speculative potentialities. Charles Fraser worked in summer with the timbering teams and successfully urged that no cutting be done in oceanfront stands of virgin pine. He also drove up and down the coastline from Virginia Beach to Miami seeking out the original developers of beachfront properties wherever he could find them and asking, "If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?" From *haut monde* to honky-tonk and back again, they told him what a shortsighted mistake it had been to line up a row of houses along a beach and then put a road just behind the houses, creating a safety hazard and reducing the value of all the lots on the inland side of the road. They told him that large houses have a way of becoming boarding houses. They told him that control is quickly lost if it is not ironclad. Fraser regularly read almost all the journals of architecture. He went to the National Archives, in Washington, and looked up surveyors' notebooks from the eighteen-sixties, because he wanted his development to be of a piece with history, and he tried to locate old cotton fields, wartime fortifications, and vanished Taras. In 1956, with no development experience and not much money, he returned permanently to Hilton Head, where he began to sketch in the air with his hands scenes that he alone could see. Locally, he was considered a major

and absolute nut. To his mother he confided, "I may never make any money, but I want to create something beautiful." She told him he was going to waste his time and his legal talent. She says now, "Of course, a person doesn't often have a chance to take wilderness and make something of it. Charles has a sense of beauty and balance. He saw the possibilities there. I think he would have been a painter if he hadn't chosen to do something else."

Sea Pines Plantation appears to be something painted by a single hand, in greens, grays, and browns. Its roads, meaning among the live oaks and Sabal palms, were bent wherever necessary to miss the big trees. All stop signs are green. Private roadside mailboxes are all green. Fireplugs are green. So far there are five hundred and fifty private houses, built by five hundred and fifty individual owners, yet most of the houses have cedar-shake roofs and bleached-cypress siding, the intention being that they should blend into their environment like spotted fawns. Some houses are set back in the woods along the fairways. (There are fifty-four fairways.) Other houses are on narrow drives that lead toward the beach from the principal roads, which are considerably inland. No one in the plantation lacks convenient access to the sea, because Fraser left dozens of fifty-foot public swaths between his arterial roads and the beach, and he has built walkways through the swaths. Neither the beach nor the line of primary dunes behind it has been built upon. Fraser spent fifty thousand dollars to save one live oak when he built a seawall for a harbor he dredged. Trees crowd the roads—dangerously in some

places—but Fraser will not remove a tree until automobiles have crashed into it at least twice. He has one section of about a thousand acres that he calls the Main Wildlife Sanctuary and Woodland Recreation Area, and he has legally committed himself to leave twenty-five per cent of the plantation in its natural state. When prospective buyers used to ask about snakes, Fraser would say amelioratively, "Snakes? We'll show you a couple this afternoon." But the snakes eventually received the message, and now they do not show anymore. Alligators are packed up and sent to zoos when they become six feet long. Fraser has a private police force that spends most of its time protecting alligators and deer from poachers. The alligator hides are worth a hundred dollars apiece. Fraser's live oaks were once Methuselan with moss, but after he discovered that rain-soaked Spanish moss can get so heavy it cracks limbs, crews of barbers were sent into the trees to create an overhead garden of Vandykes.

An aerial view of Sea Pines Plantation reveals the great number of houses there, and how close to one another they really are, whereas an observer on the ground—even in the most densely built areas—feels that he is in a partly cleared woodland with some houses blended into it, nothing more. Fraser accomplished this in a region where people have traditionally liked to proclaim their prominence by piling red bricks into enormous cubes and placing before them rows of white columns. He did it—although he occasionally met strong opposition from buyers, bankers, and even subordinates in his own organization—by writing some forty pages of restrictions to attach to every deed. It was a reverse bill

of rights (ironclad), a set of ten times ten commandments—take it or leave. The first restriction in the long list gives a suggestion of the whole: it says that any plan or specification can be disallowed by Fraser for any reason whatever. In the early days, when Fraser was operating more on hope than on money (and in full knowledge that half the bankers in South Carolina thought he would soon go under), he was nonetheless so uncompromising that he was ready without hesitation to reject the house plans even of a textile king. If the king refused to conform, Fraser bought back his land. One giddy homeowner tried to paint his house yellow—a historic moment at Sea Pines Plantation—but Fraser backed him down, blending him into the landscape along with his house.

Fraser is cruising through Sea Pines in an air-conditioned green Dodge. A man who is opening a green mailbox marked "H. F. Scheetz, Jr." looks up and waves hello. Fraser lowers the window. "Hi, Henry!" he says as he glides by. Up goes the window. "I operate as nonelected mayor, so I have to act as if I were elected," he explains. "There is democracy of communication here but autocracy of decision-making. Our corporate contracts and deed covenants are the constitution and bylaws of the community. The only way you can have aesthetic control is through the power of ownership. We have more power than a zoning board has. I have centralized the decision-making process, but I'll listen to anybody." The marvel is not whom he listens to but who listens to him. The car passes some of the nation's most authoritative mailboxes—McCormack of Comsat, Hipp of Lib-

erty Life, Taylor of New York State wine, Twining of the Air Force, Simmons of the mattress, Close of Springs Mills. Fraser calls the plantation "a high-quality destination resort," and it has proved to be the destination of a fairly extensive variety of people—not just the barons of war and commerce but also retirees with wan incomes, golfers of most incomes and all handicaps, tennis players of the wider levels, a few painters, a few writers, and rich widows from the North, who bring their late husbands to Fraser's graveyard and then build homes for themselves in the plantation. What these people have in common is Fraser. He is Yahweh. He is not merely the mayor and the zoning board, he is the living ark of the deed covenant. He is the artist who has painted them into the corners he has sold them. A few owners have put sums like two hundred and fifty and three hundred thousand dollars into their houses, but most are in the forty- to fifty-thousand-dollar range, and Fraser has also built condominium villas that sold originally for as little as nineteen thousand—a minimum that has since risen to thirty-eight thousand. He has also built a small town, shops and all, with apartments that rent for two hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars a month. He figures he can blend fifteen hundred more houses into the trees, and one more golf course.

The chairman of the Continental Mortgage Forum recently introduced Fraser as "one of the two finest developers in the United States," not mentioning his peer. Lyndon Johnson appointed him to the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Outdoor Recreation and Natural Beauty. Fraser is also Commissioner of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism for the

South Carolina coast. Now forty-one, he has made twenty million dollars in the past ten years, but he, his friends, and his enemies all agree that personal profit is not paramount among his motives. Fraser's drive seems to have been directed toward accomplishment for its own sake, toward aesthetics for the sake of an aesthetic criterion. Sea Pines has evolved, perhaps, as a kind of monument.

Fraser considers himself a true conservationist, and he will say that he thinks of most so-called conservationists as "preservationists" but that he prefers to call them "druids." "Ancient druids used to sacrifice human beings under oak trees," he says. "Modern druids worship trees and sacrifice human beings to those trees. They want to save things they like, all for themselves." He is aware of the importance of the larger environment. He says he would like to establish a College of the Oceans—"you know, pot, ecology, the whole bag." He reads the newsletter of the Conservation Foundation. He knows the vital position of salt marshes in marine ecology. "Salt marshes are productive feeding grounds for seafood," he says. "In the immediate marsh boundaries of Hilton Head Island, in the marsh flood plain, we save seventy-five per cent of the marsh, as a balanced approach between the interests of recreation and the interests of the druids. Man has to use some of the salt marsh if he is going to live near the sea. A few years ago, anybody would have said it was O.K. to build anything in a salt marsh. Now the society has so much money that we can afford to wonder. The druids get emotional and say you are upsetting ecology if you as much as touch the salt marsh, and you *have* to be polite. But you can't take the position that production of

seafood is the most important issue in America. The druids dismiss me as a quote developer unquote, and that makes me mad."



There must be a very remarkable druid at Hammond, Inc., in New York, for Hammond has published a large map that seems particularly notable for what can only be a deliberate omission. It happens that the longest undeveloped beach on the Atlantic coast of the United States forms the eastern shoreline of a very large island, no part of which appears on this map—Hammond's Superior Map of the United States, four feet wide, one inch to seventy miles—although the map shows clearly such islands as Ocracoke, Hatteras, Assateague, Long Beach, and Manhattan, all of which are smaller. The name of the missing island is Cumberland. Virtually uninhabited, it lies off the coast of Georgia. It is the largest and the southernmost of the Georgia sea islands, and on the map the place where Cumberland Island should be is filled with nothing but blue Atlantic, although other sea islands—St. Simons, Sapelo, Ossabaw—stand forth in bold outline to the north. Clearly the work of a druid cartographer.

Cumberland Island, a third larger than Manhattan, has a population of eleven. Its beach is a couple of hundred yards wide and consists of a white sand that is fine and soft to the touch. The beach is just under twenty miles long, and thus, although there are no obstructions whatever, it is impossible to see from one end of it to the other, because the beach it-

self drops from sight with the curve of the earth. Wild horses, gray and brown, roam the beach, apparently for the sheer pleasure of the salt air. Poachers round them up from time to time and sell them to rodeos for fifteen dollars apiece. Wild pigs seem to like the Cumberland beach, too. The figure of a man is an unusual thing there. Now, young dunes rise behind the beach, and behind the dunes are marshes, fresh or tidal. In some of the marshes and in ponds and lakes elsewhere on the island live alligators fourteen feet long. The people of the island will not say specifically where the alligators are. They are fond of their tremendous reptiles. Poachers, commando-fashion, come for them by night, kill them, and take just the hides. Behind the marshes stand the old dunes, high, smooth as talc, sloped precipitously like lines of cresting waves, and covered with pioneer grasses. At the back of the dunes begins a live-oak forest. The canopies of the oaks nearest the beach have been so pruned by the wind that they appear to have been shaped by design in a medieval garden. Among the oaks are slash pines and red cedars—trees also tolerant of salt. Sand-lane roads wind through the forest. Poachers use them in pursuit of white-tailed deer. Hotels in Jacksonville pay thirty-five dollars a deer. Through the woods run thousands of wild pigs. Now and again, a piglet is stopped by a diamond-back.

