

# GAIL WINDS

by: Gail L. Roberson

On April 12, I was 40 years old. I have now reached the old age of youth and the youth of old age. Some days I feel 40, and some days I don't. While people around me fret over every new year, I accept each gray hair and wrinkle. Thank the Lord I've lived long enough to have a few. Some of my friends weren't so lucky. One died in Viet Nam, one in an automobile accident while traveling to be fitted for her wedding gown, and one simply went to sleep and never woke up again.

To me, no one grows old by living . . . but by losing interest in living. The sad thing about being over the hill is not realizing there are other hills to climb. An example was the famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, who, at age 89, designed the Guggenheim Museum. Experts say it was the best work of his entire career.

There's a lot more to being alive than not dying. Youth is a gift of nature, but age is a work of art. When you've grown old, you've accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the years, and it's only then that you can truly begin to use it to enrich the remainder of your days.

Growing old is the most unexpected of things that can happen to us. One old man stated: "Yesterday was my 70th birthday, and as I was thinking about the birthday celebration that was planned for me, I began to review the events of my life. As my mind quickly scanned the year and the blur of 280 seasons, I became increasingly aware that I had not lived life to its fullest. My life is almost over, and despite a few cherished memories, it all seemed like, when I was 25 years old, I went down to the corner store to pick up a loaf of bread . . . and when I arrived back home, I was 70 years old."

There can be many benefits to growing old. When you choose a hobby, you can choose one where you can sit down, and nobody bothers you about that fact. You can nap with no apologies and guilt, and fall asleep in the middle of somebody's conversation without making them mad. Instead of being insulted, they'll just smile and say, "Bless her heart. Poor thing. She's getting along in years, isn't she?" Other advantages are saying "no" more often to most everything you never liked to do anyhow. You can also conveniently forget what you don't want to remember. Everyone will blame it on your senility, so you won't need to feel so bad about forgetting birthdays, anniversaries or baby showers. It won't concern you one way or the other whether mini-skirts make a comeback, and you can initiate a conversation with strangers or handsome men, and nobody will question your motives. More importantly, your friend won't ask how you feel, but where you hurt. And they'll listen as you complain, out of respect for their elders.

Those special old folks who shine from inside always look twenty years younger. They are the ones everybody loves. They might wear out, but you can bet your britches they won't rust out. They are, I expect, also the ones who keep this prayer . . .

"Father, Thou knowest I am growing old. Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject. Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless detail. Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong. Make me thoughtful, but not moody, helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want to keep my friends until the end. Amen."

Age means nothing. It's just a handy way of determining who gets social security. So, at age 40, in the infancy of my old age, come grow old along with me. For the best is yet to be.

## Professor Plant

The plants growing around your home add to the livability and attractiveness, provide shade, privacy and windbreaks, define areas such as the barbecue area, attract birds, butterflies and animals and often provide cut flowers for indoor use. Above all, properly maintained, they add to the value of your home.

However, there is a thorn in the symbolic rose, a fly in the ointment. Some popular plants can be toxic to humans if eaten and among those are the common iris and boxwood, to name two.

Families with children need to see that the youngsters do not eat the fruit or chew on the leaves of the ornamentals in the landscape scene. They should be alerted to the spines on roses and pyracantha and the pointed leaves of the holly. A practical way of doing this is to walk around the property with the kids, pointing out the potential problem plants. Youngsters learn quickly which plants are "stickery" and give them plenty of room.

If a child does eat a part of a toxic plant, the nearest hospital emergency room is the place to go. Some first aid can be administered, beginning with the removal of any plant material in the child's mouth. If the mouth is inflamed or sensitive, a small drink of water or milk can show if there is any problem in swallowing. Then take a sample of the plant, and the child, to the emergency room. The plant specimen may be helpful in deciding what plant substance has been the cause of the problem.

For a full treatment of plant toxicity, we recommend Walter Muenscher's classic *Poisonous Plants of the United States*.

Rose Handbook Available  
The 1989 edition of the American Rose Society's *Handbook for Selecting Roses* has recently appeared, and for rose enthusiasts it is well worth the \$1 it costs. The pocket-sized handbook includes a listing of over

1,000 commercially-available roses. The alphabetical listing includes classifications, such as climber, miniature, hybrid tea and so forth. It also provides information on how well each rose grows, based on reports from thousands of members of the ARS.

