

1/25/76

Dear Rock,

Enclosed please find the character descriptions that you requested and the rewrites for Act One.

RE. CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS: As I told you, I always hate to suggest character types, because they never show up for auditions and because the Director will usually see things quite differently. These may, however, be useful to Don and you, should someone show up who might fit one of these descriptions and you had not thought of the character in these terms. I hope we'll have a lot of skin showing in this production and I hope (though I wouldn't gamble on it) that we can avoid the worst excesses of Piedmont and coastal accents throughout the show. I shudder to think of the prologue with such accents. After that's over, I'll relax.

THE REWRITES: As you will see, I have added and deleted no scenes--but I have re-ordered them and alter their content. I am sure that Don will wish me to make additional changes, but that will be slow in coming, as my schedule is crammed full. PLEASE have Don go through the First Act soon and let me know his reactions to these alterations... and PLEASE get him to start cutting this act. As you can see, if performed as written, Act One will be over an hour in performance. I have intentionally over-written so that he will have some freedom in the shape of things; but I, of course, will want to approve these cuts. There is a great deal of verbal excess beginning about half-way through the act and lots of it can go.

RE. SCRIPTS: You have copies, I assume, of Draft IV. Please makes as few copies of it as possible for auditions, or you will be wasting money. I have a feeling that Don and I will not have an acting script much before May. I also want to re-emphasise the danger of allowing the present script into the hands of non-staff people at present. No one--especially news media people--should be allowed to read the thing and form pre-production notions about it. I had trouble with that two years ago down there, when people read the script in an even rougher state and published (in print or by word of mouth) a number of incorrect reports about what would be done. PLEASE EXPLAIN THISS TO ALL STAFF!

RE. MUSIC: I hope it's getting underway. As I told you, I was much impressed with the tape I heard. I'd like to hear more--I'd like to meet the composer whenever that can be arranged--and I'd like Don to be present at the meeting. Let me know and I'll come down--or they can come to Chapel Hill.

RE: Contracts, Royalties, etc.: As soon as time allows, I will get a copy of a standard playwright's contract to you. It will cover reproduction of the script, production rights, program credits, percentage of gross, copyright, etc., etc. I don't expect any problems--everyone I've met is working in good faith--but I would like it all in writing and I know you would also. (Paul Green and Kermit Hunter both had problems on their early shows because they believed in good faith and not in contracts.) My royalty for The Liberty Cart is 7 1/2 % of gross, but for the first year of Strike, we may wish to negotiate. Please remember



that I have been working on this project since 1969 and that the only payment I have received was for a First Draft. I've done Four complete revisions and made an unbelievable number of trips to Lumberton since then--and only once--when you came on board, was I even reimbursed for my gas. I'm sorry if people think I've done it all for charity, but that was made quite clear when I accepted the commission--that I expected to be paid as any other outdoor playwright is paid--or any playwright, for that matter. I will, of course, be more than fair--because this project is close to me as to anyone downthere and I want it to succeed! O.K.?

RE: NOW; I am in the middle of rehearsals for EAST LYNNE and IOLANTHE at the same time, plus doing costumes for PURLIE and working with STRIKE and LIBERTY CART. My time is limited, but so is everyone's. I think, before we go too much further, that it would be a good idea for the entire staff to get together some week-end, to look at sketches, ask questions, propose changes, etc. WE OPEN IN LESS THAN SIX MONTHS! In this regard, let me say that I have appreciated your keeping me in touch with the progress down there and taking what few suggestions I've had to offer. I feel very secure about the project with you in charge and I'm sure the other folks down there feel the same way. I only wish that you had come on board earlies--it would have saved so much frustration on my part!

At any rate, please look over the enclosed and forward it to Don as soon as possible. It's difficult to express my gratitude for the wonderful job you've done so far, but I have a feeling we're all going to turn up someting this summer that's going to shock and please the entire outdoor drama industry.

My very best to Vive!

I am,



STRIKE AT THE WIND!  
SUGGESTED DESCRIPTION OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

INDIAN

THE LEADER: of indeterminate, but mature age (mid-30's to mid-40's). Physically well-built, tall (6'plus) and, as he is costumed as a Hatteras chief, obviously muscular, capable of immediate command and attention. A deep, resonant voice with no regional accent.