A generally high bluff rims the western shore of the island, and along it are irregular humps—Indian burial mounds that have never been opened. Watched from the bluff, sunsets gradually spread out over a salt marsh five miles wide. This distance from the mainland in part explains

why Cumberland Island remains as it is at this apparently late date in the history of the world. There is no bridge. The salt marsh is the most extensive one south of the Chesapeake. It is dominated by cord grass that rises higher than a man's head. The higher the tide, the higher the grass in a tidal marsh, and the Georgia coast has seven-foot tides. An acre of that marsh is ten times as fertile as the most fertile acre in Iowa. Roots of the cord grass reach down into the ooze and mine nutrients. When the grass dies and crumbles, it becomes high-protein detritus. Shrimp spend a part of their life cycle in there eating the crumbled grass. In the marsh, too, is a soup of microscopic plants, of phosphorus, nitrogen, calcium. Oysters grow there. Fish feed in the marshes and on marsh foods washed by the tides. If a quarter acre of marsh could be lifted up and shaken in the air, anchovies would fall out, and crabs, menhaden, croakers, butterfish, flounders, tonguefish, squid. Bigger things eat the things that eat the marsh, and thus the marsh is the broad base of a marine-food pyramid that ultimately breaks the surface to feed the appetite of man.

Tidal creeks penetrate Cumberland Island, and along their edges, when the tide is low, hundreds of thousands of oysters are exposed to view. Shrimp, fast-wiggling and translucent, feed between the beds of oysters. No wonder the Indians wanted to be buried on Cumberland Island. The only wonder is that the island now is much as it was when the Indian mounds were built. It has not always been so. There are stands of virgin pine and virgin live oak on Cumberland, but the island as a whole is a reclaimed wil-

erness. Orange and olive groves stood there once, and plantations of rice, indigo, and cotton. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the sea islands were abandoned. Later, rich Yankees began competing with one another in the acquisition of Georgia islands, and nearly all of Cumberland was bought by a Carnegie—Andrew's brother Thomas. His family, as it increased, built several enormous houses, and two or three of these are still in fair condition, but the others make Cumberland the world's foremost island in salt-sprayed baronial ruins. The Carnegie heirs are in the third, fourth, and fifth generations, and their number is so large that they went to court not long ago and had the island divided. Conservationists, noting this, and realizing that not all Carnegies could afford to hold land anymore, began to move toward finding a way to keep the island from being developed. They spoke of Cumberland as—in the words of one of Brower's colleagues in the Sierra Club—"a spot in our eyes, a dream that may not come true." Then, in October, 1968, three Carnegies—Tom, Andrew, and Henry—sold three thousand acres of Cumberland Island for one and a half million dollars to Charles E. Fraser.

There was an expression that had been in the air there since the days of the rice and indigo plantations, and now it rose again to currency: "The Devil has his tail wrapped around Cumberland Island."

▲ With “the purchase of lands on Cumberland Island,” as Fraser termed the event, the issue was joined for one of the great land-use battles of recent times. Remaining Carnegie heirs closed ranks against him. All over the coast and, in fact, all over the South—particularly in Atlanta, Augusta, Columbia, and Athens (the University of Georgia)—people began talking intensely about Fraser.

“He walked into the Cloister at Sea Island and he said, ‘I’m the golden boy of the Golden Isles, and I’ve just bought three thousand acres of Cumberland Island.’”

“I want to shoot the son of a bitch.”

“He is a visionary young man who has learned that conservation can pay.”

“No. Charlie is a conservationist in the real sense. He wants to harmonize a modern environment with all the endowments of nature.”

“Conservation to Charlie means, in great part, that Charlie should not be bitten by a mosquito.”

“He thinks he’s a home boy with a lot of clout in Georgia, but he’ll find out what he can do with his pink-sock golfers.”

“Charles himself is interested in power. That’s what motivates him. Everybody thinks he will go into politics.”

“He would dearly love to be governor of South Carolina, and he would be fabulous.”

“He doesn’t have the stomach for it. In politics, there’s a lot you can’t control. Where he is, he controls everything.”

“I’m an ecosystems man. It’s not the island alone that in-

terests me. It’s the island, the marsh, and the sea. If the marshes are saved, there would not be much ecological loss with development. If you’re going to have a developer, I’m all for Fraser. Unplanned development would spoil it.”

“I don’t think his declared intentions are always his true intentions.”

“He’s a demon. He has no principles.”

“He is a little man walking empty with a cartoon balloon before his mouth, talking and talking as if to create a Charles Fraser who isn’t there.”

“Fraser says he wants to make these islands available to the people. Horse manure. He means taking it from the old rich and giving it to the new rich. Let’s just be straight. A fifty-thousand-dollar investment ain’t too many of the people.”

“He does things no other developer would. Those concrete bulkheads at Hilton Head cost him three-quarters of a million dollars. He could have had steel for two hundred thousand.”

“Steel bulkheads are an eyesore.”

“Mr. Fraser does preserve environment. The university hopes that most of Cumberland can become a National Seashore, so people can enjoy it. It can’t be all wilderness. We think it should be a mix—people in nature.”

“The guy is tearing off an island just as if it were a postage stamp. He’s behaving like a hunter knocking off buffaloes. We’ll challenge anyone who wants to be the Buffalo Bill of the Georgia coast.”

“He has half-baked, two-bit ideas. He’s thinking very

small. I challenge Charlie Baby to come up with something exciting. We are going to come into an age when people want more than a bag of sticks and some white balls.”

“We can’t afford to think in Colonial land-grab terminology anymore. We could set a precedent on Cumberland Island for recreational land use in America. Let’s do something imaginative. Fraser’s plans are not big enough. The golf-course bit should go to the mainland. There could be three planned communities on the mainland, with Cumberland their open space.”

“You come in to the coast slowly. It grows on you. River mouths, marshes, tidal creeks, islands, the continental shelf, and the continental slope are really an integral unit, a single system. We have had integration of the races in the sixties, and we are going to have integration of man and the land in the seventies, or we’ll all be gone in the eighties.”



On a cold but sunlit November day, a small airplane, giving up altitude, flew down the west shore of Cumberland, banked left, crossed the island, and moved out to sea. Sitting side by side behind the pilot were Brower and Fraser. The plane turned, still descending, and went in low over the water and low over the wind-pruned live oaks and down into a clearing, where the ground was so rough that the landing gear thumped like drumfire. A man in khaki trousers and a wild-boarskin shirt waited at the edge of the

woods. The aircraft wheeled around at the far end of the clearing and taxied back toward him through waist-high fennel.

Fraser and Brower had met only the evening before, at Hilton Head, and Fraser, in his direct way, had begun their relationship by giving Brower a dry Martini and then telling him what a conservationist is. Fraser said, “I call anyone a druid who prefers trees to people. A conservationist too often is just a preservationist, and a preservationist is a druid. I think of land use in terms of people. At Hilton Head, we have proved that you can take any natural area and make it available to people while at the same time preserving its beauty.” Brower listened and, for the moment, said nothing. He had not expected so young a man. Fraser’s dynamism impressed him, and so did Sea Pines Plantation. Fraser, for his part, was surprised by what he took to be, in Brower, an absence of thorns. Expecting an angry Zeus, he found instead someone who appeared to be “unargumentative, quiet, and shy.”

Now, on Cumberland Island, the pilot cut the props, and into the resulting serenity stepped Fraser and Brower. Fraser wore a duck hunter’s jacket and twill trousers that were faced with heavy canvas. Brower had on an old blue sweater, gray trousers, and white basketball shoes. The name of the man in the boarskin shirt was Sam Candler. Hands were shaken all around. Brower said it was “nice to be aboard the island.” The weather was discussed. Amiability was the keynote.

Candler, who was thirty-eight, had spent much of his life

on the island. He grew up on its oysters and shrimp. His children were doing the same. Candler knew where the alligators were, and he had a boxful of diamondback rattles, from snakes he had killed with a hackberry stick. Notches on the stick corresponded to rattles in the box, and Candler would have dearly loved to be able to make an additional notch that corresponded to Charles E. Fraser. There was native gentility in Candler, however, and he did not permit his darker sentiments to surface in the presence of his new neighbor. Candler spoke even more softly than Brower did, and the accents of Atlanta were in his voice. He was a slim man of medium height, with dark hair. He owned, with others in his family, the part of Cumberland Island that Thomas Carnegie did not buy. The Candler property, about twenty-two hundred acres at the north end, was the site of a rambling wooden inn (now Candler's house) in which business flourished around the turn of the century but atrophied after causeways were built to other islands. Candler's great-grandfather was the pharmacist who developed and wholly owned the Coca-Cola Company; his son, Candler's grandfather, bought the Cumberland property in 1928.

The pilot said goodbye. The airplane waddled into position and took off.

"An airport is essential here," Fraser said.

"But it's not a nice neighbor," Brower told him.

"Yes, but ours would be just large enough for small private jets, no more," Fraser said. "Let's go see Cumberland Oaks."

