

SEPTEMBER 25, 1986

Without an art reference book, I can't link the colors surrounding me to the French artist who used them to such grand effect. I can't recall his name, but he'd sure like this natural background which is about an hour's drive south and a little west of Lexington, Kentucky. For the moment, I've paused on a wide bench on a hill overlooking a long valley of forest land and thick mountain shrubbery.

State road maps call the settlement I'm in Pleasant Valley. However, a private group dedicated to restoring historical sites has renamed it Shaker Town after a religious sect that once had their commune here. Meeting halls and living quarters have been reclaimed, an inn and a restaurant have been opened, and the aura of another age has been recaptured with the attending personnel wearing the old time costumes.

I have just finished a lunch of a thick sandwich of country ham accompanied by a bowl of broccoli and Roquefort cheese soup. To maintain balance, I also ordered a tree fresh, red delicious apple baked in butter and honey sprinkled with cinnamon.

Though it's a trifling matter, I am going to have to speak to my dry cleaner when I get back home. They've shrunk the waistband and smoothed out the pleats on several pairs of my trousers. I like to lean back and raise my knees up to rest the tablet that I use to make my reports, but the way they've shrunk my clothes, I can't comfortably reach my writing pad in that position.

Something else that's been bothering me on this trip is the amount of menus I've seen that stated a no-tipping policy. At first I thought maybe these hombres had discovered a new method of inspiring waitresses and bellmen to lift coffee pots and shift folding luggage around. On other occasions in Texas, I've thought of suggesting to the management that perhaps a teaspoon of hot grease in a hash slinger's shoe might encourage her to bring my breakfast and stop chewing gum and talking to the truckers at the counter. I had never thought of linking bellboys to service, other than giving them a large grant for finding a theatre ticket, or bestowing an annuity upon them for calling a cab.

The same policy must be hitting the Dallas/Ft. Worth terminal, too. On the way up while I was waiting to change planes, I watched a bar patron settle his \$6 tab with a nickel tip. The bartender became so upset that I thought he was going to trip the terminal's emergency switch and bring a squad of commandos or a swat team down on us.

The last Shakers to live in Pleasant Valley were here in 1923. Their most prosperous times were from the early 1800s to the Civil War. Shaker belief, I must add, forbade husbands and wives from living in the same quarters. I don't want to discuss such intimate matters in detail, but I think it does make it plenty clear why the faith died out.