

Viewpoints

Storm brought out best in county residents

After almost three weeks of hard work many Hoke County residents can finally put their feet up and relax with the knowledge that their sacrifices have made a difference, and that they have done a great deal to help victims of the tornado.

Many county residents have donated time, thousands of dollars, clothes, food and hard work to help restore order to the lives of those who were uprooted by the storm.

Not only do tornadoes like the one which hit North and South Carolina on March 28 leave an aftermath of death and destruction, but the storms also seem to bring out the best and worst in many of us.

Editorial

There are the too familiar and well-publicized stories about looting, or the theft of a homeless victim's last remaining possessions.

More recently there have also been tales of persons posing as contractors bilking those who are desperate to have repair work done to their wind-damaged homes.

It is important that the media cover and expose the deeds of the afterstorm wrongdoers in order to warn others. However, because of time and space considerations, many of the good stories often get left untold.

Not much is said, nor is it expected to be, about the Sunday School class which donates its offer-

ings to a devastated family in Red Springs or about the troop of "strangers" who show up to help clear a tree from the roof of an elderly victim's house.

There is never enough space or air time to recognize those who donate boxes of clothes, purchase bags of groceries, make soup or who prepare hundreds of sandwiches for the workers and victims.

If there is one thing which can be counted as "good" that resulted from the recent storm, it was a rekindling of a widespread spirit of neighborliness.

That spirit, which had perhaps been pushed aside in recent years by the pressures of a modern

society, became infectious and spread in this county and throughout North and South Carolina and other states.

The spirit not only brought out volunteers and donations, but it also reached many of the storm's victims and brightened their outlook.

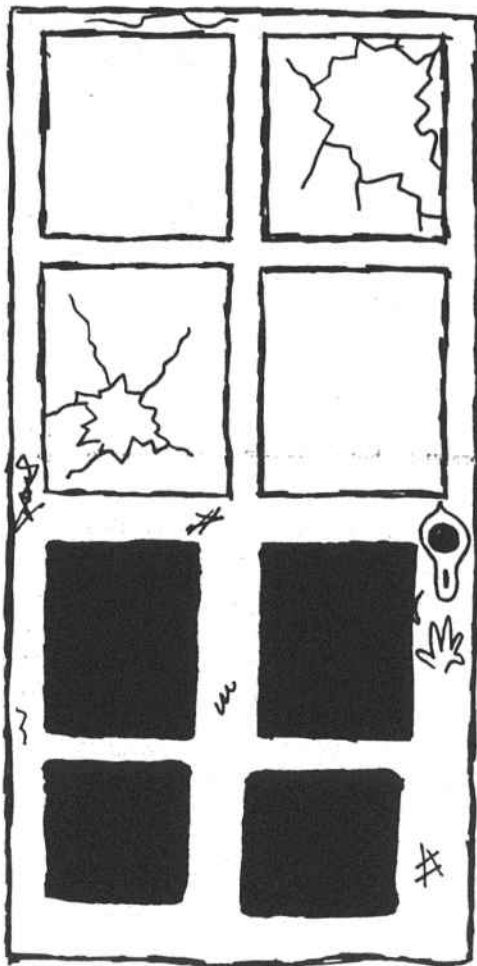
Some of those who had seen their lives shattered on March 28 have said that without the warm showing by thousands of neighbors, their hope might not have been restored, and they would not have had a reason to rebuild.

The efforts of county residents who gave a hand during the last three weeks will probably go unsung, but there is little doubt that the job they did will long be remembered and appreciated.

"The Garden Department of the Raeford Woman's Club has invited all of us to decorate our doors in celebration of

Hoke Heritage Hobnob ...

...maybe I can take it off the hinges and hide it out back somewhere.



Mary B.

Madilyn



Hoke County is hard to leave, but goodbyes are not forever

By Sherry Matthews

I was walking through Raeford the other day, admiring the friendly waves and cheerful hellos that bellowed from familiar passers-by.

The sky was cotton candy blue, and the air was blowing its warm breath down my neck.

It seemed right. Just a typical day in Hoke County.

But in the back of my mind, I knew different. Things were going to change and change soon.

It was the beginning and the end for me. I was preparing for a new adventure while leaving another behind.

The day had roused its sleepy head early, leaving me with the realization that new beginnings were just on the horizon.

Why I wasn't jumping up and down about the idea of moving on to a brighter tomorrow and a new adventure, befuddled me, as I dragged myself to the shower, hoping to wipe away the thoughts that were clogging my mind.

As I dried my hair, the chorus of a very familiar Anne Murray tune wept through the radio wires.

"Somebody somewhere is always saying goodbye," wailed the tune over and over and over again.

Memories began flooding my thoughts, drowning me in a mixture of sorrow and happiness.

"How could I welcome a new future, when I wasn't ready to store away the present?" I shouted at the four barren walls that surrounded me.

There were just too many things that I did not want to leave behind.

Change had reared its head at me almost too suddenly and the thought of accepting the challenge and leaving behind all that I had accomplished was frightening.

How was I ever going to forget? It wasn't going to be easy to wipe away the smell of press ink that lingered in the air every Tuesday afternoon, or the cranking, crunching, often times, cantankerous sound of the press as it prepared to spit out the latest news?

