

Opinions

Downed lawmakers hang around



Watching
By Paul T. O'Connor

Some people just won't ever go home.

That's the case with a bunch of former legislators who lost their bids for reelection last November. They're hanging around the Legislative Building this year, making a living either as legislative aides or lobbyists for private concerns.

The legislature has always been a friendly place for former legislators to make some cash lobbying. There's hardly a major lobbyist working the halls today that hasn't served in the legislature at one point or another.

But even given that history, this year's crop of new former legislators is unusual. Former representatives Pinky Hayden of Sparta and Sam Beam of Cherryville have won staff positions. Mary Seymour of Greensboro is lobbying for the N.C. Railroads Association. Gus Economos of Charlotte is working for Labor Commissioner John Brooks. All of those people lost in the November election.

Add to that list former representatives Al Adams of Raleigh and Tom Rabon of Winnabow, both retired and are now lobbying.

Then there are the former legislators who don't seem to have

anything better to do than come back and visit. Former Rep. Jeanne Fenner of Wilson lost in an election held only days before the opening of the session. She's been seen in the hallways several times during the opening weeks. So have former representatives Marvin Musselwhite of Raleigh, Margaret Tennille of Winston-Salem, D.R. Mauney of Cherryville and Betty Thomas of Concord.

Mrs. Hayden had a new position created for her. She's the first ever staff consultant to the appropriations committees on education. She's being paid a consultant's fee of \$600 a week, with no benefits.

Beam got a deal that pays better than serving in the legislature. He's getting \$100 a day in salary and \$60 a day in expenses to serve as one of two legislative aides to House Speaker Liston Ramsey. Legislators get \$700 a month as salary, \$209 a month for official expenses and \$420 a week for living expenses. (Former Rep. Roger Bone, who left the legislature several years ago, is Beam's co-aide.)

"I guess it gets in your blood," Mrs. Hayden said of the legislature. "It's an exciting place to be. It's where everything is happening." She said she'll probably run for office again in 1986.

Beam said he wants "to stay in touch with what's going on. Certainly I'm going to try again. If I get beat, I'll hang it up." Mrs. Seymour said she saw lobbying as a new challenge and didn't know if she'd run again. As for the unusual number of 1983 legislators hanging around this time, she said, "To my knowledge, I don't recollect a year

when as many key Democratic legislators got beat. We have some special insights to offer that make us valuable as lobbyists."

Several Republicans find the presence of the fallen Democrats amusing. "It says to me that their egos are as big as anybody's," said Rep. George Robinson, R-Caldwell.

Rep. Walt Windley, R-Gaston, who defeated Beam, said, "I'm not going to comment on that. I'm going to wait til I get home, it might be a good campaign issue."

There's a precedent for a legislator losing and coming back to Raleigh to serve as a kind of shadow legislator. In 1964, Liston Ramsey lost his seat in the House. He came to Raleigh and set up an office where he lobbied for his district. He won his seat back in 1966 and has been here ever since. He's the speaker of the House and is not expected to go home for a long time.

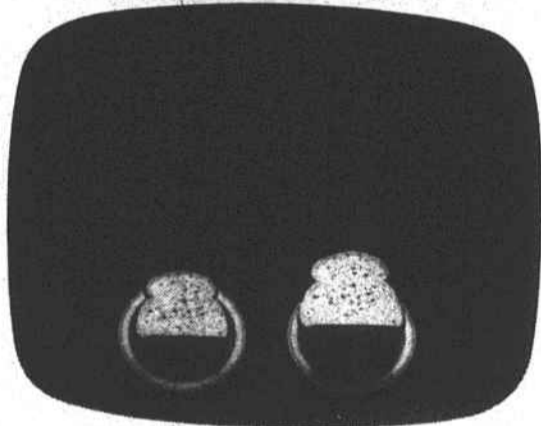
Editor's Note: Paul T. O'Connor, 33, is the Raleigh political columnist for the 45 members of the N.C. Association of Afternoon Newspapers. O'Connor, a resident of Cary, has covered state politics since 1979.

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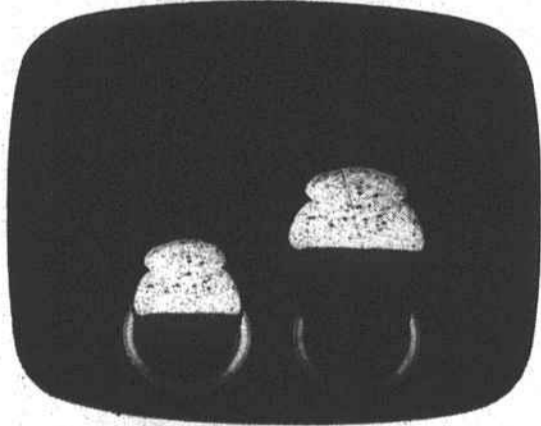


...IT WAS HORRIBLE! I DREAMED I WAS MUGGING A SMALL, FRAIL, HANDICAPPED LADY WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN-WHAM!... I'M ATTACKED BY A SWARM OF VIGILANTES!!

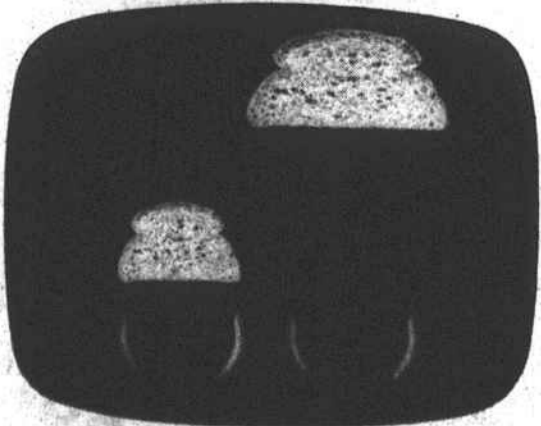
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