Harriet Van Horne

American dream: things

BY HARRIET VAN HORN

The American Dream, in its raw essentials, does us little credit. It lacks the common sense and moral precepts. It is basically immature. Still, it drives men upward and onward. Sapped by advertising, by the clamor of greedy wives or by the simple lust for power, up the ladder they go. To sheer hard work, enormous sacrifice and occasional low cunning, some men live to see the American Dream become true. Sometimes they even enjoy it. More often the gift of enjoyment is left to sons and daughters, along with the newly creased silver and the second-rate paintings bought for twice their worth.

On display at Caroliniana

Dadds papers reflect life

(Editor's note: This column, written by Jack Bass, originally appeared in the Charlotte Observer.)

The late James Mclhrine Dadds may go down in history as one of the most significant voices in South Carolina in the middle of the twentieth century.

When he died at the age of 73, the publication South Today called Dadds, "one of the South's great voices of common sense and moral precept," and a "leader in his field." A collection of his papers now on display at the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, reflects his wide interests as a poet, essayist, philosopher, and social critic. Dadds retired from the pulpit at a younger age, and religion. Dadds retired from a career as a college English teacher (though not one who was overlooked or forgotten) in 1955. His last book, "American Dream," was published in 1957, a year after his death.

At the entrance to the room exhibiting his papers is a profile of Dadds, smoking his ever-present pipe, accompanied by the following quotation from his book, Southern Heritage:

"It is no mere doubt of the fire which burns at the heart of the South than I have of that which burns at my own. Why not? They are both the same."

The exhibit includes an excellent display of Dadds' papers and the poet Robert Frost, who once publicly credited Dadds with more sensitivity than any other American writer whose work he was not being struck by personal tragedy in middle life.

Other items include a letter from Dadds to his wife, Harriet Van Horne, written in 1869, when he was vice president in 1869, inviting Dadds to a religious conference in Washington. The letter came from Adlai Stevenson, expressing appreciation for insight gleaned from an informal talk Dadds gave before a group at the Field Foundation in New York.

There is also an engraved invitation from President John F. Kennedy inviting Dadds to the Inaugural House on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Dadds was a traditional South Carolina emphasis on manners that first involved him in civil rights. When a special session of the legislature was called in 1944 to attempt to circumvent a federal judge's ruling that the "white man's club" was unconstitutional, Dadds wrote in a letter that appeared in South Carolina's largest newspaper, the State in Columbia:

"My first reaction was that it was graceless, mannerless things to do: at this moment when our soldiers are fighting all over the world to protect democracy, South Carolina courts are attempting to undo the fact that her government intends to protect the doctrine of white supremacy.""