But most importantly how was I going to forget the people...so

Looking On

friendly and warm...always ready to lend you a smile or a helping hand if it was needed.

An elderly lady once told me that "you couldn't find any better people than those who lived in Hoke County." Almost too late I was beginning to realize just how right she was.

"I will never be able to forget these people," I told my frazzled suitcase that was sitting in the corner eyeing me suspiciously.

"We've done this before. Why is it so hard this time?" my suitcase demanded.

I couldn't answer. I knew that I had boxed up my belongings and memories in cardboard more times than I cared to remember, but somehow this was different.

This time was going to be much harder.

"It is going to be sad leaving so much behind...much more than I could ever express," I whispered more to myself than to the empty room.

"You'll be fine," my suitcase said, winking its rusty clasp.

I shot a tearful glance toward the corner and headed towards the door, armed for the goodbyes I knew I must say.

"You'll be back," the walls echoed as I slammed the past behind me.

Snapping back to reality as I continued my walk down Main Street, I played a quiet tug-of-war game with my mind and my heart.

"Change is not a bad thing. It makes you a better person," my mind reasoned.

"It hurts to leave friends behind," my heart moaned.

"You won't be leaving them behind or replacing them. They will always be with you where it counts the most. Even friends have to say goodbye," my mind stormed.

"They may be out of sight but never out of your heart," my conscience said in an effort to appease the quarreling.

"You could be right," my heart mused.

As I drew near my destination, I stopped, taking one last mental photograph of the town and the people I had grown to love.

"I'm sure going to miss you but I will never forget," I said under my breath.

I wiped away the tiny tear that had managed to escape and roll down my cheek and headed for the glass entrance-way.

As I stepped into the office, armed with a ready smile, I saw the familiar cheery faces that had greeted me each morning for the past year.

I knew at that moment that I wouldn't forget, couldn't forget. Everything was going to be all right. I would be back...maybe not forever, but I would be back.

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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Active word-watching creates missing person

By Warren Johnston

Fred Smithers had disappeared.

He was missing for about three weeks when he showed up at Doc's, the neighborhood service station and gathering spot.

He looked a little rough around the edges. His color was ashen. He was unshaven and his eyes were red-rimmed and glazed.

"Where have you been?" I asked him. "We were mildly concerned."

This wasn't the first time Fred had turned up missing. It happened the same way about six months ago. One day he was down at Doc's just as fit as a frog. Then he was gone for three or four days.

We had been afraid that he'd croaked, and were relieved when he turned up.

When questioned that time, he had said he'd been reading his dictionary.

All the boys down at Doc's had gotten a good laugh out of that one.

"It's those darn pictures," he said after his recent disappearance.

"I hate a dictionary that's got pictures in it," he added, taking a pull off of a tall Bud.

"Well, I showed it, and now it can rot for all I care."

Fred had started his day three weeks earlier on Sunday with the crossword puzzle in the newspaper. He was buzzing along, until he got to "32 down (an eight letter word for traitor)."

"I knew it was 'quillwort,'" but I wasn't sure how to spell it. I had to look it up," he said.

The Puppy Papers

"That's when I saw the picture of a 'quirt' and the one of the 'quillwort.' I couldn't just pass them by," he said. His face was in his hands. He was crying unblushingly.

Then there was the picture of the "lorgnette," which lead him to "Lorentz contraction."

"That one really fascinated me. I went to the medical dictionary and encyclopedia for more. It was 4 p.m. before I got back to crossword," he said, sniffing through his second beer.

The tale became more harrowing. Fred had spent the next two days bouncing from one word to the next, spurred on by the accompanying photographs.

After the first week of frivolous word chasing, he had mistakenly turned to the biographical section. It was there that he had fallen into the clutches of Rutherford B. Hayes and Warren G. Harding, and had spent another four days immersed in an indepth comparison of their records as presidents.

"It's a good thing Harding died in office. Otherwise, I'd still be there checking his record," he told the fellows who had gathered around the bar to listen.

After the presidential research he was exhausted. He laid the dictionary down and tried to sleep. But he was too keyed up. Definitions and words were running through his head like children through a mud puddle on a sunny day.

It was about an hour before he realized that a gaggle of children

were running through a mud puddle outside his window. He chased them away.

Trying to sleep was useless. He turned on the television, the early news and the coffee pot.

Jesse Jackson was accusing his opponents of "pandering." Fred was shocked at the implication, and rushed to the dictionary to check the definition.

"Surely he does not mean that Mondale and Hart are acting like pimps," he said to himself.

He quickly flipped to several other spellings. "Perhaps he means they are eating too much and were 'pandering,'" he thought, noting that word was defined as resembling a violin in shape.

The Jackson statement kept him going another week. He popped from word to word and from photograph to photograph.

Finally during the third week, he realized that he was out of clean socks after he ran across the word argyle. He decided to dispose of the dictionary in the back yard compost pile.

"That's it. I'll never look at another dictionary," he fulminated after his fourth beer at Doc's.

The evening news was on the television which hung over the bar. The anchorman was saying something about the campaign moving at a "dicrotic pace."

I turned to Fred to ask if the word was being used properly, but he was gone.

We knew that before long he would be scraping the compost off his dictionary, and it would be weeks until we saw him again.