To receive a copy, send \$1 and a self-addressed stamped envelope to American Rose Society, Box 30,000, Shreveport, La. 71130-0030

## Obituary

Odie T. Morris

Mrs. Odie Toler Morris, 86, died last Wednesday at Guardian Care of New Bern.

The graveside service was held at 3 p.m. Saturday at Pine Tree Cemetery near Vanceboro and was officiated by the Rev. Graham Lane.

Surviving are one nephew, James Toler, of the Cayton community; two nieces, Mrs. Lilly Whitfield and Mrs. Marie Paterson, both of Ermul; and one sister-in-law, Mrs. Nora Toler of Ermul.

She was a native and lifelong resident of the Cayton community of Craven County. She was a member of New Haven Free Will Baptist Church.

Arrangements were by Wilkerson Funeral Home, Vanceboro.

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# Our Opinion

## Debate On Choosing Judges Has Become Divisive Issue

The question pits lawyer against lawyer and judge against judge, but to date no one seems to care as to how the people of North Carolina feel. All who have expressed opinions or who have testified before the legislative study commission, we understand, have been lawyers and judges.

We speak of the proposition to take away from the people the right to elect judges and hand that authority over to a special commission.

What we need to be discussing is how best to improve justice, and we see no way to improve it with a special commission meeting in some smoke-filled room to name our judges. We see many possible evils connected with such a scheme, and instead of improving justice, the proposition, in our opinion, would hurt justice.

Now James Exum, North Carolina chief justice of the Supreme Court, went before the legislature and called for selection by a commission rather than election by the people.

Now William Griffin, resident judge of the Second Judicial District which embraces Beaufort and Hyde counties, went before a state Senate committee recently to differ with Justice Exum. Judge Griffin is quoted as saying, "The judiciary ought to be free of the political influence that comes from being elected by an elite group of people." And certainly a small commission would very aptly be labelled an "elite" group.

If the only people of North Carolina who are to be consulted or allowed to speak up are judges and lawyers, then we are getting away completely from the very concept of the reason for the existence of courts — justice. If justice is to be cast aside under the guise of removing politics from the picture, then the lawyers and judges might argue such, but the people will not be fooled.

What a small commission would face is extreme political pressure all the time. Those wanting to be Superior Court judges or District Court judges would have friends bombard the commission members. In a real practical sense what would happen is that we would have a concentrated political effort rather than a democratic vote of the people. But people will not be fooled when the full explanation is given. The judges and lawyers as individuals have no more voting power than any other North Carolinians. Each has one vote, and only the people with their ballots can bring about such a change.

Such a change is a constitutional one, and the state Constitution can only be changed by a vote of the people. And we believe the people will not want to give up a right and a power they have had for a century.

We agree that lawyers as officers of the court have more at stake than non-lawyers. And of course judges are officers of the court and very important ones. But the people own the courts in the sense that only the people can change the system.

We just cannot see how giving authority to a small elite group to name our judges in North Carolina will improve justice.

## Issue Of School Spankings Best Left To Local Boards

We have a lot of pressing problems in North Carolina. Many of them demand immediate attention, and the urgency label has been applied to several of them.

As we evaluate our problems, we do not see the issue of school spankings as one which is either urgent or practical. Now we realize that a lot of people seem concerned over this question of allowing corporal punishment in our schools. And by the same token, if we take away the right of school officials to discipline students properly and reasonably, we have then and there contributed to a breakdown of discipline.

We criticize schools and school officials for what we see as a lack of discipline in our schools, but that criticism surely will grow ever louder if we take away from these teachers and principals the right to discipline according to the needs.

In every session of the North Carolina Legislature there are elected representatives who feel that they are not doing their duty unless they introduce some bill regularly. As a result we get a lot of unnecessary bills introduced.

And the bill or talk of a bill to ban spanking in the public schools of North Carolina is one of those bills which some legislator feels he or she must drop in the hopper or else duty is lost.

In truth, this matter of punishment, spanking or its bigger name, corporal punishment, should be left to local school officials over the state. We do not need any statewide bill banning the right of a teacher or principal from administering a spanking to some boy who broke the rules to a degree demanding such punishment.

We read that there are right now 16 school units in North Carolina which may engage in a two-year experiment of banning such spankings. We are unable to learn why 16 such units have been tabbed as having such a right. In our opinion every school board in North Carolina already has such a right. If a school board adopts a policy of banning spankings within the school unit, that is it — there will be no spankings. And all any school board member has to do is to make such a motion, have it seconded, and then passed by a majority vote.

