

# Comparisons

By JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Hanging around with my associate, a guy named John Vassar, often provides a new outlook on many things.

In many ways we are similar. In others, not so.

I am happiest in small towns down south or back in a swamp somewhere. He is happiest roaming 8th St., the area he calls "John Vassar's New York."

So there we are, riding to the place where we measure beaches, and John wants to know:

"Andy Griffith has always been one of my favorite shows. Tell me the truth—is that show a reasonably accurate depiction of small town life in North Carolina?"

Naturally, this required some thought, and even then got placed on the cerebral back burner long enough for me to devote full mental energy computing the probability of a wildly veering beer truck just ahead winding up in one lane or the other.

I finally determined that its movements were irregular enough to suggest total randomness and any sort of prediction efforts in such a binary situation—left lane or right lane—could be solved as accurately by flipping a coin.

But seeing that I was taking awhile to wrestle with the question, Mr. Vassar's grizzled face assumed an expression of worry.

"Hold it. You're not going to tell me it's all wrong, are you?" he said. "Please don't tell me that Andy Griffith is not your typical North Carolina sheriff. That's one of my most treasured beliefs. I couldn't take it."

"Well, I can't say that Pete Bland runs things down New Bern the way Andy did in Mayberry. But I can say that most of the Craven County womenfolk can cook Aunt Bea under the table, and that there are more than a few guys running around the Piney woods with a striking resemblance to Ernest T.," I told him.

"The bottom line," I continued, "is that Andy Griffith is pretty close by TV standards. Rural North Carolina life in that show is about as accurate as urban life is in Hill Street Blues, and as close to reality (which may not be very close at all) as TV gets." John looked thoughtful.

"Would you say," he said finally, "that Andy Griffith is a lot closer to the truth than the Dukes of Hazzard?"

"Most definitely," I said.

"OK. That's all I needed to know," he said, apparently satisfied.

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## Dear Editor:

North Carolina is one of the finest states in this country and is a wonderful place to live and work. We are blessed with good people, good climate and good government. We have good highways, good schools and are considered one of the most progressive states in this country.

We do, however, have one tax that is an unfair tax, capricious in its application, and probably the most disliked tax in our state. I am, of course, referring to the Intangible Tax. This tax was instituted in 1868 and was instituted at a time when capital was not as important and when the economy was more labor intensive. It is a tax that discriminates against capital and is out of step in the computer age of the twentieth century. It is a tax that discourages investments and savings. Because of changing tax laws, tax shelters, thrift plans and other investment vehicles, as well as computerized transfers of money, it no longer efficiently collects what it was designed to do. Its peculiar application hits very hard at retirees and new businesses and most of all discourages people from moving to North Carolina. Georgia, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina have both Intangibles Tax and an Income

Tax, and Ohio will eliminate their Intangible Tax on December 31, 1984. Indiana is phasing out its Intangible Tax. Georgia and Kentucky have a lower rate of Intangibles and a lower Income Tax than North Carolina.

The General Fund of the State of North Carolina has an estimated surplus of \$400,000,000 to \$500,000,000 this year. It is only fair that the taxpayers in North Carolina share in this excess revenue, particularly since their taxes were raised by \$219,000,000 in 1983. When the Legislature meets June 7th, they will have an opportunity to review again the tax program of the State and it is an ideal time for the Legislature to start directing some of the revenue back to the taxpayers and to make a progressive step forward for the State of North Carolina.

However, the Legislature needs to know how the citizens feel and I would encourage every taxpayer to contact their Legislators by personal conversation, telephone and letters to encourage them to repeal this most unpopular tax. It can only be done if the taxpayers let the Legislators know how they feel. Let's take another step to make North Carolina the best state in the Union.

Very truly yours,  
James M. Culbertson, Jr.

I have long hair and a beard and my dress is something short of what the editors of Gentlemen's Quarterly would consider appropriate.