Cumberland Oaks was Fraser's working title for the development he intended to build on Cumberland Island. To

get to the site, we drove about ten miles on narrow sand-lane roads, Fraser at the wheel of a Land Rover that belonged to his company. Sunlight came down in slivers through the moss in the canopies of huge virgin oaks. We stopped near one, and Brower paced the ground under it. The limbs reached out so far that, bent by their own weight, they plowed into the ground, from which they emerged farther out, leafily. Yucca grew in a crotch twenty feet high. Brower computed that the canopy covered fifteen thousand square feet of ground.

We drove on, through long stretches that were straight to the end of perspective. "This is a vast island," Fraser said. "It can absorb dozens of different kinds of uses. You won't even be able to *find* the uses, it's so vast—if it is handled with discretion." Brower was silent. "By going into islands, I tarnish my shining image, because I irritate so many druids," Fraser said. Brower smiled. The Land Rover raced along at forty miles per hour and occasionally bounced over a corduroy bridge. Eventually Fraser said, with both humor and sarcasm in his voice, "Now we're on my property. Don't it look lovely?" Brower said sincerely that lovely was how it looked, with its palmettos, its live oaks, its slash and longleaf pines. To Fraser, it was obviously raw and incomplete, but even now he could clearly see before his eyes finished villas and finished roads. So complete was this vision, in fact, that Fraser turned off the existing road and began to zip through the trees, rounding imaginary corners and hugging subdivisional curves. Spiky palmettos rattled against the Land Rover's sides like venetian blinds. Pine branches smacked against the windshield, making explosive noises and causing us all, instinc-

tively, to blink and cover our heads with our arms. A buck and two does leaped away from the oncoming vehicle, and Candler, raising his voice above the din, commented pointedly that on an island heavy with deer they were the first we had seen. "Variety of wildlife increases sharply with variety of food," Fraser said, accelerating. "A place like Sea Pines Plantation has more wildlife than an untouched forest—more browsing, more habitat variation."

The western edge of Fraser's property was a high bluff over the Cumberland River, a tidal lagoon separating the island from the broad marsh, and as we stood there looking down at the water and across to the distant mainland Fraser said, "We'll have slides here, so kids can slide down the bluff."

"You could have swings here on these cedars," Brower offered.

Fraser said that some of the cedars on his property had been planted by Scottish soldiers who had built and manned a stockade there in the early eighteenth century. Development was thus nothing new around Cumberland Oaks. Looking west across the water and the marsh, he confided that he was envisioning a seven-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar system of towers, cables, and aerial gondolas to carry people to Cumberland Oaks from the mainland. "Brunswick Pulp & Paper owns those forests over there," Fraser said. "I would describe Brunswick Pulp & Paper as 'friendly.'"

Wild grapevines as thick as hawsers hung from the high limbs of Fraser's pines, and as we moved east through the

woods Brower found them irresistible. Fraser stopped the Land Rover so Brower could get out and swing on one—fifty feet in an arc through the air. He crashed into a palmetto.

Between the deep woods and the beach, among the secondary dunes of Cumberland Oaks, was a freshwater lake—Whitney Lake—so clear and lustrous that it gave Fraser's property a slight edge over all other parts of the island. Set in all the whiteness of the big hills of powder sand, the lake was so blue that day it paled the blue sky. Near the north end of the lake, three skeletal trees protruded from the slopes of sand—branches intact, but spare and dead. A buzzard sat in each tree. The trees were dead because the dunes were marching. Slowly, these enormous hills, shaped and reshaped by the wind, were moving south. They had already filled up half of Fraser's lake, and, left alone, they would eventually fill it all. Five buzzards stood at the edge of the water. Fraser stood there, too, with the unconcealed look on his face of a man watching a major asset disappear. "We've got to stabilize these dunes," he said.

Brower, for his part, was moved by the lyricism of the scene. If destruction is natural, Brower is for it. "I think it's just fine to see it happen," he said.

Fraser said, "I've got to restore dune-grass vegetation here. I've got to put the lake back to its original size. I'm an advocate of lakes."

"There's a place for development and there's a place for nature," said Candler.

"What would you move the dunes with?" I asked Fraser.

"Spoons, hoes, shovels—earthmoving equipment. You change natural gradings very cheaply with a bulldozer," he said.

Fraser went on to tell us that the lake had been named for Eli Whitney. Planters on the island had given Whitney financial support toward the development of the cotton gin. "This lake shouldn't be allowed to disappear," Fraser said. "There should be canoes on it for children. Children should be fishing here for bream. There is nothing here now but buzzards and dead trees."

Thinking of his three thousand acres as a whole, I asked him privately what he would like to build there by Whitney Lake.

"Houses!" he whispered.

The northernmost tip of the ocean beach was a long spit owned by Candler. We drove up there, inadvertently filling the sky with sandpipers and gulls. Then we turned and, in the late-afternoon light, went south all the way. The big beach ran on and on before us, white and dazzling in the clear sunlight. No other human beings were there. Of the several houses on Cumberland Island, the one nearest to the beach was a half mile back in the woods. We had been driving for a while when Candler remarked that we were nearing the end of his property. He has two and a half miles of beach. He said, "The only thing wrong with this beach—the traffic's so bad." Shells crunched under the wheels and salt foam flew out behind us. Plastic jugs, light bulbs, bottles, and buoys had drifted up along the scum line, but nowhere near enough of them to defeat the wild beach. I remem-

bered the shoreline of the Hudson River at Barrytown, New York. A photographer from *Sports Illustrated* had caught up with Brower near there, and they had gone to some difficulty to get down to the river's edge, so that Brower could be photographed with the wind tousling his white hair against a background of natural beauty. For the occasion, Brower had changed from a topcoat into a ski parka, and the picture was successful—this ecological Isaiah by the wide water. It was just a head-and-shoulders shot, so it did not include the immediate environment of Brower's feet. The shore of the Hudson River, a hundred miles upstream from Manhattan, was literally obscured by aerosol cans, plastic bottles, boat cushions, sheets of polyethylene, bricks, industrial scum, globs of asphalt, and a tattered yacht flag. Now, on the Cumberland beach, Fraser, for the moment, was sounding much like a hard-line real-estate man. He was saying that we had beside us "the finest, gentlest breakers on the Atlantic coast." Brower said that where he came from such ripples were not called breakers. We got out of the Land Rover and walked for a while. Brower paused and studied the reflection of the falling sun on the surfaces of the breakers. This was what mattered to him—the play of light. He saw a horseshoe crab and had no idea what it was. He picked up a whelk shell and a clamshell and asked the names of the creatures that had lived in them. He wondered what made the holes of fiddler crabs. Shrimp boats were working offshore. Brower said he liked the look of them, bristling with spars. Brower seems to think in scenes. He seems to paint them in his mind's eye, and in these scenes

not everything made by man is unacceptable. Shrimp boats on a bobbing sea are O.K. On the waterfront in San Francisco, he and I once drove at dusk past a big schooner that is perennially moored there, and its high rigging was beautiful in the fading light. "There should be more masts against the sky," Brower said. And now, back in the Land Rover, he looked up at high cumulus that was assembling over the ocean and he spoke of "sky mountains," while Fraser looked the other way and said that the primary dunes were in a process of severe disintegration, and the Land Rover moved on at forty miles per hour, crunching Paisley-spotted shells of the tiger crab.

"Have you ever been on a shrimp boat to see how they work?" Brower said.

"I have—when I was twelve," said Fraser. "I want a shrimp boat out of Cumberland Oaks, taking four or five kids a day."

The distance was so great across the beach and the dunes to the woods that I asked Fraser how far back he thought the nearest of his houses ought to be.

"The mainland," said Candler.

"That's a real dilemma here," Fraser said. "If the houses are set back in the trees, it's bad for recreation. What we need is an extensive tree-planting program to build up destroyed areas by the shore."

"Destroyed?"

"Destroyed. These dunes are not ordinary."

"They have always looked all right to me," Candler said.

"Pine trees grow exceedingly fast down by the ocean," Fraser went on.

Brower was silent.

"Within thirty years, there need to be fifty thousand more points for a week's visit on the Georgia coast," Fraser said. "You don't decrease the number of Americans taking a vacation by sealing off a particular land area. Surveys show that seventy-five per cent of Americans prefer beaches to all other places of recreation. I believe in human enjoyment of beaches, but, of course, the druids think it would be a shame and a crime to have people on this beach—a shame and a crime."

Acres of ducks darkened the swells of the ocean. A wild brown mare and her gray colt stood ankle-deep in a tidal pool. "Sam, why didn't you buy the property I bought?" Fraser said.

"I didn't have enough money," Candler said.

A line of pelicans—nineteen of them—flew south just seaward of the breakers. Pelicans fly single file, and Candler said he could remember them going by in lines a hundred pelicans long. That was in an era that seems to be gone. DDT has got into the bodies of pelicans and eventually into the shells of their eggs, and its effect on the shells is that they come out so thin they crack before chicks are ready to be born. Brower remarked that the pelican is one of the earth's oldest species. He quoted Robinson Jeffers, saying that pelicans "remember the cone that the oldest redwood dropped from." We were nearing the end of the

beach, and we could see Florida across the mouth of the St. Mary's River. The pelicans kept going, like flying boxcars, across the river. "They're doomed," Brower said. "Maybe we're lined up behind those pelicans."



