

PEACE: Smart money

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 20 Oct 2002

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Roy C. Lackey — 20 Oct 2002, 00:00

mantis quoted me and wrote:

Assuming

Smart had no siblings, his parent's death left him owning a chunk of real estate that was worth a tidy sum of money to him in the go-go 1920s.

Ah, but he must have had siblings, no? He mentions "in-laws," after all, among those relatives trying to help him get started.

He doesn't mention any siblings, but if he did have any that just increases the likelihood of his having closer, by blood, relatives to whom he might bequeath his business. Stockholders, majority or otherwise, don't need to know anything about day-to-day operations of a corporation they own stock in.

That

has to be a source of his start-up money for the plant; Smart was no farmer.

I thought we were agreed that Smart could not have started up the factory without Olivia: "her" money, her brother's money, her family's influence in the town.

I'm not sure where Smart got all his money, or when, but he had money before he met Olivia. He claims to have earned enough in Florida to have bought Tilly's store, had he wanted to, "for collateral, you know, on a loan from the bank, just like I'm doing here" (148). He had already bought Bledsoe's drugstore, with the help of a bank (Blaine's?) loan. He may have had off-the-books money from illicit drug sales to carney freaks (as Stone Ox notes). (He wasn't looking for a cure for cancer in his lab at Olivia's!) He may have had money from the sale of the family farm. At some point he sold Olivia's house. There may well have been insurance money from Olivia's death. I don't know that he even needed any of the Weer fortunes to start up the plant, even if John had money to spare by that time. It depends on which came first--the Depression or the plant.

Thinking about this, just now, I had an insight!

In fact (and I don't know how I overlooked this when working on the timeline!), I think that I can now prove that the plant existed before Olivia's death--in which case Smart probably didn't need any Weer money.

"At my aunt Olivia's funeral he had been much younger; small, stocky (he was already beginning to make money, and my aunt had hired an excellent cook, a Latvian who . . ." (149)

Two points here: Smart was making money before Olivia died; she hired a cook.

"She [Olivia] had grown plump within a year of her marriage, eating Milewczyk's cooking . . ." (180)

And:

"In the evenings, when Milewczyk and the maid (neither of whom lived in) had gone home, and Julius was at work in his laboratory in the basement, my aunt soaked in a hot tub [. . .] her breasts [. . .] waxed, in the two years that passed between her marriage and my parent's return . . ." (180).

Den was still living with the Smarts at that time, was living there when the cook was hired (and a maid!), his parents were still in Europe, Olivia was alive, and Smart was "already beginning to make money". That _must_ be referring to money made from the plant. Milewczyk was hired within the first year of their marriage.

Remember also that, according to Blaine, it was Olivia who "set her cap for Julius Smart when he went into business here the next spring" (174). It was Olivia who pursued Smart, not he her. Bledsoe's had already been taken over by Smart before he even met Olivia, so the business he later "went into" had to have been the juice plant. If this is all true, then Julius started up the plant _before_ he married Olivia. In which case he did it without _any_ Weer money, and he owed the Weers nothing, not even token gratitude. It was Olivia who married Smart for _his_ money. They probably married in 1925, the second spring following Macafee's birthday party. That would put the plant's founding in 1924.

Stone Ox wrote:

Of course, Smart is likely lying about the handsome salary as well, to explain where all the money he got from taking over Mr. Tilly's carney medicine business came from. After all, even if he kept the books in the pharmacy's regular business honestly, I don't see why he would have kept records of having prescribed illegal medicines.

You may be right about the citrus season in Florida; I know it's been discussed here before, but I don't remember the particulars. You may also be right about Smart having lived with Tilly for longer than he claimed. As for whether or not he killed Tilly, that's hard to say. On the one hand Den says that he showed genuine grief, on the other that he (Den) possessed a child's credulity to full measure (148). Postmortems were not often performed in those days, and not very sophisticated when they were. How can you establish rigor mortis in a man who was turning to stone? <g> I would like to have seen a coroner's report!

-Roy