The state has no business involving itself in the responsibilities of local school boards. The crowd in Raleigh is of the political variety. While school boards also are seen as political electees, they are expected to know more about how to run schools than are the politicians in the legislature.

So let the politicians in Raleigh tend to the major and pressing needs of North Carolina and leave the matter of school spankings to local school officials.

This is not a case of us favoring spankings in school. It is totally a case of us believing local school boards over the state can handle the matter more capably than can legislators in Raleigh.

# Viral Hepatitis Is Acute Disease Of Liver

By FREDERICK D. AUSTIN, III, M.D.

Viral hepatitis is an acute inflammatory disease of the liver. It is commonly caused by the virus of hepatitis A, hepatitis B, or the non-A, non-B viruses. Hepatitis caused by Type D virus, Epstein-Barr virus or cytomegalovirus is less common. Most cases of viral hepatitis are mild, but occasionally the disease may lead to hepatic failure and death. The onset may be gradual or sudden.

The most common early symptoms of viral hepatitis are fatigue, drowsiness, loss of appetite, nausea and dark urine. A low grade fever is also common. Further, patients may experience a vague generalized abdominal discomfort especially in the right upper quarter of the abdomen. About half the patients suffering from viral hepatitis will also have arthralgias (aching joints); such joint symptoms are usually associated with a Type D viral infection.

Most of the early symptoms of viral hepatitis subside when jaundice (yellow skin) develops. In the unusual case of severe hepatitis, the patient may become confused or even lapse into a coma. The patient's eyes and skin may become icteric (yellow). The liver is often enlarged and tender and the spleen is felt in about ten percent of patients.

Hepatitis A is primarily transmitted via the fecal to oral route and large scale outbreaks due to contamination of food and drinking water can occur. In type A hepatitis, the virus is shed approximately 14 to 21 days before the onset of jaundice. Although patients may continue to shed the virus for several weeks, they are usually no longer infectious 21 days after the illness has begun.

Hepatitis A is quite contagious and transmission within families is common. Outbreaks have been reported in day care centers in which children as young as one to two years of age have become infected.

The ingestion of sewage contaminated shellfish has resulted in several epidemics of hepatitis A. Virus is usually present in blood from one to four weeks prior to the onset of symptoms but transmission by blood products occurs rarely. Patients with Type A hepatitis develop an immunity to the disease. Approximately 50 percent of the U.S. population has a high concentration of serum antibodies to hepatitis A, indicating a previous infection.

Hepatitis B infection can be spread by either inoculation with infected serum of blood products (a needle stick) or unapparent (through sexual contact) transmission. Although blood is the most effective mechanism for transmission, the hepatitis B virus is present in saliva and semen. It is rarely found in feces or urine.

The hepatitis B infection is a common problem in male homosexuals, drug addicts, and sexual partners or patients with hepatitis B infection. Healthcare personnel are at risk for acquiring hepatitis B. Further, some patients suffering from chronic diseases are at risk. Patients at high risk include those being treated in hemodialysis units, hematology/oncology wards, and those receiving multiple transfusions. Five to fifteen percent of the population has serum antibodies to hepatitis B. The presence of the antibody confers immunity to hepatitis B.

Non-A/non-B hepatitis is caused by both blood borne and water borne strains. It is a diagnosis of exclusion since serologic tests to make the diagnosis are not yet available. Non-A/non-B hepatitis typically occurs following blood transfusions and is responsible for 90 to 95 percent of all cases of post-transfusion hepatitis. The incubation period ranges from five to ten weeks. The risk of developing post-transfusion hepatitis is about ten percent.

Hepatitis D (known as the delta agent) requires the presence of hepatitis B in order for infection to occur. Therefore, hepatitis D infection can only occur in hepatitis B carriers that are exposed to hepatitis D and in patients who are therefore simultaneously infected with both hepatitis B and hepatitis D.

Hepatitis D infection is commonly seen in southern Italy and certain areas of the Middle East and South America. Outside this area, most infections occur in drug users and in individuals receiving blood transfusions.

The PAMLICARE column next week will address measures that should be taken to prevent

the spread of hepatitis. Next: Hepatitis: Prevention Measures

This column is provided as a community service for readers of this newspaper by the management team of Beaufort County Hospital and members of its medical staff. Questions and comments regarding this column may be sent to Pamlicare, West Craven Highlights, 217 N. Market Street, P.O. Box 1788, Washington, N.C. 27888. Dr. Austin is an internist whose specialty is infectious diseases. He is associated with the Pamlico Medicine Associates in Washington, N.C.

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