Fraser is descended from the Frasers of Inverness and the Bacons of Dorchester, who began their existence in the New World as Puritans of seventeenth-century New England and gradually moved in a southerly direction, establishing Dorchester, Massachusetts; Dorchester, South Carolina; and, eventually, Dorchester, Georgia. The Bacons and the Frasers were on the original roll of the Midway Church Settlement, a seat of Presbyterian enlightenment important in the history of Georgia and the South. The Frasers regularly sent their sons to Edinburgh to be educated. The 1810 census showed the Frasers to be among the ten foremost slaveholders in the state. One distinguished Fraser voted against secession, and another used a slingshot against troops of General Sherman. For two hundred years, the family has had what Fraser calls "substantial amounts of land," and the family's "social antennae" (as he would phrase it) have developed a length and sensitivity commensurate with the family's history and standing. Consequently, nothing makes Fraser sit straighter and tuck his chin in deeper than the assertion—often repeated in gossip—that his acquisition of property on Cumberland Island was something straight out

of Chekhov: the capitulation of a fine old family under inexorable pressure from a *nouveau-riche* developer.

Having returned to the middle of the island, Fraser stopped at a small graveyard, not by chance. Its walls were made of tabby—lime, sand, and oyster shells—and it was only twenty feet square. Dusk had come and was now heavy, and Brower grew rhapsodic about the penumbral grays, the deep shafts of varied gloom under the high trees. Fraser, meanwhile, was intently pointing to a stone, and there was still enough light to reveal what was written there: "Thomas Morrison Carnegie, born Dunfermline, 1843, died Pittsburgh, 1886." What Fraser wanted us to note was that the Carnegies are comparatively recent immigrants. He referred to them as "upstarts," and said, "I have no patience with them. They have no sense of history. They think the history of the island is the history of their occupancy. They think history began when they arrived. Look there." He was pointing to another stone. The inscription said, "In memory of Catherine Miller, widow of Major General Nathaniel Greene, Commander-in-Chief of the American Revolutionary Army in the Southern Department, 1783, who died November 2, 1814, aged 59 years. She possessed great talents and exalted virtues." "More talents and more virtues than all the Carnegies put together," Fraser said. "Her friend General Lighthouse Harry Lee died here on Cumberland Island. Did you know that, Sam?"

"Yes, I did, Charles."

"The family of my friend Brailsford Nightingale, in Savan-

nah, owned parts of this island when the Carnegies were still herding sheep. The Nightingales have been elegant for more generations than you can count. They are descendants of General Greene. They had subdivided this island and were going to make it a rich man's retreat before the Carnegies had ever heard of it, but the Nightingales were thwarted by history. Reconstruction was a brutal wipeout. And now the Carnegie druids do not wish to share the island with other people. They think only Carnegie eyes are sensitive enough to appreciate the beauties of that beach out there. On any list of America's hundred most selfish families these poor new-rich Carnegies must be placed very high."

On the way in from the beach we had passed another kind of graveyard—a place where at least twenty automobiles and pickup trucks were disintegrating in flakes of rust. It was this scene that had set off Fraser's ridicule and fulminating scorn. Here, he said, was a family posing as conservationists, attempting at this very moment to enlist the support of the federal government in protecting their island with them on it, and this junk heap was their idea of preserving natural beauty. He said he would like to bring a bulldozer to the island and cover the junk up. And he said, "How about your place, Sam? You must have some things up there that need covering up. Could I give you a neighborly hand?"

"I have nothing to hide," Candler said.

"You haven't got anything one day with a bulldozer won't cure."

Fraser's relationship with the Carnegies had not always been as clearly defined as it now appeared to be. The Carnegie heirs were a diffuse group. Most of them spent little or no time on the island. Two or three of them lived there. During early negotiations, the Carnegies' attitudes toward Fraser varied considerably. Then a social event framed the nature of things to come. A few days after Fraser was given the deed to his new lands, one of the Carnegie heirs, a pretty girl in her twenties, was married on Cumberland Island. The groom, a junior executive in Fraser's Sea Pines Plantation Company, had been assigned to the Cumberland Island project and had met his bride there. That should be plot enough for a Deep South Lorca, but there was more: The bride was the author of a Sierra Club book. Fraser arrived for the wedding, as various Carnegies recall the scene, wearing an ascot and carrying an enormous leather map case. They say that he unstrapped his case in the middle of the reception and displayed plats and plans for his new utopia on Cumberland Island. They say he called them idiots not to understand the concept of conservation easements. Moreover, they say, he burped in front of ladies. According to the bride, Fraser "galvanized the Carnegies into unanimity." They united in order to block Fraser in any way possible, most notably by promoting a Cumberland Island National Seashore, with "inholding" or "life-time-estate" provisions for established residents. The groom, for his part, defected. He quit the Sea Pines Plantation Company, the better to live happily ever after.

And now, by the little graveyard, in the near-darkness,

Fraser said to Candler, "Sam, what do you think of that line about the hundred most selfish families? Do you think I can get some mileage out of that? Shall I hone it?"

Candler said, "You don't want to develop that line, Charles. You might spoil it."

"All right, I'll leave it as it is, but did you know that one of the older Carnegie ladies told Stewart Udall that only blooded heirs of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie should ever be allowed to set foot on this island?"

"How do you know that?"

"I was told by someone present. She wagged her finger under Udall's nose and said, 'Only blooded heirs of Thomas and Lucy Carnegie should ever set foot on Cumberland Island.' You know, during all the present talk about National Parks and National Seashores the Carnegies have been keeping something under the table. A few years ago, most of them were in favor of strip-mining the beach. The sand is full of ilmenite, zirconium, and rutile. I have no patience with the Carnegies. All they want to do is maximize their dollar, either through the mining industry or through the federal government or by piggybacking on me. Now look at one more headstone."

The inscription said, "Thomas Hutchison, Golf Professional, eldest son of William and Helen H. of St. Andrews, Scotland. Born October 6, 1877. Died December 8, 1900."

"He was surely the first golf pro to be buried in America," Fraser said. "When this property was bought by the Carnegies, there were no golf courses in the United States. A golf club had once been in operation in Charleston and another in Savannah, but they had long since ceased. The oldest

continuing golf organization in the United States is St. Andrews of Yonkers. It was built in 1888, and from then to 1900 golf swept the country. Hundreds of courses were built, including one here on Cumberland Island—where we landed in the airplane. The Carnegies brought this young man from St. Andrews, Scotland, and he died here when he was twenty-three."

Fraser had already made something out of his research into the history of golf in the South. He had arranged with the Professional Golfers Association a new hundred-thousand-dollar tournament, to be held at Sea Pines, and to be called the Heritage Classic, because the first golf club in America had been built in South Carolina. The first Heritage Classic was won by Arnold Palmer, and because Palmer had not won a tournament in more than a year this was major news in the sporting world, and the names of Sea Pines and Hilton Head were publicized throughout the United States. As we stood there in the graveyard on Cumberland Island, I looked at the tombstone and then at Fraser, feeling a kind of awe for his luck. Someday, if he had his way, there would surely be a hundred-thousand-dollar First Pro Classic on the Thomas Hutchison Memorial Golf Course, Cumberland Oaks.

Reflectively, Fraser placed a hand on the tombstone and said, "Druids hate golf. I keep telling them golf was here seventy-five years ago. Dave, you wouldn't mind if I built a little golf course here on Cumberland Island, would you?"

"I suppose not, if you don't take too many trees," Brower said.

"You know I don't take too many trees, Dave," Fraser

said. He turned to Candler. "Sam, Dave is going to let us have a golf club here."

"He is?"

"Yes."

"That's damned white of him."



That night, in a place called Greyfield, before a big fireplace that glowed with burning logs and coals of oak, Fraser and Brower spread out on the floor a map of Cumberland Island twelve feet long. Together they crawled around on it, pushing cocktails from one part of the island to another. Antlers hung above them, and portraits of Carnegies, and a portrait of George Washington, while the skull of a loggerhead turtle, huge and primordially human—or so it seemed—faced them from a cluttered shelf. The map was about twenty years old and bore the names of quick and dead Carnegies—Thomas M. Carnegie, Jr., Florence Carnegie Perkins, Carter C. B. Carnegie, Lucy Ricketson Ferguson, Nancy Carnegie Johnston, Andrew Carnegie II. Greyfield, with high porch and high columns and a need of paint, belonged to Lucy Ferguson's son Rick, who once ran a plastics factory in Jacksonville and was now running Greyfield as an inn for selected guests. Fraser could hardly be said to have been selected, but he was made welcome at Greyfield, and nearly all the inimical things said about him were said behind his back. Meanwhile, on his hands and knees on the big map, a Martini at his fingertips, Brower was saying, "When you get

onto a floor with a big map, something happens. You think you're in an airplane."

Fraser said to Brower, "Dave, suppose you owned this island. Suppose you were the dictator and were under no financial pressure whatever. How do you think this island ought to be used in the last thirty years of this century?" Brower said, "I'd have one feeder point to the beach per mile."

Fraser seemed to levitate, to float above the map. He might have been a skin diver who had just picked up a doubloon. The excitement he felt was almost, but not quite, palpable. Was this the David Brower of Friends of the Earth and the Sierra Club—the slayer of environmental dragons, the uncompromising defender of wilderness? Fraser's face was a mask. He tucked in his chin and said unflinchingly, "I call them 'beach social points.'"

The conversation was semi-private. Several duck hunters and the odd Carnegie or two moved around it. Beyond the firelit room was a long hall, and off this was a small room where Rick Ferguson had set up a self-service bar. He was there, a short man, wiry and strong, in tennis shoes, khaki trousers, an old blue oxford-cloth button-down shirt—the great-grandson of Thomas Carnegie. Ferguson's wife, in a long hostess gown, was with him.

"Cumberland Island is going down the drain," Ferguson said.

"Fraser's drain," said his wife.

