

THE CLEGGs: THEY'RE BACK

You might remember we talked about the Clegg family a week or so ago. Well, they're back. This time they're in the northeast and not the southwest and they're doing the same things only different -- just like a Seven-Up commercial.

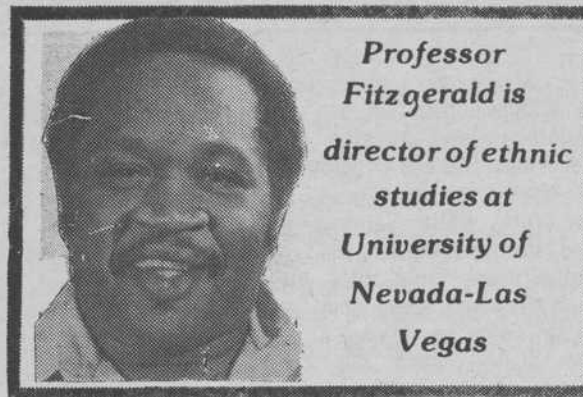
They were brought to my attention via the wonders of electronic media: television and on that show of shows, "A Current Affair." This time they were not robbing banks, holding up stagecoaches, taking over wagon trains, killing, raping and whipping. What they were doing was simple fun - teenage pranks -- fooling around and such as that and it all added up to harassment.

Here's the story. A certain Ralph Longenecker resided with his mother in a small house in a rural area of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His father was deceased and they were supported entirely by his mother's social security checks. Ralph was middle-age, a loner and had no regular friends. Some thought of him as something of a hermit. He was not a recluse in that he was regularly seen although usually alone. He was tall and quite slender and with shoulder length almost white blond hair and a full beard. Usually he wore dark clothing and he had deep-set eyes. To some he presented an eerie personae. Perhaps he served as a living testament to that which so many of the young find thrilling in their imaginations -- something to be frightened by.

In any case, teenagers from throughout the area,

when they could find nothing better to do, would go out to Longenecker's house, in the middle of the night and harass him. According to the report, this had gone on for a considerable length of time. They would honk car horns, throw rocks at the house and at him if he came outside and other "all in good fun" things. They called him the "Troll." They made fun of him, belittled him and humiliated him time after time. Longenecker never defended himself. He never responded to their taunts and their physical attacks on his person and his property. Everyone in the community knew about what was being done to him, but neither parents, neighbors nor the police did anything to put a stop to it. Perhaps they were waiting for him to file a complaint but he never did.

Longenecker expected the laws that were to be enforced to protect him just as they would be for any other citizen. To him, it did not matter that he was somehow different or that he did not fit in. He was an American and he needed not to apologize, explain or ask permission to be left alone. All he required was for existing laws to be upheld. They were not and he waited for all those many months/years for them to be. What he did not understand was that he was dealing with average people -- people who not only could not accept responsibility but who were light years away from being capable of assuming responsibility. How was he to know that? There were many who were college graduates, doctors, lawyers, newspaper people, scientists and all



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those other things that one is often misled into believing are somehow above average. Most of them just make more money and talk the great conversations, but when it comes right down to what it comes right down to, they're just average people in designer clothing. There are a lot of people who know what tow plus two equals, but have no ethics. Education does not obviate ethical behavior.

We never know when a person is going to get to their breaking point -- when a person gets fed up -- and stick their head out of the window and yell: "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore." Many times we get lucky and people die of a heart attack or something before they get to that point. Other times, they outlive their patience. Ralph Longenecker finally did the latter.

On a night not too many weeks ago, Jamie Rosella and his friend Ron Greiner decided to go out and "mess" with the "Troll." They did and Ralph shot Jamie in the head. The shot didn't kill him because, after all, there was nothing in there to hit. The police finally came and arrested Longenecker who offered no resistance. The entire community was suddenly awakened. What had transpired at Longenecker's house was the topic of conversation everywhere. Russell Frank, a neighbor, said: "Those boys had it coming. They had been bothering Ralph for a long time." I wonder why Frank hadn't spoken out earlier-- before someone was injured or killed? Tom Flannery, who filed the story, reported numerous other similar sentiments of others of the community. Why did they allow those kids to con-

tinue to go out there harassing the guy? Did they think he was going to take it forever? Didn't they realize they were playing Russian Roulette with those young people's lives? There had to be somebody in that county with some good judgement. Well, maybe not. There are a lot of counties -- all over this country -- where, seemingly, there is no one with good judgement.

There was a trial. Longenecker was set free. Helen Rosella, Jamie's mother, was outraged. Jamie

himself was miffed. "I'm the victim," he said. "I got shot and now it's made to look like I did something wrong." His mother went even further. "It just doesn't seem right. My son got shot -- could've been killed -- and the man who did it is let go. It isn't right. It isn't fair." Can you believe that? If Jamie hadn't taken his head out there bothering Longenecker, he wouldn't have gotten it shot. If his mother had raised her son not to bother people and to mind his own business, none of what happened would've happened.

This sort of reminds me of those "few" times someone has bought a home in a neighborhood where some people think they have the right to tell you where you can own a home. They harass also. They might spray paint racial slurs on such a house, dump garbage all over the place, frighten the kids, call up and verbally molest whomever answers the phone, stand out on the sidewalk and call the occupants dirty names, set fire

to the place or anything and, all the while, neither the "decent" people in the neighborhood, the police, the mayor, the governor, the president, the Red Cross, non-smokers, smokers, internal revenue, unions, proliferators or abortionists, the well-read, illiterates -- well, you get the picture -- nobody, does anything about it. Some of the enlightened will volunteer and suggest: "Why don't you sell this place? Buy a house somewhere else. You don't need this." Answer: "I bought this place. If I had wanted to live in another neighborhood I would've bought a house there. You're right. I don't need this. Not to worry. I'm going to get rid of it myself, because, if nothing else, I have the right to be left alone."

I used to like Red Ryder movies. He always introduced himself as being a "peaceable man" and he was -- until someone bothered the Dutchess, Little Beaver, him or the ranch. I want to be like that when I grow up.

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