

Eastern Echoes

By Gail Roberson



The Final Say

I love browsing through old cemeteries. Like large libraries, they teach you much when you spend some time there. Alive. Old monuments attract me, but it's the epitaphs that cause me to linger. Someone once said that the tombstone was the only thing that could stand upright and lie on its face at the same time. But, unlike some mourners who forget all the evils of the deceased and inscribe flowery words of praise, occasionally survivors tell the truth and nothing but. . .

"Here lies the carcass of a cursed sinner, doomed to be roasted for the Devil's dinner." Now, that really leaves little to the imagination. "Here lies the body of Mary Ann, safe on the bosom of Abraham. 'Tis not a bad deal for Mary Ann, but kind of rough on Abraham." From that one, we glean a bit of detail about Mary Ann. And from the next, there is much left to read between the lines. . . "Near to this stone John Barnet lies, there's no man frets nor no man cries, where he's gone or how he fares, there's no man knows nor no man cares."

Some people die such unusual deaths that their epitaphs duly explain: "Here I lies, and no wonder I'm dead, for the wheel of a wagon went over my head." Or, "To all my friends I bid adieu, a more sudden death you never knew. As I was leading the old mare to drink, she kicked and killed me quicker'n a wink." Now you see why I love spending time in old cemeteries.

Disgruntled husbands get their revenge and final say by way of their wives' epitaphs. Here are a few instances: "Beneath this stone my wife doth lie, now she's at rest, and so am I." Another one proclaims: "Here lies my wife in earthly mould, who when she lived, did nought but scold. Peace wake her not, for now she's still, she had, but now I have my will." My favorite, says: "Here lies my poor wife, without bed or blanket, but dead as a door-nail, and God be thankit."

You can use your tombstone to brag a little, as this man, now buried in a Georgia cemetery: "Here lies the father of twenty-nine, he would have had more but he didn't have time."

This child's epitaph poses an interesting question: "Since I am so quickly done for, I wonder what I was begun for?"

And, believe it or not, somebody actually has this inscribed on their monument: "Thanks for calling. I am unable to answer. Please leave a message." Can you believe that?

The nicest story I've ever heard about epitaphs has to do with a widower, who, in his bereavement, expressed sad feelings by having engraved on the stone of his wife, "My light has gone out." You see, he was about to marry again. He asked the advice of his Bishop, as to whether or not he should have the inscription erased, as it seemed at variance with the new condition in his life. "Oh, no," said the Bishop. "I wouldn't have it taken off. Just put underneath it, 'I have struck another match.'"

You know, I really miss the inscriptions on old tombstones. You could learn much about a person by just standing at the foot of their grave. Today, we simply use the name, dates of birth and death, and perhaps a Bible verse. Given a choice, I'd much rather walk through the old plots than the new graveyards, because I always leave filled with knowledge of those who are buried there. They continue to live through the words they've left behind.

Have you ever known someone whose epitaph should read, "Died at 30. Buried at 60." The final say is usually the truth, you know. Let's try hard not to leave that kind of legacy behind.

Honor Roll

The following students were named to either the Principal's List or Honor Roll at West Craven Middle School for the fifth grading period:

Principal's List
 Sixth grade — David Walls, Julie Wetherington.
 Seventh grade — Koneisha Ward, Kathryn Eatmon, Crystal Powers, Tanya Webber, Jeff Schoch, Tonja Freeman, Heather Nowajewski, Rosemary Riggs, Cindy Jordan, Heather Bright, Charlie Moore, Heather English, Ivy Oakley and Candi Register.
 Eighth grade — Lori Demoret, Diane Morgan, Sara Bateman, Alena Smith, Catherine Salter, Scherrie Hargett, Janice Rowe, Helen Civils, Cheryl Snider, Cristle Ballenger, Susan Bowers and Christy Hart.

Honor Roll
 Sixth grade — Carrie Ballenger, Debbie Morgan, Janet Pate, Jason Brumelow, Amy Bryan, Edward Ippock, Edward Redditt, Jennifer Whaley, Melissa Wiggins, Amy Williams, Del Bennett, Jeremy Broadway, Tanisha Jones, Lonnie Long, Amy Morse, Elijah Pugh, Michael Dail, Charly Laughinghouse, Cheryl McCoy, Tammy Riggs, Tammy White, Michelle Gardner, Robbie Humphrey, Brian Cobb, Chris Hamilton, Christie Hawkins, April Kirkman, Joey Nobles, Michael Riggs and Mike Whitford.

Seventh grade — Connie Chesner, Tina Fillingame, Melissa Phifer, Joe French, Donna Laughinghouse, Amy Wiggins, RaMarie Bazemore, Ray Griffin, Allen Kornegay, Sam Moore, Mary Ricks, Kristy Wilson, Dalton Gaskins, Rob Stallings, Theresa Moore, Stephanie Wiggins, Stephanie Weatherington,

Jay Smith, Debene Dawson, Lisa Ippock, Susan Lewis and Keisha Smith.

