

A BOWL OF WEEVILS

He sat drunk and nodding. The neck of the bottle rested on his ankle. He still wore the big fur hat that made him an oversized Mongolian horseman. In the morning we found him in a down sleeping bag on the porch. He had made a fire in the charcoal basin of the communal barbecue grill. The morning was frosty and clear.

That night we returned from a revival and Lordy were we filled with the spirit and even speaking in tongues and the singing of hymns. The telephone rang and he said it was the hotline to heaven and demonstrated a nearly orgasmic attack of glossolalia. He then played his spoons to our rendition of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

The next morning we told him about cotton ginning and how we had to get back since the fields had dried over the weekend. As we prepared to leave for breakfast, he said, "I got to have a bowl of weevils."

I was reminded of a Monday morning in the preceding year and in the same house. The man in the fur hat had not yet come, and his rivermen friends, who had frequented the neighborhood that winter, had vanished. I was readying my bag and doing my toilet for the start of the week and the inevitable, unenviable jaunt I was about to make. She then told me she had commodity oatmeal and to come to the kitchen and there's nothing like having government surplus stick to one's missing rib. She watched my first two bites with calm maternal care until I showed her an oat trying to climb out of the bowl. She laughed (like Redi, Pasteur perhaps) as the cereal came to life. There is nothing like a bit of vital force to generate a bowl of weevils.