"I feel like a man who has just been told his block is up for urban renewal. We seem to be on the sidelines while

this big show is going on. All I want to protect here is my children's inheritance."

"We have no rights except what the majority lets us do."
"I was giving Charles the benefit of the doubt once when I called him insensitive. I think his rudeness is an inherent characteristic."

"Charles is over-self-righteous. He thinks he is absolutely right and is doing good—and that is his mistake."

"No one is interested in this island but the family, basically."

Ferguson excused himself and went off to slice a roast of beef.

On the floor in the big room, Brower was leaning on his elbows. Fraser was on his knees.

"How many people would you, as dictator, permit on the island July 4, 1980?" Fraser asked.

"I don't know," Brower said. "An answer is needed, but if on the evening I come here I come up with an answer, I'm an ass."

"Ninety per cent of Americans want bedrooms when they are on vacation," Fraser went on. "Ten per cent want to camp with automobiles. Only five per cent of that ten per cent—or five people in a thousand—want wilderness camping. How many would you permit on this island, and how would you accommodate them?"

"Let's keep Cumberland Island for the five per cent of the ten per cent who want wilderness," Sam Candler said.

"I think I'd recommend the Yosemite formula," Brower

said. "Seven square miles of Yosemite bears heavy and concentrated use. The rest is open."

Brower has deep affection for the Yosemite, which is, or was once, the most beautiful valley in the Sierra Nevada. He has spent whole years there, and a great deal of time in or around the valley throughout his life. When he is in the Yosemite, he seems to be packed in nostalgia, and he appears to be unaffected by the valley's peeled-log Levittowns, its tent cities, its bumper-to-bumper traffic, and its newsstands—all results of what has been described as the fatal beauty of Yosemite. In all likelihood, he accepts Yosemite whole because the valley was already urbanized when he was young. And now, on Cumberland Island, he was recommending something similar. "I would cluster all development in one place," he said to Fraser. "People could walk elsewhere. Walking on the beach is the most important thing a person can do here. If you were going to develop just one spot on the entire island, where would that be?"

"To be very explicit, my tract has tremendous diversity," Fraser said. "I have Whitney Lake, the Scotch fort, the marching dunes. But we're pretending *you're* the dictator. The island as a whole is twenty miles long. How many people can your area of concentration absorb?"

"You mean at night?"

"Yes, at night."

"They do have to be there at night," Brower mused. "People will want to see what the sky is saying. It's their last contact with Mother Earth."

"How many people?" Fraser said again.

"It's their last chance to listen to the sun and the moon."

"How many people?"

Brower shrugged. He said, finally, "I wouldn't mind having a population of twenty thousand here."

"Twenty thousand?"

"Twenty thousand."

Brower got up and went in to make himself another drink. When he came back, he and Fraser agreed that if a National Park or Seashore could surround Fraser's place on Cumberland Island, that would be very good. Brower said that what worried him was that if Fraser were to go ahead and develop his land without some such federal protection of the rest of the island, the value of the remaining properties would rise so sharply that the neighbors might have to let the land go to less capable developers. Fraser said that worried him, too.

"Whatever happens to this island, the automobile should be ruled out," Brower went on.

"I agree," said Fraser.

"No tourist vehicles. No bridge. No private automobiles or other vehicles on the beach."

"I agree."

"How would you get people around?"

"Perhaps jeep trains."

"How would you bring in food and services?"

"In sky vans—mini flying boxcars."

"Whatever you do, don't give the island to Detroit. Zermatt is carless. Stehekin, in the State of Washington, is car-

less. It is good conservation practice, if you are going to develop, to concentrate people and leave wild land around them. People need earning territory—territory they have to earn by walking, limping, crawling, or whatever they can do. With that around them, the concentrated area is important, and I wouldn't mind so many people. Not at all. When you get out of the city, you hear the planet talk, and here it is talking. If the dunes want to march, they ought to march. I know how you feel, but the land itself should not be controlled."

"The Brower Plan is economically sound," Fraser said. "I could live within the constraints imposed by the Brower dictatorship. As the island is now, birds enjoy it but nobody's swimming here. Nobody's in the woods. There are no people. The island's stable population is eleven. That comes to one person per mile and three-quarters of beach."

Rick Ferguson had come into the room to say the roast beef was ready. "One person per mile and three-quarters of beach is just about right," he said.

"Why do you think the family have kept it this way?" said Mrs. Ferguson. "Because they *feel* so strongly."

"If you can keep it the way it is, fine," Brower told her.

"But I don't think that is one of your choices."



Not long after Fraser acquired his property on Cumberland Island, he established a public campsite there. He admitted privately that he had several motives. For one thing, it was

a way to acquaint the public with the island. For another, it would set a precedent for public use of the island at a fee. Finally, and most ingeniously, it would put Stewart Udall in a position where he might have to criticize camping—for Udall had been employed by the Carnegies as a conservation consultant, or, as Fraser insisted on putting it, as "a hired mudslinger." Udall said of Fraser, "I want to push Charlie into a corner where he has to face the truth. He is good news as a developer and bad news for Cumberland Island. He is not interested in having a reputation as a spoiler, but he can't have it both ways. He tries to incorporate conservation with economic development, but it doesn't work."

One motive Fraser emphatically did not have for establishing his campsite was a desire to camp on Cumberland Island himself. Fraser is not in any sense a woodsman or a man of the outdoors, as he will acknowledge without shame. Nonetheless, under urging from Brower and from me, he had agreed to sleep in his own campsite. And now, after dinner at Greyfield, the three of us went out into the black, cold night and headed for the campsite, which Brower was eager to see. After we had gone some distance through the woods, Fraser said, "I'm most happy to go along with this, but, frankly, you are taking me out of my element."

It would be difficult to say whose element the campsite was. It consisted of fifteen so-called recreation vehicles—tent-covered, two-wheeled automobile trailers, with electric lights, electric heat, and four-burner gas stoves. A central toilet facility had hot showers, an ice machine, and a cedar-shake roof in the Sea Pines manner. Fraser said he believed

in "use," and that this was a good way to start. He said he planned to build a small store at the campsite and, eventually, to rent jeeps by the day. Meanwhile, he was charging five dollars a night for the mobile tents—loss leaders if ever there were any, for they cost him fifteen hundred dollars apiece.

Two of the vehicles had been set up for us, and they faced each other, like canvas tourist cabins, across an area filled with palmettos and cast-iron grills that were mounted on galvanized pipes. Brower went into one tent and Fraser and I into the other. While we were unrolling our sleeping bags, Fraser said, "Very interesting, his views. They're so different from what I thought they would be." Spreading out the contents of a briefcase on a Formica-topped table, Fraser looked through them. Then he got out a pen and began to read and make marginalia. He read an article in the *Yale Law Journal* on large-lot zoning; he read a piece from the *Beirut Daily Star* on a new kind of sewage-disposal system; and in an issue of *American Forests* he read something called "The Destiny of Conservation Depends Upon Truth." "At the moment, I am rather aggravated about the distrust of statements made by certain druids," he commented. "But Dave is not a druid—not the way he was talking. Arthur D. Little would get ninety thousand dollars for the consultancy Dave did tonight." For morning, Fraser set aside a copy of *Audubon* magazine, a book called *Land, People, and Policy*, and the first draft of a prospectus for the first public issue of stock in his company. He shut off the light. "The highest and best use of this island is for chil-

dren," he said as he was settling to sleep. "I believe, however, that the struggle here is too complicated, and therefore hopeless, and that no reasonable development will ever go on here."

Brower called out from across the palmettos, "Good night, and sleep well if your conscience is good."

Fraser called back, "My conscience is always bad, and I always sleep very well. Good night."
"Good night."



Sleep was not all that easy, in part because the bunks folded out and were cantilevered from either end of the mobile unit. Fraser and I were balanced on a kind of rubber-tired seesaw. Every time he rolled to his right, I went up a little, and every time he rolled to his left I went down. I lay there long into the night thinking mainly about the peculiar pattern of the relationship developing between him and Brower.

A beach is for children, Fraser had said. I didn't think he was just groping for a key to a bank vault. I had seen swings of various kinds all over Sea Pines Plantation—swings hanging from the eaves of covered walkways, swings hanging from the limbs of trees. He had bought tricycles and scattered them around. He had strung hammocks at the height of children. Walking among the fresh foundations of his new town, he had once said to me, "Landscape architects won't

hang swings. They say swings are not a strong enough design statement. I'll wait until the landscape architects are finished, and then I'll hang a hundred swings from the live oaks. I'll have a vender selling watermelon, too—roasted oysters in the winter, ice-cold slices of watermelon in the summer." Fraser and his wife, Mary, lived in a glass-and-cypress Sea Pines house. Gardeners took care of the environment. The Frasers had two daughters, aged four and two. The Frasers believed that the direction of a life was established almost at the beginning—that no years were as telling as the earliest ones. Hence, among other things, the Montessori School (where Mary Fraser worked) and the swings all over the plantation.

Brower was reverent toward the young. His faith had told him that the young would do better with the earth. He did not associate lumber companies, motor companies, chemical companies, or mining companies with youth. He admired Young Turks while he attacked Old Philistines. By his ready admission, he had learned a great deal from his own children, all of whom were college age or older. Brower himself looked almost unnaturally young, his white hair notwithstanding. He sometimes seemed to trust young people's judgment over his own. He often said, "I'm impressed with what young people can do before older people tell them it's impossible." Any number of times since we had come to Cumberland Island, he had commented on the youth of Charles Fraser. "I didn't know he was so young. . . . What energy! I didn't expect so young a man."

