

Viewpoints

Campaign advertising is lowering standards

When voters recover from the nausea caused by the low-level campaigns being waged by the two major candidates for North Carolina's U.S. Senate seat, it is hoped that an effort will be made to push for reforms in election advertising laws.

After 18 months of campaigning and over \$20 million of spending, Sen. Jesse Helms and Gov. Jim Hunt are in a dead heat in their bid for the Senate, and because of the advertising tactics used in the race, voters are being left with swimming heads and upset stomachs.

On November 6, many of this state's electorate, who have been over-exposed to the barrage of negative television advertising, will make their choice based, not on whom they perceive to be the best candidate, but on who appears to be the least evil of the two hopefuls.

To paraphrase the words of Governor Hunt, voters have heard so many bad things about both candidates, that neither one seems worthy of support.

The campaigns of Hunt and Helms are built on television ads which distort the truth.

One Hunt ad attacks Helms for his alleged support of El Salvadorian "death squads," while a Helms' spot blasts Hunt for wanting to raise taxes.

Neither ad is factual, and both are designed to raise the ire of the voter.

With little more than two weeks remaining in the campaign, one has to wonder if either of the candidates will bother telling the voter why they are qualified to be a U.S. Senator.

The Hunt-Helms campaign is the most expensive Senate race in history, but other battles for similar seats in other states are not far behind in the spending.

Observers are estimating that more than \$100 million will be spent this year in efforts to garner the 33 seats in the Senate which are up for grabs.

Millions will also be spent in Congressional races across the country and for bids for major state offices like governor.

Annual salaries for all of the federal seats would not add up to what is being spent in the one North Carolina U.S. Senate race; therefore it would be difficult to believe that the candidates hope to repay campaign debts with their wages.

It would also be legitimate to ask whether a candidate can still represent his constituents after an election which cost millions of dollars. Surely his backers want some return on their investment.

One might also wonder that if a candidate squanders millions on his election, whether he will have the fiscal acumen to frugally handle the public's money in Washington.

The spending of the Hunt-Helms campaign seems to be the frightening trend in this country which could not be in the best interest of the voters.

One way to curb the spend-fest would be to eliminate all paid political advertisements.

Once the ads were eliminated, the candidates would have to depend on their ability to sell themselves through interviews and through personal appearances.

Without distorted half-truths, like the ones now being forced on the voters, perhaps this country could return to electing the best candidate for the job, not just the one who is able to raise the most money.

"First, we have to get on the property to inspect it."

"I say we use diversionary tactics..."



- How To Inspect An Airport -

A day in the life of the Raeford-Hoke Airport Commission

Letters To The Editor

Article misrepresents airport meeting facts

To the Editor:

The representatives of the various news media are constantly reminding us, and rightfully so, that the public has "a right to know." What the public wants to know, however, is the truth and not misquotes, inaccuracies, and innuendos.

I am referring to the article on the front page of the October 18 issue of *The News-Journal* which allegedly describes the proceedings of the October meeting of the Raeford/Hoke County Airport Commission. If your paper is going to report on the meetings of our elected and appointed officials all efforts should be made to get everything correct, not just the substance of the meetings. Details carry a large part of the story.

As an example, it was reported that a visiting pilot entered the terminal building (public property) to inquire into obtaining fuel, and that he was treated rudely by students in a jump school class being held there.

In fact, he entered the jump school buildings owned by Gene Thacker which is on private property.

Rudeness notwithstanding, the issue is the inaccuracy of reporting the incorrect building with the implication that Mr. Thacker's student's had no right to be there.

In the middle of the report on the conflict appears a paragraph about the rules and regulations that states no enterprise is to be conducted on airport property without permission of the commission.

This reference to the rules and regulations was made during a discussion on a separate matter and had nothing to do with the subject of Mr. Thacker or his parachute school.

As far as the commission is concerned, Mr. Thacker is meeting the terms of his lease in every respect and often does many extra things for the airport such as pumping gas at odd hours of the day.

The quote about the airport being closed if the posted rules were removed from the building was made, but not by me.

You asserted in a recent editorial

that the airport is "beset with problems," a point with which I also take exception. Certainly we have problems; every airport has problems. Saying that we are beset with them, however, infers that we are swamped under and this is not true. We have a board of five citizens who are addressing these problems and doing something about them. We have also met with the owners of the businesses located at the airport and have established a good working relationship with them.

What we don't need is inaccurate and incomplete reporting upsetting the apple cart and creating problems where none exist.

Sincerely yours,
John A. Plummer
Raeford/Hoke County
Airport Commission

Knox decision was honest move

To the Editor:

It is a known fact that I was Eddie Knox's campaign chairman in Hoke County. On several occasions I have been asked:

"What do you think of your man now?"

I shall answer the question in this letter.

Eddie Knox was not only my choice for governor. He is my friend. When a friend does something I do not approve of I do not condemn him. I assume, as I hope he would me, that he did what he thought was right.

There is no doubt in my mind Eddie did what he thought was right. He was honest and above board. The voting booth was not used as a cloak to hide his hypocrisy. I admire him for his honest stand.

Frances Knox is an outstanding young woman. She is committed to the things she believes.

Furthermore, she has a mind of her own. She was terribly hurt by the character assassination letters which were distributed before the election. The letters were a cheap, untruthful and under handed way to win an election.

I was not surprised that she retaliated. I would have been greatly disappointed in her if she had not.

Anyone worth their salt would have done the same.

Eddie has been called a turn coat by many of the editorial writers in North Carolina. If he is a turn coat, whatever that implies, he is an honest one.

Honesty is one of the traits many of those at the top in both parties do not understand. I suspect that is why they are yelling so.