THE BOY: a young male between ten and twelve, a student in an upper grade at the local Elementary school, but with some acting ability and a clear, articulate voice.

RHODA STRONG: not necessarily "beautiful," but certainly "striking." Medium height, slim, long hair. Energetic and capable of portraying a range of emotion from youthful enthusiasm through marriage, motherhood, and the strain of her life with Henry. Slight regional accent acceptable, though not preferred.

POLLY OXENDINE: Rhoda's girlfriend. Should offer some physical contrast to Rhoda (either prettier or dumpier). Must have fairly wide emotional range. Regional accent more acceptable.

MARY LOWREY: late forties, early fifties; short and rather plump. A warm look (you might expect to see her baking cookies). Touch of gray hair. Warmth should be reflected in voice.

HENRY BERRY LOWREY: Medium height, handsome, not beautiful. Early twenties. Face should reflect potential for "character." A physically well-developed body (he'll have his shirt off) and he should be agile. Historically, of mixed Indian and Portuguese blood. Long hair, no beard. A strong, flexible, though not necessarily bass voice, with no pronounced regional accent. Should be able to sing and it would be great if he could play guitar.

BOSS STRONG: Late thirties, early forties. Rhoda's brother and historically not a very attractive man. Large wart on face. A heavy, rather sluggish physique with a touch of pot-belly. But strong.

STEVE LOWREY: Mid-teens. Youthful voice, good body. Long hair. Medium-tenor voice. If Polly weren't so perverse, she would have been after Steve.

ALLEN LOWREY: Henry's father. Late fifties, patriarchal. Tall, lean, and a face with great character. Gray or white hair. Resonant bass voice.

DONAHOE: Mid 30's to mid 40's. Of mixed Indian and white blood. Long, greasy hair, bad complexion, perhaps a scar or other disfigurement. Of medium height and build, with unpleasant voice reflecting no regional accent.

PORTUGUESE

MOMMA CUMBO: Early sixties, practitioner of Voodoo. Small, wirey body, Portuguese accent, without effects of a witch.



BLACK

PRISONER: Mid-20's to mid 30's. Powerful body, bass voice. Must sing well. Head shaved (?). Regional accent preferred.

SHOEMAKER JOHN: Late 40's to mid 50's. Touch of gray hair or balding. Warm, personable, but tough. Not necessarily over-muscular. Strong voice. Regional accent. Tall.

WHITE

JAMES SINCLAIR: late thirties, early forties. Thin, pinched face, medium to tall build. Scotch accent.

HECTOR McCORD: late forties. Tall, strong build, open and confident personality. Touch of gray. Strong, articulate voice, but with more than a trace of Scotch accent. Plays harmonica.

RUBEN KING: Fifties. Overworked, perhaps slight pot-belly. A body that looks like it once was strong, now stoop-shouldered. Good strong voice. No regional accent preferred.

DOLLY KING: Mid-thirties. Blond, striking, but not "beautiful." Should not give a feeling of weak femininity, but of strength and good humor. Medium height. Alto voice(?). No accent.

ZACHARIAH McLAUGHLIN: Seventeen or eighteen. Pale complexion and red hair. Skinny body, lean face, Scotch accent.

HUGH MCGREGGOR: Early fifties. Heavy physique, mutton chops. A man who eats well and sleep well. Medium to six feet. Long, graying hair. Souther accent, but not Colonel Saunders.

RODERICK McMILLAN: Late thirties, early forties. Medium build, six feet. Brown hair, strong voice. Handsome.

JACK HARRIS: Mid 40's. Bald (?). Roundish face, standard regional accent.

HARRIS: Late 40's but could be older. Beard or unkempt whiskers. Backwoods accent at least.

DR. SAUNDERS. Late thirties. Possible Mediterranean blood. Long hair, receding hair line, small wart on forehead. Medium to short with hint of middle-aged spread beginning. Neither attractive or unattractive. Voice is not romantic. In another life, might have been a choral director.

IN ADDITION

A number of actors will be needed for important, though small roles. We need a number of men and women for the Prologue who do not have pronounced regional accents and who can move well and speak loudly.