Out through a picket fence and down a deeply shaded

street Fraser, as a boy, had walked every day to school. He was blond then, and had curly hair. His mother and father used to buy athletic equipment for him, but he would give it all away and sit on the porch reading books while his friends—endangering the camellias—played football or baseball on his family's lawn. His family owned nearly half of Hinesville. Their house had been the first in Liberty County to have running water, inside toilets, and two pianos. The land for the First Presbyterian Church had been a gift from his grandmother. His father had been moderator of the Presbyterian Church of the State of Georgia and president of the Men of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America. The church was the Frasers' locus of being. "Holy, holy, holy," Fraser had chanted one day at Hilton Head, waving his hands like a choir leader as he revealed these credentials. "As a Calvinist, I was told that you're not supposed to do all the pleasurable things in life. But eventually I realized that I would be part of the elect no matter what sins I might commit." He said that at the age of thirteen he had been a newspaper entrepreneur. Under his ironclad managerial control, his entire Boy Scout troop sold papers. He fished the creeks, hunted squirrels, collected buckeyes. He became the first Eagle Scout in the history of Liberty County. Now the executives of the Sea Pines Plantation Company included a high proportion of former Eagle Scouts. On the Sea Pines boardroom wall was a life-size portrait of Fraser's father, in uniform, and beside this portrait stood two flags—a United States flag and the three-star flag of a lieutenant general. General Fraser commanded the first

ground troops to land on New Guinea. He went into France with Patton. Charles Fraser, at the age of ten, had been quite relieved when his father's unit was converted from cavalry to anti-aircraft. Charles hated horses and did not want to ride them. His interests were elsewhere. In becoming an Eagle Scout, he won merit badges in birds, reptiles, conservation. He loved beautiful objects and had a gift for design. He painted his family's coat of arms on a mug, applying the paint with toothpicks. His brother, Joe, was an athlete. Liberty was a coastal county, and one thing Charles particularly liked to do was to go to the beaches and build castles in the sand.

Fraser's mother-in-law, before she became that, used to send newspaper clippings about him and his plantation to her daughter wherever she might be—at Stephens College, in Columbia, Missouri, for example, or, later, in Washington, D.C., where she worked for Senator Thurmond. "Mary's mother is a very sensible Southern mother, who knows that her daughter's standard of living depends on her husband's income," Fraser once explained. "Mary was accustomed to a very elegant standard. She had a Cadillac to drive to school when she was sixteen—and that was just the leftover car around the place." Mary, in her college days, had not so much as met him. He was twelve years older than she, and he lived two hundred miles from Greenville, her home town. Nonetheless, she dutifully read and saved the clippings. Eventually, she would more or less save Fraser. Small details not being his forte, she had assumed responsibility for looking after them. He forgot everything

—his money, his briefcase, his topcoat, his whereabouts. He lost every hat he ever owned. "Hats are a nuisance and an absurdity," he complained. He was not absentminded, his wife decided. He was simply not interested in petty detail. He read all the time. He read walking upstairs, he read until his food was cold, and he rigged up extra lights in the car so he could read while she drove. He forgot his raincoat but remembered facts. Three minutes after he walked into a room, it was a shambles. "Have you read this? What did you think of it? What do you think about that?" Newspapers hit the floor. Sixteen books came off the shelves. "Charles says there is so little time, and never a convenient time for anything, so if you want to do something you have to just do it," Mary once said. "He applies this to a trip to Europe, to conceiving a child—to anything." Mary, dark-haired, dark-eyed, slender, was collaterally descended from a family named Lawton that once grew cotton on Hilton Head Island—in fact, on the site of Sea Pines Plantation. When Fraser's archival researches yielded this fragment, he was most pleased. He and Mary began to refer to it as "the heritage." He would talk about it with a detached grin, but he was obviously happy that he had something like that to be detached about. "The Lawtons were planters," he liked to say, invoking images of antebellum wealth and antebellum elegance. He once introduced his four-year-old daughter, Laura Lawton, to a stranger.

"Hello, Laura," said the stranger.

"It will have to be Laura Lawton, I'm afraid," said Fraser.

"Laura Lawton, say 'My great-great-great-great-granddaddy planted cotton here.'"

In an office at the University of California Press, in 1941, Anne Hus had demonstrated to David Brower that she could lean over and pick a newspaper off the floor with her teeth. She wondered if he could do the same. They shared the office. Both were editors, working on what she called "rewarmed dissertations with the scaffolding taken out." He said stiffly, about the newspaper stunt, that one does not do that sort of thing in an office, and he refused to try. Brower as an editor made her jealous. "He was so much better than I. I have never understood where he got his feel for words. He is a great editor. He liberates what is good in an author's work. It just infuriates me that anyone who has read so little can do that. I have been reading since I was four. He has never read anything. He hasn't read novels. He knows very little about English literature. Yet he has a remarkable sense of language." Anne had been born in Oakland. Her father was a man who failed at so many jobs that he said he should go into undertaking in order to prolong human life. Her grandfather John P. Irish, editor and politician, was the man who was debating with William Jennings Bryan when Bryan said, "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Brower was in the 10th Mountain Division when, in 1943, he proposed to Anne by mail. Before he went overseas, they lived in Colorado for a time, and then in West Virginia, where Brower taught climbing to the mountain troops, on the Seneca Rocks. He spent so much time on biv-

ouac that she despaired and went to Washington, where she edited combat narratives for Army Intelligence. Later, she went back to the University of California. She was still an editor there when I met her, in 1969. A gentle person, she seemed almost complacent—an impression that belied her sharpness of ear and eye. I remembered her telling him once, “I never see people I’d rather be married to than you—especially in National Parks.” Brower obviously needed her guidance. Away from her, he could scarcely pass a phone booth without getting into it and calling her. At the Press, in their early days, he had dropped from sight now and again and gone off to the Sierra Nevada. After he had been doing this for a while, she told him he was getting away with murder. Leaning over, he picked a newspaper off the floor with his teeth and said he had to practice somewhere. He asked her to go with him to the mountains. She loved the sea and didn’t like the mountains. “Edna Ferber said mountains were beautiful but dumb, and that is how I felt, too. Finally, I went on a Sierra Club trip just to fill in. To get through it, I took a bottle, and took nips. After three days, I really loved the trip—such incredible country. Until you’ve seen him up there, you don’t know him.”

I thought of Brower in the Sierra Nevada, in the Valley of the Mineral King. To conservationists, the Mineral King had become an Agincourt, a Saratoga, an El Alamein. Walt Disney Productions wanted to string the slopes with lifts and build enough hotels there to draw a million people a year. Mineral King had been mentioned as an excellent setting for the Winter Olympics of 1976, celebrating the two-hun-

dredth anniversary of the birth of the nation. Brower and I went to Mineral King together. My impression was that—all other considerations aside—it was an extraordinarily good site for a skiing resort. A stream ran through the middle of the valley, and if you stood beside it and looked up and around you saw eleven conical peaks, the points of a granite coronet. The steep slopes of these mountains were covered with red fir, juniper, aspen, and foxtail pine. Great rising swaths were treeless and meadowed. Hannes Schneider had called it the best potential ski area in California. So much snow had been there the winter before that avalanches had sheared off many hundreds of trees twenty feet above the ground—the snow was that deep. The avalanches had been so powerful that they had not stopped at the bottom of the valley but had climbed the other side, smashing trees. In the geological history of the Sierra Nevada, Mineral King was an old valley. The Sierra Nevada had been a minor mountain range of about four thousand feet when it began the great upheaval that made it higher than the Rockies. New streams cut through the new uplift and created valleys like the Yosemite, with wide, flat floors and sheer walls. The Mineral King was lifted with the mountains and remained intact, a V-shaped valley—alpine, ancestral—and it caught snow like nothing else in a mountain range that was named for the snow that fell there. Brower had done a ski survey of Mineral King once, long ago, and had said that he favored limited development. He said now that he essentially felt the same way. Sitting under a big cottonwood with his feet in the stream, he pointed out that the valley was, for one

thing, not wilderness. A road reached into it. A couple of dozen buildings were there, a sawmill, and corrals belonging to a pack station. Listening to him, a surprised conservationist might have thought that the Antichrist had come to the Mineral King disguised as David Brower. But to the Disney interests Brower would not have seemed like much of an advocate. Looking around at the Mineral King peaks, he decided that although he was for limited development, he was against ski lifts. He said he preferred to see people earn their ski runs by climbing with skins attached to their skis. Moreover, he was against improvement of the existing access road, an incredibly twisting cliff-hanger so narrow and serpentine that a million people trying to use it would grow old before they reached the valley. Brower said Disney Productions should build a hundred-million-dollar tunnel, or fly people in—save the approaching mountains, hang the cost. Told he was being almost poetically impractical, Brower responded that the Disney people were going to change something forever, so they could amortize the changes over a thousand years.

Fraser rolled over and sighed in his sleep. I wondered if in the day to follow he would find that Brower's apparent tolerance for the development of Cumberland Island was equally tied in string. He sighed again. Possibly he was dreaming of Badische Anilin- & Soda-Fabrik Aktiengesellschaft, a name, of all names, that haunted him. Fraser was hoist on a most ironic petard. Badische Anilin- & Soda-Fabrik Aktiengesellschaft, known as BASF, was a company that made, among other things, petrochemicals and dyes for

the textile and furniture industries, and not long before they had decided to expand beyond Ludwigshafen and into the American South. They searched in several states for a site for a new plant. There were plenty of possibilities. What in the end attracted the Germans most in all the South was Sea Pines Plantation. German chemical kings apparently liked golf and the good life, too. They had found a plant site on Victoria Bluff, three miles from Hilton Head Island. Air and water pollution would surely follow. Fraser, meanwhile, had become the unlikely leader of a battalion of druids, whose war cry was "BASF—Bad Air, Sick Fish!" Ultimately, Fraser and his druids would drive the Germans away, but he had learned that even in the beauty of Sea Pines Plantation there could be something fatal.