Eighth grade — Kim Gabhart, Annika Harris, Mary Grace Opphile, Stephanie Peterson, Sylvonia Cox, Ernest Cutler, Chris Dixon, Michelle Elkins, Marlon Miller, Dawn Vetter, Robyn Allen, Terri Baker, Chris Carrier, Tekeisha Manley, Jay Tyree, Randy Davis, Tonya Adair, Derek Adams, Trisha Clark, Jackie Harris, Lovella Perkins, Snow White, Laura Cope, Angela Jones, Eddie Moore, Melissa Wiggins, Roscoe Fulmore, April L. Gaskins, Michelle Lamonds, Hope Mitchell, Kim Russell, Tina Stillley, Charity Adams, Dana Beck, Janet Collins and Michelle Wiggins.

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Our Opinion

A Job Well Done

The importance and professionalism of volunteer rescue workers and firemen was evident at the industrial accident Tuesday at the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill between Vanceboro and New Bern.

More often than not, those who risk their lives and limbs for others are thought of by the public as people who do what they do as a hobby. Not so. These people are dead serious about their work. They were tested Tuesday and by far met and answered the challenge.

The professional emergency personnel could not say enough about the efforts of the area rescue squads and fire departments that responded to the accident. Rumors were abundant. The firemen and rescue workers probably had no real idea of what awaited them at the scene.

What could have been a potentially worse disaster was probably averted by the actions of those who responded. Craven County Emergency Services Director Stanley Kite said he was pleased with the actions of the volunteers. Craven County Emergency Management Coordinator Henry Sermons termed the work of the volunteers "excellent."

We know of no names to put with the many faces of the volunteers that came when the call for help was issued. We suspect that many of those volunteers would probably prefer to remain anonymous. To those who were rescued, the names didn't matter, just the caring faces.

A hearty "thank you" should go out to the rescue workers from Vanceboro, Cove City, Fort Barnwell, New Bern-Craven County, Bridgeton and Craven County Hospital EMS. And let's not forget the firemen from Vanceboro, Township No. 9, Little Swift Creek and Township No. 7 and others who came to help.

If not for these people, the real disaster would have been a longer wait for help to arrive. Or waiting and no help arriving. Out of tragedy, a renewed spirit in helping one's fellow man was seen.

That spirit lives everyday in the hearts of those brave rescue workers and firemen. Saving that spirit is almost as important as saving life itself.

To the volunteers — a job well done.

Leave Well Enough Alone

If we could penalize the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, we would like to hit them with a major penalty.

The penalty? Illegal substitution, in a manner of speaking. Every so often the NCHSAA decides to play musical chairs with athletic teams. NCHSAA calls it realignment. They say realignment is necessary in that schools either decrease or increase in enrollment. These schools may find themselves far ahead or far behind others in their conferences. If a school passes the limits set for a particular class — A, AA, AAA or AAAA — the NCHSAA attempts to put it in the proper conference.

More often than not, realignment means rivals cannot compete against each other at the conference level. We think that diminishes any rivalry, even if they can play non-conference games. It also means a lot of travel. Sometimes a school in the same classification, but different conference, is closer than a conference foe. Closer does not translate into an automatic game.

Currently the NCHSAA plans to revamp several conferences in the eastern part of the state. The changes will affect West Craven High School. We prefer to leave things alone, if possible.

Under an unofficial plan (a meeting was to have been held today to make any official changes), the Coastal Conference would lose Washington to the Tar-Roanoke Conference. With the merger of Ahoskie and Murfreesboro high schools, the Tar-Roanoke Conference would be gaining two new teams. Both teams would be at the extreme geographical edges of the conference.

Pender County and White Oak high schools would join the Coastal Conference, as East Carteret drops to AA classification under the proposed plan.

By losing Washington and East Carteret, the West Craven

teams would have to spend more time on the road and out of the classroom if Pender County and White Oak replace Washington and East Carteret. More travel means more money spent. Loss of classroom time speaks for itself.

The realignment would also hurt rivalries. West Craven and Washington are less than 30 miles apart. Athletes from both teams know each other well and often see each other away from athletic competition. The closeness of the two schools makes for a good rivalry. The schools compete for geographical and media bragging rights in their area.

Throw in D.H. Conley High School just up the road in Pitt County and both West Craven and Conley lose a good conference rival if Washington is moved. The schools could play each other in non-conference events, but it is not guaranteed. Any way it's looked at, a conference rivalry has more meaning. A contest between the two schools could be the deciding factor in conference standings or a championship. It is doubtful a non-conference rivalry could generate as much excitement.

And there have been several changes in West Craven's conference affiliations in the recent past. Stability in a conference allows tradition to build, programs to improve and allows athletes to count on a constant instead of ever-changing list of variables.

From the standpoint of money, academics and rivalry, we hope the proposed realignment will be scrapped or worked out so West Craven can build on rivalries with schools much closer than White Oak or Pender County. As good as the programs may be at those two schools, we think a game between West Craven and a school from "just down the road" will mean much more for the fans, players and to the box office.

The rivalries in danger might not be off the Carolina-N.C. State variety, but they are just as important. Let's hope the NCHSAA will make the right call on this play.

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