

Viewpoints

No shows at public hearings could kill funds

A couple of weeks ago, members of the Hoke County Commission held the first of two hearings to solicit public opinions on the need for federal grant money.

However, despite weeks of announcements and advertisements, no members of the public showed up and no opinions were offered.

The commissioners were seeking advice and direction from residents on where federal funds could be used to improve living conditions in the county.

Hoke County has a good chance this year in garnering \$750,000 in community development block grant funds for projects like housing rehabilitation, park construction, senior citizen

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centers and improvements to the rural fire protection system.

With the help of the Lumber River Council of Governments (COG), the commissioners have decided that the Tylertown and Shawtown areas should be targeted, and that housing rehabilitation would be the best use of the money.

Because no residents showed up for the public hearing, the commissioners and the COG staffers are forced to guess at the needs of those communities.

Unfortunately, as well meaning as this pater-

nalistic guesswork is, it will probably not give this county an edge in the competition for the federal funds.

Community development money is limited and competition for the funds is keen. In the final decision, state committees administering the federal grants will probably lean towards counties where funds were requested to satisfy needs expressed by hundreds of residents who showed up at public hearings.

With the limited input from the community on the requests from Hoke County, those making the decisions would have to question the need for funds here.

If residents of Shawtown and Tylertown want improvements made to their communities and want the work done with public funds, then they should let the commission and the state know at the next public hearing scheduled for April 2.

A failure of residents from the areas to show at the hearing will probably seal the fate of the Hoke County application for funds.

We encourage leaders in those communities to organize the residents and get them to the public hearing.

Without the support and advice of the community, the county commissioners may be wasting their time applying for the federal money.

I'm not sure what happened, I went to UCB to cash a check and ended up enrolled in basket weaving lol...



Madilyn

Religious hostility growing

By Richard A. Viguere

During the last few decades, the nation's establishment has grown more and more hostile to religion. In the news media, in the law, and in the schools, religious values are derided.

On the campaign press bus, reporters laugh when Jimmy Carter talks about reading the Bible before he goes to sleep.

In full-page newspaper ads, the American Civil Liberties Union accuses traditionalist Christians of plotting to create a religious dictatorship.

The liberal magazine *The New Republic* calls the National Association of Religious Broadcasters "a gaggle of electronic Elmer Gantrys." In movies like *Celebrity* and *Footloose*, ministers are ridiculed.

When liberals don't mock religion, they ignore it completely.

In the public schools, study of ethical questions is limited to helping students "get in touch with their own feelings;" the teaching of "moral absolutes" is considered indoctrination. At the direction of unelected judges, the schools have become hostile to the idea of a Creator.

Following the principles of judicial activism laid down by Earl Warren, courts have interpreted the First Amendment to ban voluntary, student-initiated religious meetings from high school property before, during, and after school hours.

In Tennessee, a state official ruled that high school coaches violated the First Amendment by leading their teams in prayer prior to football games.

In Florida, a history film depicting such events as the first Thanksgiving and George Washington kneeling in prayer at Valley Forge was banned because of its religious content.

In Michigan and Virginia, Gideons were prohibited from distributing free Bibles to school children. From Riverdale, Georgia, and Williamsport, Penn-

sylvania, and Sonoma, California, come similar horror stories.

Bonnie Bailey of Lubbock, Texas, participated in an inspirational program each morning before the start of school at Monterey High. Then, one day, although all sorts of extracurricular programs were allowed on campus, religious meetings were banned. "When we were told we could not meet for religious discussions, we assumed that the decision was made willingly by the school, not knowing that they were forced by the courts to discriminate against us."

"... Americans are allowed to picket, demonstrate, protest, use four-letter words, and take God's name in vain, and the courts seem to uphold their actions and their words as being protected by the Constitution even though they are highly offensive to those who see or hear them. . . . However, we students are not allowed to speak of religious matters on school property," she said. ". . . It seems to us that the government is not neutral but that it is against religion."

Colleges are allowed to show X-rated movies; in fact, last year a judge ordered Grand Valley State College in Michigan to show an X-rated movie. The First Amendment is used as an excuse to allow everything from homosexual groups meeting on campus to four-letter words in school newspapers, from *Hustler* magazine at the corner newsstand to nude dancing at the local bar. Unprotected, however, is the right of high school students to discuss the Bible and pray together.

"Why are we so reluctant to engage our students and our children in questions of character and virtue?" Kathleen Kennedy Townsend (Robert Kennedy's daughter) wrote in the *Washington Monthly*. "Why are we afraid to raise the issue of honesty when we teach politics, to raise the issue of love when we teach sex, to raise the issue of faith when we teach

science? Is there something really terrible about encouraging students to read . . . Biblical texts?"