One night of camping out, even in a fifteen-hundred-dollar mobile tent, was quite enough for Fraser, and the following evening we transferred our gear to a motorship called the *Intrepid*, which had slipped quietly down the coast from Hilton Head and into the Cumberland River. The size of Fraser's yacht was proportionate to his distaste for wilderness. The yacht was ninety feet long. It contained five staterooms and a floor-through saloon. Its bar was stocked with Tanqueray gin. Fraser's Southern antennae had reached out unobtrusively, suprasocially, and their research had shown that Tanqueray is Brower's gin of gins. With the moral support of a friendly doctor, Brower once used gin as his princi-

pal weapon in humbling a stomach ulcer, and he was so successful that he has ever since been a friend of the preventive Martini. With something beatific in his eyes, he ritually asks for "a Martini with Tanqueray gin, straight up, with nothing in it." Lemon, he feels, changes the taste, while only a madman would accept an olive, for an olive displaces two cubic centimetres of gin. It had been a long, full day on the island, and Brower now settled back with a drink innocent of additives and watched the sun fall behind the Georgia mainland. Fraser sipped bourbon and Calvinistically worked on his stock prospectus—for several hundred thousand shares of something he was calling Recreational Environments, Inc., at twenty-five dollars a share. He needed money for expansion—not only to Cumberland Island but to half a dozen other places he was interested in, from North Carolina to Hawaii. He had just bought six miles of beautiful and undeveloped white beach under coconut palms on the east coast of Puerto Rico, and only the week before he had gone as far as Kuwait looking for funds. "I'm just an oyster catcher from South Carolina begging for money," he said, moving a blue pencil over the prospectus. "A million dollars. A million dollars. Can you spare a million dollars?"

"Look at that sun on that smog!" Brower said. Shining low through the air over the paper-mill country, the sun tended to embarrass Georgia. It appeared to be setting in black-bean gumbo. "American industry never asked my permission to shorten my life," Brower went on. "They have taken two years off my life and will take seven years off my

children's. These are figures I can't support, but I believe them."

"Let's put a paper mill over here on Cumberland Island and get the smell away from the cities," Fraser said, looking at Sam Candler, who went on looking at the sunset.

"Whatever their economy is, they haven't paid for the people's air," Brower said. "They should be given six months to clean up or go out of business. Roll, you earth. I swear the sunset is slower than the sunrise."

On the beach at six-fifty-seven that morning, we had watched the sun jump into the clear sea air like a rubber ball released from a hand below the ocean's surface. Fraser, over breakfast, read an article called "The Dying Marsh" in *Audubon* magazine, and throughout the day he pelted Brower with sachets and nosebags. Hurling along a narrow, curving sand road through the forest, Fraser said, "We'll call this the David Brower Scenic Drive." And later, approaching an attractive swamp, he said, "We'll call this the David Brower Wildlife Sanctuary and Woodland Recreation Area." In a small skiff on a tidal creek, Fraser stood in the bow like George Washington and spoke what were apparently the first words of a press release he was forming in his mind: "Charles Fraser announced today the results of a detailed study for the use of Cumberland Island." Sam Candler had one hand on the skiff's tiller and with the other he was bailing. Flights of ducks passed overhead. The tide was low. Using a small anchor as a kind of oyster rake, Fraser knocked hundreds of oysters loose from an exposed bed. He

was clearly feeling very good. On the beach, he drove at fifty-five miles an hour and said gleefully that he had decided to name his new development the Cumberland Island Conservation Association.

Brower was feeling good, too—obviously enjoying himself on the island. Why he did not rise up and clout Fraser, verbally, seemed a little odd to me, but I had seen him before in situations where he was getting the sense and feel of something, and while his mind was working toward a settled attitude he had vacillated or lapsed into an uncharacteristic passivity. In the North Cascades, he had known where he was. He had been there before, and had fought for the wilderness there. He had never before set foot on Cumberland Island. Fraser, ebullient, was finding Brower so docile that he wouldn't even call him a druid, and in a sense Fraser was right, for the rote behavior of an ordinary member of the priesthood should be simple to predict. This, however, was—as Fraser apparently did not grasp—no ordinary member of the priesthood. This was the inscrutable lord of the forest, the sacramentarian of *ecologia americana*, the Archdruid himself. Fraser's difficulties with druids were anything but over.

Lacking a target in the invisible Brower, Fraser eventually attacked Candler. Candler, whose original intention had been merely to help show Brower around the island, had tried to hold off from saying much, but now there was a gun-fusillade argument.

"Sam, you just don't want people on this beach, do you?" Fraser said.

"I didn't say that," Candler said.

"A man has no more right to personal private property on a beach than he has to a highway, an Army camp, a railroad, a school, a hospital, an airport, a valley to be flooded for a dam. A fundamental part of the pursuit of happiness is one's annual vacation. Hence this beach is for a public purpose."

"Your purpose. I'm happy to have people use the island now, if they make the effort to get over here and to enjoy it."

We happened to be at the southern boundary of Fraser's proposed development. Fraser said that a National Seashore should begin just there and extend all the way to the southern tip of the island—about fifteen miles—and that the northern end, above his property, should become "an environmental-protection zone." The development, he promised, would include nothing that would pollute the environment.

"What *would* it have?" Candler asked.

"Houses, a marina, an airport, a store."

"That is not my idea of conservation."

"Tell me, Sam, which Carnegies will break ranks and sell out next?"

No answer.

"How many Carnegies will rub their hands with glee when prices go up because of development?"

No answer.

"Those snobs—high on the list of the hundred most selfish families."

"I'd like to make a list of island destroyers," Candler said.

Fraser said, "The government has a perfect right to condemn my land here if it thinks its use is wiser than mine." It emerged that a Cumberland Island Conservation Association already existed.

"Name all organizations that exist on the island," Fraser said.

"What do you mean?" Candler asked him.

"Every time I pick up a paper, I read about another organization."

"You mean like your Cumberland Island Holding Company?"

"Name another one."

"The Cumberland Island Conservation Association is the only one I know about," Candler said.

"Is it incorporated?"

"I believe so."

"You believe so?"

"Yes."

"Who is the president of the Cumberland Island Conservation Association?"

"I am."

"Is it incorporated?"

"I'm not real sure."

"The light is nice on the water there," Brower said. "The light is getting good."

Brower and Fraser climbed a high dune. Candler stayed on the beach. From the dune, he appeared a lonely figure—the only person on twenty miles of white sand. "People develop passionate attachments to these islands, and any

change from the way they have known them since childhood is emotionally disturbing to them," Fraser said. "It's a jolt to them to have any of their property used by strangers."

One afternoon in Atlanta, Candler had told me what Cumberland Island meant to him. "Changes come slowly there, and leave marks on one another," he said. "There is a blending from one era to the next. Indian mounds are there. When I am on Cumberland Island, I see the same things the Indians saw. I would like to live where the Indians lived. They were closer to the earth, a part of the environment. Fraser said that after the hurricane there were no sea oats on Cumberland. The island teaches you the value of patience. The sea oats came back. Dunes that are washed down will return. You've got to have some places that are hard to get to. I don't think this is a selfish thought. I think it's thoughtful."

Fraser, for his part, had told me that nothing would please him more than to develop his property in consonance with a National Seashore that would take up the rest of the island. In fact, he would be hesitant—even unlikely—to develop his land without knowing what might happen around it. Another Sea Pines freshly rising among the live oaks could so enhance the value of the island as a whole that the Carnegies and Candler might find irresistible the offers of ticket developers. There was so much of Cumberland that, even for a man of Fraser's resources, protective buying was out of the question. So he dreamed of a beautiful enclave in various shades of income, with forever-protected

wildernesses stretching away from either side and rationed quantities of the public wandering the great beach.

Now, on the dune, Brower and Fraser—Columbus and Cortez—stood high above the wild and pristine seascape. Fraser said, "I think it is wise public policy for the government to take a place like this from private owners. Don't you agree?"

"Yes."

Candler, who had moved farther down the beach, was an even smaller figure. From the dune, he could be framed between a thumb and forefinger a quarter inch apart. His hands were in his pockets.

"I would like to reverse my ninety-ten here," Brower said. "I would like to see ten per cent developed here and ninety not."

Fraser said, "I hope that can be arranged."



Oysters on the half shell, when they are as fresh as the ones we ate for lunch that day, are so shining and translucent, so nearly transparent, that if you were to drop one on a printed page you could read words through the oyster. I had lived beside tidal creeks at various times in the past, and had once set up my own amateur oyster farm, from which I regularly removed a hundred and forty-four oysters each day to eat before lunch, but even the memory of my oyster farm was turned slightly opaque by the quality of the oysters from Candler's tidal creek. Mantle to palpi, each vi-

trescent blob was a textural wonder. We ate at least five hundred of them, raw or roasted (over an oak fire)—*Ostrea virginica*, better than the best oysters of Bordeaux, and, as it happened, long-range appetizers to the roasted game hens that were spread before us that evening on Fraser's yacht.

