

**JEFF
GUINN**



**GO DOWN
TOGETHER**

**THE TRUE, UNTOLD STORY OF
BONNIE & CLYDE**

"Engaging... reads like a road story—two kids from the Dallas slums in a fast car, headed to nowhere good." —*The New Yorker*



Simon & Schuster
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Guinn, Jeff.

Go down together: the true, untold story of Bonnie and Clyde / Jeff Guinn.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Parker, Bonnie, 1910–1934. 2. Barrow, Clyde, 1909–1934.
3. Criminals—United States—Biography. I. Title.

HV6245.G79 2009

364.15'52092273—dc22

[B] 2008053342

ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-5718-0

ISBN-10: 1-4165-5718-0

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In memory of Max Lale,
an historian who inspired me,
and in honor of Cissy Stewart Lale,
a mentor and friend who still does.

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GO DOWN TOGETHER

Acknowledgments

I could not have written *Go Down Together* without the input of Andrea Ahles Koos, my longtime research assistant–sounding board who always says exactly what she thinks whether I want to hear it or not. Marcia Melton is a dogged researcher who can find practically any article or legal document, no matter how obscure or supposedly unavailable it may be. It was a pleasure to work with Roger Labrie; his thorough editing reflected constant respect for the subject matter, and I learned a lot in the process. It's a privilege to be edited by him, and to be published by Simon & Schuster. I'm fortunate that Jim Donovan, now a best-selling historian in his own right, remains willing to serve as my literary agent.

Mike Blackman, Christopher Radko, Carlton Stowers, Cissy Stewart Lale, Archie McDonald, Sandy Jones, and Doug Perry all read along as I wrote. Their constructive criticisms continually helped shape the book.

Several author-historians were generous with their time and Barrow Gang knowledge. They include John Neal Phillips, Rick Mattix, Bill Sloan, Ben Procter, and Sandy Jones. Terry Whitehead's videotaped interviews with members of the Methvin family and Commerce shootout witness Lee Phelps provided invaluable information. Jonathan Davis shared key material, and was always willing to have one more meeting to answer my questions.

Buddy Barrow Williams and Rhea Leen Linder are credits to their Uncle Clyde and Aunt Bonnie, respectively.

Thanks to everyone who granted me interviews: Virginia Becker, Robert Brunson, Harold Caldwell, Wayne Carter, Jonathan Davis, Lu Durham, Doris Feller, Harold Feller, Marvelle Feller, John Paul Field, Harrison Hamer, Orville Hancock, Charles Heard, Boots Hinton, Ken Holmes, Olen Walter Jackson, Ted Johnson, Sandy Jones, Cissy Stewart Lale, Rhea Leen Linder, Rick Mattix, Archie McDonald, Bill Palmer, John Neal Phillips, Ben Procter, Mitchel Roth, Bill Sloan, Doris Stallings, Janice Thomas,

Robert Pitts Thomas, Terry Whitehead, James Willett, Buddy Barrow Williams, Jim Wright, and Pat Ziegler.

I'm certain that for the past two years Charles Caple, Mary and Charles Rogers, Robert Fernandez and Larry Wilson, Felix Higgins, Melinda Mason, Zeke Wahl, Diana Andro, Broc Sears, Zonk Lanzillo, Rich Billings, Wilson McMillion, Phyllis Stone, and Scott Nishimura have all heard much more than they wanted to about Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker.

And special thanks are due to Victoria Meyer, Kelly Walsh, and all the other talented people working in the Simon & Schuster publicity department.

Everything I write is always for Nora, Adam, and Grant.

About the Author

Jeff Guinn is the best-selling author of numerous books of fiction and nonfiction. An award-winning investigative journalist and former books editor, he is a frequent guest on national radio and television programs. Guinn lives in Fort Worth, Texas.

Photographic Insert



1

Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in spring 1933. This photo was taken from unprocessed film discovered by police following an April 13 gun battle in Joplin, Missouri. The Barrow Gang had yet to learn that exposed car license plates like the one in this picture made it easier for their pursuers to track them.

image

2

In a rare formal family photograph taken sometime in 1911, Cumie Barrow poses with four of her children. From the left they are Buck, Artie, Nell,

and one-year-old Clyde on his mother's lap. Cumie was a stern Christian fundamentalist who never spared the rod where her children were concerned. All the Barrow offspring but open-mouthed baby Clyde seem to have already adopted their mother's habitual tight-lipped expression.

 image

4

A period postcard features downtown Dallas seen from the west, the same view available to the Barrows after they relocated to the West Dallas slum. As a teenager, Clyde would stand in the campgrounds and stare across the Trinity River at the towering skyscrapers and other elegant buildings.



5

Clyde initially tried to earn an honest living after quitting high school in 1926. His first job paid one dollar a day, so he moved on to Procter & Gamble for the princely salary of thirty cents an hour. It wasn't enough to bankroll the glamorous lifestyle Clyde wanted, so he turned to crime.

 image

7



11

Mounted “long riders” with rifles herd inmates to the fields at Eastham Prison Farm in central Texas. Prisoners were often required to run rather than walk, and the work picking cotton or tending other crops was brutal. Sentenced to seven consecutive two-year terms in 1930, scrawny Clyde Barrow cut off two of his own toes to avoid the field labor he felt certain would kill him before his fourteen years at the farm were completed.