John Vassar, as a matter of course, also does not seem to use ads from Esquire as a model for his morning choice of attire. He also sports more than the standard allocation of facial hair.

On this day we were working at the beach, and it was a rather cool, windy spring day. We were both wearing surplus army jackets, since these nearly indestructible garments with lots of pockets are ideal for outdoor work.

To make a long story short, and stay within my column-inch allotment, there was a high school class on the scene. One lass of about 17 apparently had a fixation on the era of the late sixties and early seventies.

Seeing Mr. Vassar and myself, she immediately decided we must be left-over hippies and therefore worthy of hero worship.

Persons of Julie's age and outlook I think believe that about 1970 the night skies glowed orange with the fires from piles of burning bras and draft cards, while college students wrote political manifestos behind blockades in commandeered dean's offices, and recreational drugs were pedaled like produce on the street corners.

While I was busily taking azimuths, John was busily doing nothing at all to dissuade her from these notions, and (if I may speculate) was probably trying to think of more such notions to plant in her young mind.

I was brought back into the conversation when she said we both looked like Jerry Garcia, the guitarist and singer for the Grateful Dead.

While I admire Mr. Garcia's musical talents, the man is also ugly as a St. Bernard. Julie quickly explained that she was a "deadhead," and that any comparisons to Garcia were all to be taken as compliments.

Now your average Grateful "Deadhead" is 34 years old, has numerous tatoos, rides a Harley-Davidson, ingests controlled substances like popcorn, and would hitchhike from Ernul, N.C. to Point Barrow, Alaska to see a Dead concert.

If there is a new generation of deadheads half that age, with blond hair and braces, this could mean something important for society.

Or maybe not.

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# Today - Solar Eclipse May 30, 1984

By LELA BARROW

Think not of the future, live only for the hour & its allotted duties. Finish the task at your elbow; let that be sufficient for the day - do what lies clearly at hand. Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, but lost time is gone forever.

Today is the wise man's day. Tomorrow is the fool's day. The successful man is the man who sees what should be done and does it. Make a rule - "to make someone happy today" and pray God to help you keep it.

Viewing the Solar Eclipse on Wednesday, May 30, 1984 brought back memories of the one I saw in 1900. I was visiting Helen and May Dudley, five miles north of Greenville. This was a total eclipse at that place. It occurred between 10:30

and 11:30 - the peak about 11:00. There was no light from the sun, but the million stars in the heaven gave some night light. As the darkness became greater the chickens were confused - walking slowly toward the hen house, making weird noises. They knew it was too early to go up on the roost, but darkness made them obey.

I was thirteen, and I remember I felt almost like the chickens. You feel the presence of God around you. So did this one Wednesday make me feel lonely. I was alone all day, wind blowing hard, and rain pouring down; too dark to read or work. I very rarely get lonesome but, that day was depressing. *The Sun Journal* said: "North Carolina won't see another until well into the next

century." I won't be here to see it.

The caution they gave us on using ways to not let the light burn our eyes was very good.

The most effective way to see a total eclipse is being in the right place at the right time. Three times in my life span I have been in the right place to see God's most wonderful exhibit in the Heavens. The first one was the total eclipse in 1900 I just wrote.

The second one was the falling stars. I think this was in the 1920's. It was a real shower of stars raining down to earth like small hail stones. The place lighted up like candles from Heaven. I was on the back porch where Vivian Taylor lives. Mrs. Brown lived there then.

The third one was the Aurora Borealis, the northern lights or streamers, a luminous meteoris phenomenon of varying brilliancy seen in the northern heavens, believed to be electric in origin. I had seen parts of it in the north before. But this special night it was more like a rainbow, different colors reaching clear across the Heaven from North to South. Really a gorgeous picture from God's Heaven to Earth. I was walking in the street in front of my house. This brightness lasted nearly thirty minutes. This occurred about 1931, I think.

I feel these occasions were when God manifests Himself to the people of the earth. I thank for letting me be in the right place at the right time.

## THE HIGHLIGHTS

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