Raz Autry

Teachers' salaries not keeping pace

To the Editor:

(It is fortunate for North Carolina's state employees that every so often an election year rolls around, and the employees receive a cost-of-living (or call it what you will) raise to catch the state up to the national average.)

A good example of this is teachers' salaries. North Carolina was 36th in the nation in respect to teachers' salaries until the '76 election. With the 10% increase received at that time, North Carolina teachers' salaries "skyrocketed" to 28th place.

First year teachers were starting at \$13,000 - \$14,000, and teachers with a Master's Degree with anywhere from 10 to 30 years' experience topped out at \$21,000.

When the incumbent administration took office, Americans were told "to pull in our belts." North Carolina took this statement literally and froze state employees salaries and step levels for the next three years which put North Carolina in 44th place nationally in respect to teachers' salaries.

Some counties saw fit to raise the local (county) supplement given to teachers to help offset the state freeze.

Not so with Hoke County - under the superintendency of Raz Autry and the present Board of Education, the generous \$100 yearly "supplement" given to the teachers was done away with. Apparently they thought the teachers were being overpaid.

The local supplement paid to administrators, including Autry's \$6,000 plus \$5,000 travel expenses remained untouched.

When the board was looking for

a new superintendent two years ago, it planned to work towards saving money for the school system. So with the assistance of the Department of Public Instruction, Robert Nelson was selected.

Nelson was given a \$13,000 local supplement, \$6,000 travel expenses, and \$2,000 to move to the county where he only rents; a guidance position was made for his wife at the high school; and he brought his own assistant (sic associate) superintendent. Was his belt pulled in?

Funny that Nelson was indulged in this fashion since the Alamance County School Board saw fit not to renew his contract (ie. he was fired).

So it was not that he was being lured away from a very plush, lucrative position. He himself told the *Burlington Times* the position in Hoke County will include "a substantial increase" in salary "well above \$9,000."

He also said, "I have an excellent board to work with." One would think so if the members were that easy to manipulate.

Anyway, the state employees, teachers included are receiving 14.8% over last year's state salary.

Hoke County teachers still receive no supplement, but Hoke County has "an excellent board (and superintendent) to work with."

Sincerely,
Naomi Johnson

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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Without Hoke County, book still worth reading

Carolina Curiosities: Jerry Bledsoe's Outlandish Guide To The Dabblamedest Things To See And Do In North Carolina; By Jerry Bledsoe; The East Woods Press; 224 pages; \$7.95 paper.

There are a number of curiosities in Hoke County, which, unfortunately, did not make Jerry Bledsoe's recently published guide to unusual North Carolina.

At first, I was a little ticked off. After all, Hoke County is a pretty curious place, and we always seem to be left out of books about the state.

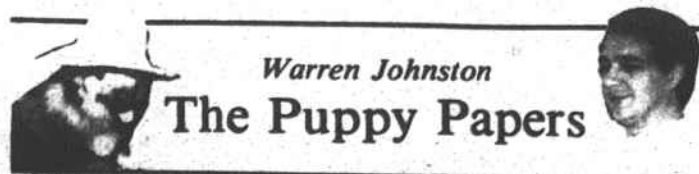
"What's the deal?" I asked my wife. "We could be kidnapped by South Carolina, and it would take a statewide election before anybody in North Carolina would come looking for us."

She assured me I was overreacting to the omission in Bledsoe's book.

"Don't be silly. Sooner or later, somebody on the way to the beach would wonder why Hoke County had been moved to the 19th Century, and they'd help us," she said.

She was right. Beachgoers would call the governor. He would remember the contributions we made to his campaign, and would rescue us from the clutches of the "Wedding State."

Once I calmed down, I realized that Bledsoe must not have run into Buddy Blue when he was out gathering facts for the book. If he



Warren Johnston

The Puppy Papers

had, something in Hoke County surely would have been included as one of "the dabblamedest things" to see and do.

Oh, it's not that Buddy is a curiosity, although some might argue the point, but he could have told the *Greensboro Daily News* columnist about a number of things worth listing in the book.

There is the Red House, for example. That's the old dwelling on Drowning Creek where the two Union Bummers were allegedly walled up in the birthing room.

Then, there is the house with the tunnel and the grave of Clyde McPhatter. How about Main Street? It could be the widest Main Street in the world for a town the size of Raeford.

Well, I'm not sure whether or not Bledsoe got to Hoke County, but it is fairly obvious that he didn't talk to Buddy Blue. Otherwise, there would have been some mention about the former watermelon capital of the world in his new book.

Bledsoe did get to all of the counties surrounding Hoke. He even went to Lumberton and ran into L.D. Todd.

L.D. bought a couple of peacocks a while back, and before he knew it he was in the business of raising them.

According to Bledsoe, L.D. is "real proud" of the birds and likes people to stop by his place on Highway 211 and see them during the spring mating season.

If you are in Sampson County, Bledsoe recommends a stop by Claude Moore's Cabin Museum in Turkey. The cabin is filled with artifacts, and even Sherry Matthews, who once lived in the town, says it is worth the trip.

In Laurinburg, it's Spaghetti's Grave that is on the "must see" list.

An Italian carnival worker was killed in Laurinburg in 1911, and for the next 62 years his mummified body hung on the wall of the local funeral parlor. It became a tourist attraction until the remains were buried in 1973.

Over in Moore County, there is the Millstone Ghost Town to see near Parkwood and the world's largest Croquet Center in Pinehurst, Bledsoe says.

Although Bledsoe did not include Hoke County in his book, it is worth reading and a great asset to have along for weekend outings. In fact I think it is so good that I am recommending it for required reading by all members of the Hoke County Culture Club.

The book is probably available at the Hoke County Library or at a bookstore in some other county.