12

Inmates slept on two- or three-tiered bunk beds in the prison dormitories. There was little room and absolutely no privacy. Whenever there were disturbances, guards would fire rounds into the ceiling, then aim progressively lower until order was restored. Shower areas were behind the rows of bunks—this was where Clyde murdered Ed Crowder in 1931 after the hulking fellow prisoner had been raping him for months.



13

Shortly after Clyde was paroled from Eastham Prison Farm in early 1932, he and Bonnie embarked on a life of crime. They proved to be bumbling rather than masterful criminals—Bonnie even spent several months locked in a small-town Texas jail—but Depression-era newspapers, desperate to attract readers, exaggerated their exploits. In 1933, Clyde, Bonnie, and their companions made headlines when they had to shoot their way past police while fleeing a rented apartment in Joplin, Missouri.



14

When the gang fled Joplin, they left behind most of their belongings, including a roll of undeveloped film. When the police processed it, many of the photos showed Clyde and Bonnie in gag poses, including some where they playfully brandished guns at each other.



16

Clyde, on the left, poses with his hero-worshipping henchman W. D. Jones, who was only sixteen when he joined the Barrow Gang just before Christmas 1932. W.D. eventually became disenchanted with the criminal lifestyle and left the gang, but not before having several fingertips blasted off during a gunfight in Arkansas.



17

Cumie Barrow rejoiced when her son Buck married Blanche Caldwell, a preacher's daughter. This photo was taken in 1931. Blanche begged Buck not to join his younger brother's gang, predicting it would end badly for him and for her. Blanche was right on both counts.



19

After Buck's death, Clyde and Bonnie made even more visits to Texas to meet with their families. Standing from left to right are Bonnie's sister Billie Jean, Clyde, Cumie, and Clyde's younger brother, L.C. Kneeling are Clyde's sister Marie, Bonnie's mother Emma, and Bonnie. Note the coat obscuring the car license plate—Clyde had learned a lesson from the film left behind in Joplin.



20

While the public believed the Barrow Gang spent its spare time in luxurious hotel hideouts, Clyde and Bonnie actually spent most nights in primitive backcountry camps, sleeping in their car, bathing in streams, and frequently eating their meals out of cans. They often spread a blanket on the ground and laid out their arsenal of guns for cleaning. Clyde didn't mind roughing it, but Bonnie was afraid of bugs, snakes, and thunderstorms.



21

Clyde, Henry Methvin, and Raymond Hamilton sometime between January 16, 1934, when Clyde helped break Henry and Raymond out of Eastham Prison Farm, and March 6, when Raymond left the Barrow Gang. Clyde always insisted that, in public or posing for pictures, his subordinates dress in suits—the Barrow Gang had an image to uphold.

image

22

Henry Methvin was a bad-tempered small-time hood from Louisiana who was serving a ten-year sentence for attempted murder in Texas when Clyde broke him out of Eastham Prison Farm. Though Henry pretended to be a loyal Barrow Gang member and enthusiastically participated in two separate killings of lawmen, the Methvin family was anxious to betray Clyde and Bonnie in return for a pardon for Henry from Texas authorities.

image

23

The six-man posse that pursued Clyde and Bonnie in northeast Louisiana was led by legendary Frank Hamer, who had left the Texas Rangers but was recruited by state officials to end the Barrow Gang's two-year reign of terror. Hamer was joined by Dallas deputies Ted Hinton and Bob Alcorn, Manny Gault of the Texas Highway Patrol, and Sheriff Henderson Jordan and his deputy, Prentiss Oakley, of Bienville Parish, Louisiana. Standing left to right are Oakley, Hinton, Alcorn, and Gault. Squatting in front are Hamer and Jordan.

image

24

Following the May 23, 1934, ambush outside Gibsland, Louisiana, the bullet-riddled Ford V-8 with Clyde's and Bonnie's bodies still sprawled inside was towed to the parish county seat of Arcadia. Thousands of spectators gawked along the way, and some were disappointed that in death the two seemed so small and harmless. One man said of Clyde, "He was nothing but a little bitty fart."

image

25

The bodies of Clyde and Bonnie were displayed on tables in the back room of Arcadia's Conger's Furniture Store, which doubled as the parish coroner's laboratory. Photographers were allowed to snap pictures before Dr. J. L. Wade conducted a cursory examination that concluded the cause of death was gunshot wounds.

image

27

In death as in life, Clyde and Bonnie provided entertainment for Depression-weary Americans. The so-called Death Car was on display at state fairs all over America for much of the next decade.

image

28

Newsreels depicting the scenes of Barrow Gang crimes and garish footage from the coroner's laboratory in Arcadia were popular attractions at movie theaters. As this poster indicates, the Barrow Gang "shorts" routinely received top billing over full-length feature films.

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