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Book Review: In Remembrance of Emmett Till: Regional Stories and Media Responses to the Black Freedom Struggle

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http://generalmills.com/~media/Files/history/hist_betty.ashx - accessed 9/9/2014). Duncan Hines was a real person who established his own brand for integrity and high standards before he became associated with an eponymous line of packaged foods. In fact, Hines would likely be astonished to learn that today “Duncan Hines” is associated with cake mixes and not with his highly popular travel and dining guides or the “Recommended by Duncan Hines” seals of approval proudly displayed by restaurants, hotels, and food companies.

Hines’ associations with the food and travel industries arose incidentally from his own experiences as a consumer. He frequently suffered from eating poor quality restaurant food and sleeping in uncomfortable, unsanitary lodgings while crisscrossing the county on business. Hines began keeping careful notes about places to avoid as well as places worth driving another few miles to visit again.

As word of his expertise and demanding standards spread he was barraged with inquiries from travelers seeking advice on places to eat and stay. In an effort to save himself aggravation of responding to individual questions, Hines prepared an annotated list of his favorite restaurants and sent it out to several hundred business contacts along with the usual Christmas cards---thereby unwittingly launching his publishing business. The casual lists which began as a personal diary grew into frequently revised and ever-expanding travel guides to restaurants (*Adventures in Good Eating*), hotels (*Lodging for a Night*), and vacation destinations (*Duncan Hines Vacation Guide*).

Hines made little money on these publications; in fact, for several years he lost money on them. He kept at the time- and resource-consuming task as a public service. Hines refused to accept payment of any kind in return for his endorsements. To keep the ever-lengthening lists up-to-date, Hines enlisted the support of volunteer “detectives” who sent in detailed notes about restaurants and hotels they patronized. Hines was painstaking about dropping entries for establishments which failed to maintain his high standards for cleanliness, comfort, and service.

Over time, as Hines’ reputation for scrupulous integrity and reliability as a travel expert grew he added a small but successful side business renting “Recommended by Duncan Hines” signs to establishments that had earned his seal of approval. These were “uniform in design so they would be instantly recognizable” and “color-coordinated” with the corresponding guidebooks’ bindings (*i.e.*, red for restaurant signs, blue for lodgings). The signs were subject to immediate removal if subsequent inspections found that standards had slipped.

For all his evident genius for branding and marketing, he was not a great businessman. For instance, the bindings on his directories were too good—they didn’t wear out in a year, so people did not rush out to buy the new editions as they were published. This was not only bad for the immediate bottom line, but also for the credibility of the directories themselves—people were relying on outdated information.

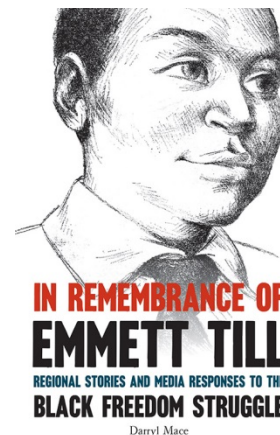
During his lifetime, Hines’ name became better known among Americans than that of the Vice President of the United States. The fact that Duncan Hines’ name is a household word more than a half century after his death in 1959 is due to an advertising man named Roy Park. Unlike many before him, Park was able to persuade Hines to give his name to a line of top-quality foods as a way to influence and upgrade American eating habits. This led to the establishment of Hines-Park Foods, Inc. in 1948. The wildly successful company merged with Proctor & Gamble in 1956.

At times the author’s admiration of Hines borders on hero worship or idealization. Originally an 840 page manuscript, this enthusiastic history began as the rough draft of a master’s thesis in history at Western Kentucky University at Bowling Green. The final book would not have suffered from further editing. The biography contains superfluous minutia (*e.g.*, recitations of every dish eaten by Hines at every restaurant visited during multiple road trips, when descriptions of a single day’s meals would have been sufficient to convey Hines’ tasting methods) and extraneous side stories (*e.g.*, details about Hines’ siblings’ lives) that impede rather than advance the narrative of Hines’ life and work.

Despite its lack of polish, this well-documented work is useful as well as a pleasant read. This book is recommended for public libraries and for academic libraries supporting culinary, business and/or marketing, and popular history programs.

Karen J. Cook
State Library of Louisiana

In Remembrance of Emmett Till. Regional Stories and Media Responses to the Black Freedom Struggle. Mace, Darryl. Lexington, Kentucky. The University Press of Kentucky, 2014, ISBN: 978-0-8131-4536-5 (Hardcover). 212 p.. \$40.



Pennsylvania-based history professor Darryl Mace takes a look at media coverage of the 1955 lynching of a black youth in Mississippi in his 2014 book, *In Remembrance of*

Emmett Till, Regional Stories and Media Responses to the Black Freedom Struggle.

The murder of 14-year-old Till, a Chicago native visiting his uncle in the Mississippi Delta, garnered national attention more-so than many other race-related murders in Mississippi at the time.

Mace focuses on the differences that various media outlets had in covering Till's life and death. Mace takes a look at the following types of media outlets: Mississippi-based newspapers; newspapers based in other parts of the Deep South; newspapers from around the country; and black owned and operated newspapers.

Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were accused at the time to have kidnapped and murdered Till after the young man allegedly wolf-whistled Bryant's wife, then a store clerk in a business Roy Bryant owned in Money, Mississippi. Till allegedly touched her hand and allegedly made comments to her that made her uncomfortable. Bryant and Milam were accused of pistol whipping and murdering Till, dumping his body in the Tallahatchie River.

Mace's extensive 22-page bibliography consulted dozens of sources on this matter.

But Mace doesn't focus only on the influence of race on media coverage. He also notes gender-stereotypes as portrayed by the media.

Mace notes that coverage by at least 1 publication, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, didn't characterize Mamie Till-Mobley, Emmett's mother, as a "weak" woman fainting after viewing her son's mangled corpse, as many other publications did. The *Tribune* notes that men who attended the funeral also "shielded" their eyes when looking at Emmett's crushed head.

Jet Magazine was the first of 3 newspapers to publish pictures of Emmett Till's open casket, Mace points out.

The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* also published those vivid images.

Mace also points out the differences in how black newspaper reporters were treated compared to white newspaper reporters. White trial attendees would steal the chairs of black reporters, according to Mace.

Cleveland Call and Post reporter, James Hicks, who covered the Till trial, was arrested by a white police officer without being told the charges against him. The charges, later revealed to be passing a school bus, were later dismissed. But this gave Hicks, a black man, the idea that he was a "marked man." This treatment, Hicks later revealed, "beat me down."

One of the most significant issues Mace writes about is the *Look Magazine* decision to print Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam's paid confession. The article, printed after Bryant and Milam were acquitted by a jury of their peers, is almost exactly identical to Carolyn Bryant's account of what allegedly happened on the day Till died. *Look Magazine*, which paid Bryant and Milam \$3500 for their words, didn't print any other opposing points of view on the Till case.

Mace's book tackles a very troubling episode in the nation's history and is one of at least 2 books in the past 4 years to study the media's portrayal of Emmett Till's murder.

Almost 60 years after Emmett Till's death, this book is recommended for academic, public and school libraries.

*Peter R. Dean, Reference Librarian
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