On the yacht, Brower held up his glass and studied the prismatic coupling of gin and light. He then looked off into the rouge afterglow over the marshes to the west. "The outdoor life is all right," he said. "But don't knock the amenities." Pale wines escorted the game hens, and brotherhood bobbed on the water with the yacht, while the dark mass of Cumberland Island stood beside the boat with what Joseph Conrad once described as "the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention." No one was looking at the island. On a color-television set inside the yacht, the San Francisco 49ers were bombing the Baltimore Colts. Brower said, "Long live the instant playback—the nicest thing technology has given us!"

"We will create a conservation conference center here on the island," Fraser said.

"That will require an airport," said Brower. "I'm Machiavellian enough to know that if you are going to have a conference center you have to have a way to get there."

"We'll let druids land free," Fraser said. "If you were dictator, what would you do with that marsh?"

"Save it! Save the greenery! I can make noise, but you can make deeds," Brower said. "Save the marsh! Grasses are one of the nicest ways the green thing works. The green giant is chlorophyll, really. When I come back in another

life, I am going to spend my whole life in grasses. I'm addicted to the entire planet. I don't want to leave it. I want to get down into it. I want to say hello. On the beach, I could have stopped all day long and looked at those damned shells, looked for all the messages that come not in bottles but in shells. Life began Tuesday noon, and the beautiful organic wholeness of it developed over the next four days. At three minutes before midnight, man appeared. At one-fourth of a second before midnight, Christ arrived. At one-fortieth of a second before midnight, the Industrial Revolution began. You, Charles Fraser, have got to persuade the whole God-damned movement of realtors to have a different kind of responsibility to man than they have. If they don't, God will say that man should be thrown away as an experiment that didn't work. I have seen evidence of what you can do. Now make others do it. The system must be used to reform the system."

Fraser had been listening with his hands clasped behind his head. When Brower finished, Fraser said nothing and sipped his wine.



In the early morning, in the yacht's saloon, Brower performed his matins. He spilled out and sorted the contents of his briefcase—an old and thick one, jammed with books, notebooks, magazines, clippings—and he read for an hour or so, as if to put himself in context. He read a Sierra Club tract called *Machiasport: Oil and the Maine Coast*. He read

a copy of a letter from Earl Bell, the planner, to Senator Henry M. Jackson, asking how the island Amchitka could still be called a National Wildlife Refuge since it had become a military missile dump, a military garbage dump, and a site for atomic testing. Simultaneously, Brower made cryptic notes for a talk he would give at Harvard: "Loop the system . . . Ravisher of the Month . . . SST . . . Signs . . . Dams . . . Sawlogs." Reading on, he piled up newsclips on the table before him: "JOIN POLLUTION FIGHT, NATO TOLD," "BP OIL ESTIMATES ALASKA TRACT AT FIVE BILLION BARRELS," "DROWNING AN ECOLOGICAL PARADISE," "CAN ANYONE RUN A CITY?," "PLANNER URGES TWO-CHILD LIMIT," "SLOW DOWN THE OIL RUSH," "BAN ON ABORTION STRUCK DOWN," "THE MAZE OF HAZE THAT SPOILS OUR DAYS," "WE ARE SUBVERSIVES IN THE STATE OF NATURE," "NORTHWEST PASSAGE TO WHAT?" He had heretical material, too: "ALARMISTS IGNORE THE FACTS," "MAN MUST CONTROL NATURE," "THE POPULATION FIRECRACKER" (William Buckley arguing that there is no population explosion), and an editorial from the *New Scientist* mocking the excessive excitability and the platitudes and dogmas of "ecological high priests." Brower next examined a dummy for a conservation newsletter to be called the *National Hammer*, an article from the *Stanford Law Review* called "The SST: From Watts to Harlem in Two Hours," and a list of proposals—to him as publisher—for a series of Suppose We Didn't books, on things that would be best left undeveloped: the SST, the oil refinery in Machiasport, the Alaska pipeline, the sea-level canal through Central America. He read the Leopold Report ("Land drainage . . . will destroy

inexorably the South Florida ecosystem") and an article from *Trial* called "Can Law Reclaim Man's Environment?" Finally, he read a piece on architectural ravages in New York City's West Village, and he waved in the air a *Business Week* article—"The War That Business Must Win"—and said, "Here is the first faint streak of dawn coming up over the business world. They are at last finding out that environment is not only to sell."

From below, Fraser appeared, dressed in a dark suit and tie. After breakfast, he was going to leave Cumberland Island in order to do battle with druids in other parts of the South. The rest of us would stay on for a while. Fraser clearly felt that Cumberland was safe, for the moment. In the Land Rover, he drove to the primitive airstrip. The same small plane was waiting in the field of fennel. Fraser walked confidently away from an atmosphere of cordial farewells and climbed into the plane. The pilot advanced the engines to maximum 1 p.m. Four wild horses slowly walked off the runway. The plane raced through the fennel and into the air. Watching it rise and turn, Brower said softly, "What makes Sammy run in the South?"

We got into Candler's jeep and spent the day slowly reviewing the island. At Candler's speed—ten to twenty miles per hour—details came into focus that, at Fraser's speed, had previously tended to blur. The jeep, for one thing, was open, and we felt the island around us in a way that we had not in Fraser's Land Rover, which was closed in. "You can't see the whole island anyway—it's too big—so you might as well enjoy what you can see," said Candler. "Going along in

Fraser's Land Rover was like going over Niagara Falls in a barrel."

"I've never run into anybody quite like that," Brower said.

"Are you sorry or glad that he developed Hilton Head Island?"

"I don't know. I think probably I'm not glad. I'd rather have more wilderness on the coast than there is. But if it had to be developed, I'm glad it was developed by him."

As we moved along, deer walked across the road in front of us. Candler showed us a place where he had often found arrowheads at low tide and a place where we picked wild grapefruit. We went to the south end of the island, which was ribbed with hummocks and was full of freshwater ponds and tall magnolias. A jetty there had been built ninety years ago at what was then the southernmost point of the island. The jetty was now at least two thousand feet inland from the southern shore. Land had simultaneously been eroding from the north end. Cumberland Island was gradually migrating to Florida, and had already crossed the state line. A sonic boom hit us with a report so loud that Brower staggered as if he had been shot, and tens of thousands of birds—oyster catchers, pelicans, sandpipers, gulls—rose screaming into the air between the Cumberland shore and the Florida mainland. They stayed up there, flapping in panic, for ten minutes, clouds and clouds of shrieking birds. Candler showed us where he had once dug into a mound and found a skeleton in a sitting position, and he told us how as a boy he used to play with muzzled alligators. We

visited a tame buzzard at Lucy Ferguson's place, where a rusting automobile engine hung from a tree and no one but the buzzard was home. The buzzard's eyes glittered like the running lights of an airplane. The buzzard nibbled at Brower's basketball shoes. Brower stroked the bird and talked gently to it. The buzzard nibbled at his fingers and draped a talon over his hand. We saw blue herons, bluebills, and egrets in the marshes, and cacti hanging like strings of sausages from live oaks in the woods. At Candler's place, we ate a foot-high pile of shrimp from the tidal creek—under a big kitchen clock on which red lettering said, "Things Go Better With Coke." Shrimp, like oysters, are as transparent as clear gelatine when they come out of the creek. On the beach, Candler noticed the remains of a leatherback turtle, its back as large as a steamer trunk. It had been there for days, but we, whipping by, had not seen it before. We saw wild pigs in the tidal marshes eating seafood, and a flight of seventy cormorants, in imprecise formation, passing overhead.

"What are they trying to spell to us?" Brower said.

"Pepsi-Cola," said Candler.

As far as I could see, though, the message in the sky over Cumberland Island was "Finis." We drove up a marching dune and snowplowed down the other side, leaving fresh tracks in the powdery white sand. The wind would cover them. But how many tracks could the wind cover? Since early morning—in fact, for three days—we had roamed an island bigger than Manhattan and had seen no one on its beach and, except at Candler's place and Greyfield, no one

in its interior woodlands. In the late twentieth century, in this part of the world, such an experience was unbelievable. The island was a beautiful and fragile anachronism. We were, as Candler had said, seeing what the Indians saw, and it was not at all difficult to understand why he wanted to "live where the Indians lived . . . closer to the earth, a part of the environment." We, too, had eaten from the tidal creeks and had gone where and how we pleased—a privilege made possible in our time by private ownership. That was the irony of Cumberland Island and the index of its fate. The island was worth nothing when the Muskogean Creeks lived and fished there. Now it was worth at least ten million dollars, a figure that could swell beyond recognition. Need, temptation, and realistic taxes would eventually wrest the island from its present owners. They would not be able to afford it. The question whether it was right for a few individuals to own twenty miles of beach had already been bypassed by these inexorable facts of economics.

Actually, the resolution was to arrive swiftly. In months to come, druids in massed phalanx were to create so many pressures—social, political, financial—and so much ecological propaganda that Fraser would give up his Cumberland territory, selling Cumberland Oaks to the National Park Foundation. Money for the purchase was to be made available to the Park Service by the Andrew Mellon Foundation, with enough left over to acquire the rest of the island from the other owners. Thus Fraser, in his coming and going, was in the end to be the catalyst that converted Cumberland Island from a private enclave to a national reserve. The other

owners, as Brower had said, were without choice, really. They would have preferred to keep the island the way it was—and no wonder. It was Earth in something close to its original state. The alternatives—private development, public park—came nowhere near that, and never would. In the battle for Cumberland Island, there could be human winners here or there, but—no matter what might happen—there could be no victory for Cumberland Island. The Frasers of the world might create their blended landscapes, the Park Service its Yosemite. Either way, or both ways, no one was ever to be as free on that wild beach in the future as we had been that day.

P A R T 3

A River