Ethics and religion have become taboo subjects because liberals have worked to eliminate every remnant of faith in our public life. Why? I don't know; Ms. Townsend wrote, "I've never been able to understand why liberals don't comprehend the power of a moral appeal and why they don't begin to take religion seriously, too."

If liberals continue to ridicule the beliefs of the average American, it won't be long until they are perceived as being against God as well. When that day comes, their grip on the nation's political system will come to a sudden end.

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor are encouraged and welcomed. Writers should keep letters as short as possible. Names, addresses and telephone numbers should be included and all letters must be signed. Names will be printed, however, other information will be kept confidential. We reserve the right to edit letters for good taste and brevity. Letters should be received by *The News-Journal* by noon on the Monday of the publication week.

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Snake defense system was comedy of errors

By Warren Johnston

It was one of those sultry June Saturday mornings that are nice to remember in the throes of winter.

My wife and I were sitting on the front porch of the log cabin we were renting in the middle of a 40-acre wood and on the edge of an old mill pond.

We had just started a second cup of coffee when the late Catfish Malloy began barking.

Catfish was fond of the turtles who lived along the pond and would bark to encourage them to come out of their shells and play. The turtle bark was distinctive, and its pitch would vary according to the number of reptiles he was addressing.

That morning the bark was different.

"That's not a turtle bark," my wife said.

"It could be a five-turtle bark," I answered, turning the page of the morning newspaper.

Brushing aside my suggestion that Catfish might in fact be issuing the seldom heard five-turtle bark, my wife went to investigate.

"He's barking at a snake," my wife said in a shrill voice.

Snakes do a lot of good. They eat mice and mosquitoes, among other things. Although most of them are not poisonous, they're still difficult to warm up too. I explained this to my wife, as I continued to peruse the editorial page.

"You might not want to have them over for tea and finger sandwiches, but they're not such a bad sort," I said calmly.

"Help," said a shrill voice from the yard.

I knew I would be in "big trouble" if I didn't at least show some interest. I put down the newspaper and peered over the porch rail.

"That's a copperhead," I shrieked, immediately recognizing the reddish-brown markings of the venomous creature.

Copperheads are not my favorite snakes, and I would never invite

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them over for a round of horseshoes, much less let my dog play with them.

I rushed to the yard, grabbed the dog and sent my wife for the rifle we kept buried under the dirty clothes behind the bedroom door.

It wasn't long before the three cats, who were aroused from their nap, dropped by to see why we were having so much fun, and why they had not been invited.

Snakes were the late Watson's favorites.

If he had his druthers, he would like to start each day with a couple of rounds of sparring with a striking serpeant, Watson used to say.

"It gets your blood flowing," he always said.

As I tucked Watson and his two brothers under my free arm, I suggested he should try to choose his playmates more carefully.

By the time my wife was able to get the rusted zipper on the rifle case unstuck and bring the weapon to the yard, the snake was getting bored.

"There are no bullets," I said in a panicked voice to my wife who was now holding the animals.

She rushed back into the cabin for the ammo, leaving me with three cats, a dog and an unloaded .22 caliber rifle. The copperhead was beginning to yawn.

Soon she returned with a clip for the rifle, which she had found beneath the long underwear in her bureau drawer.

"I put the bullets in," she said, as I exchanged the four animals for the clip.

After I removed the bullets and reloaded them pointing in the

right direction, the snake decided he had had enough and was heading towards a pile of lumber stacked under the cabin.

"Stand back, and I'll shoot him," I said, exhibiting the first signs of bravado.

Taking careful aim, I fired a shot at his head. A small spray of dirt kicked up near the snake's tail. I had missed.

He was obviously frightened by the shot, which hit several inches behind him, and quickened his pace for the lumber pile and safety.

"Well, I hope he got the message and keeps going," I said, assuring my wife that I did not want to hurt the snake, just run him out of town.

We didn't see the copperhead the rest of the weekend, but as I stumbled out to work on the following Monday morning, there he was.

He was sunning himself in the path between me and my car. The showdown had come.

A clinical review of the previous Saturday's encounter, weighed heavily in my decision to chose a more agrarian weapon for the battle.

I grabbed the dog, the three cats and a hoe.

Prior to that morning I had never realized the difficulty of holding a 40-pound dog between my legs, two 15-pound cats under one arm and a third feline under my chin while attempting to cut the head off of a snake with a hoe.

However, despite the handicap, I did hit the snake, and about one inch of his tail remained wiggling in the path long after he had fled to another refuge.

For the rest of that day, Catfish resumed his sermons to the turtles, Watson spent until sundown sparring with the severed, but wiggling snake's tail and my wife took up target practice with the rifle.

We never saw the copperhead again.