

Viewpoints

County needs to farm mid-income residences

When the dust settles and the markets are closed, more than 6,000 North Carolina farmers are expected to turn in their hoes this year for another occupation.

According to a recent report by the N.C. State Extension Service, the causes for the failures are not poor management or slack cultivation practices, but economic factors beyond the farmers' control.

Financial conditions on the farm have not been this bad since the 1930's. Some of the state's best farmers will be going under, the extension service says.

Although, most crops look good this year in Hoke County, dropping land loan values and poor market conditions may force some local farmers to give up at the end of the season.

The industry which has been the backbone of Hoke County throughout its 75-year history is slowly passing from the scene. Most who live here will be affected by its demise.

However, there is a bright spot on the horizon for farm land owners in this county, and they might do well to turn their attention to cultivating new residences for the growing population of Fayetteville.

Hoke County is in an ideal position to attract middle income residents, who are tired of the hassels of big city living and want something better for their children.

The future growth of Fayetteville is an accepted fact, and developers there are predicting the population of Cumberland County will double in the next 10 years. Recent demographic surveys of the Cross Creek Mall area revealed that already 137,000 persons live within a five-mile radius of the shopping area.

As Cumberland County and Fayetteville boom, Hoke County should prosper if land owners, real estate brokers and community leaders work together to provide the right conditions for stable, quality growth.

This county not only needs to be marketed properly through advertising and community events, but it also needs high quality schools in good locations, strict zoning and planning regulations, improved water and sewer systems, a widened US Highway 401 and extended telephone service.

This county cannot wait for these needs to be met, and the longer we procrastinate, the worse our position becomes.

Without a solid plan for controlled growth and a way to lure higher income residents, Hoke County may find we have become more attractive for those who would add to our current unemployment and welfare woes and would put a further strain on the overburdened local taxpayer.

Hoke County can no longer sit back and wait for growth to take its course.

As the economic environment here changes with declines in agriculture, this county needs to start preparing the fields for a new crop of residents. If we do not, we may soon be overgrown and suffering from a deminished quality of life.

Balfour's accolades bring honor to Hoke

This year Hoke County Commission Chairman John Balfour has finally been recognized for his long career of community service.

Balfour was recently honored as the top county official in the state by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, and earlier this year the Raeford Kiwanis Club named him Citizen of the Year in Hoke County.

Considering the number of elected officials in the 100 North Carolina counties, Balfour's and this community's award from the state association was a significant one, as was the coveted Kiwanis kudos.

Although through the years this newspaper has sometimes found fault with the leadership of the county commission and has questioned many decisions rendered by the group, we are the first to admit the local elected officials occupy thankless positions with few rewards.

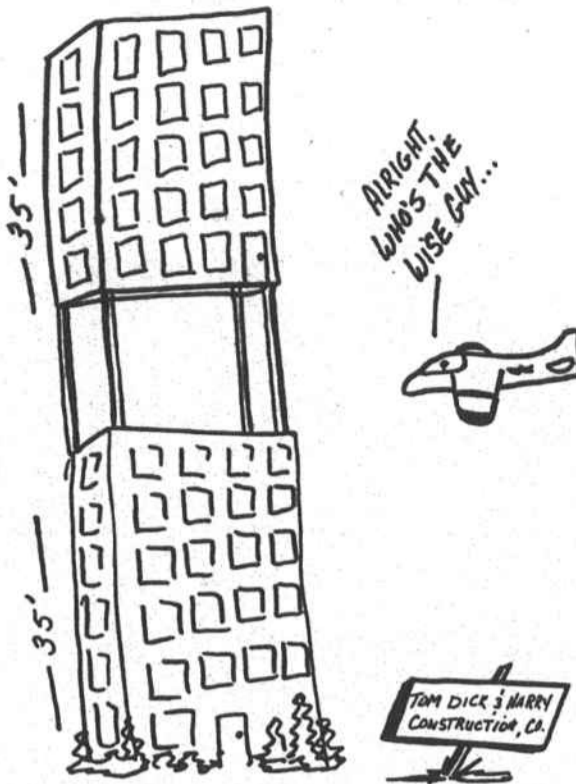
John Balfour has taken the reins of leadership of this county and accepted the heat of criticism generated by that role for more than 21 years. He has done his job well.

Hoke County has grown under Balfour's leadership and is continuing to progress towards a brighter future.

In addition, Balfour has been a good ambassador for Hoke County by serving three elected terms on the board of directors with the state association and being on the steering committee of the National Cotton Council.

It is easy for constituents to forget there is little glory, no appreciation and less pay derived from serving as a county commissioner in Hoke County. Those who serve, especially Balfour, made the commitment because they care about the community and want an active role in its destiny.

Hoke County can be proud of the recent recognition John Balfour received from the state association and should be thankful that we have leaders of his caliber serving in elected office.



RAEFORD AIRPORT ZONING RESTRICTION

Parents of victim suing tobacco firm

The mother of a 19-year old who recently died of mouth cancer is suing a tobacco company for millions. She claims her son began using smokeless tobacco at the age of 12.

She believes commercials designed to get young people started on chewing tobacco or snuff are dangerous and can prove fatal to some.

Betty Marsee of Ada, Oklahoma, testified recently before a House subcommittee and urged warning labels on all snuff and chewing tobacco containers.

Her son, she recalled, became hooked at age 12, had to undergo operations which disfigured his face and finally died. At the end, he realized his mistake and was trying to warn other youngsters, she said.

Recent surveys have found an astonishing number of grammar school boys already using smokeless tobacco -- in states like Colorado, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma and others. The percentage with the habit is already as high as one in four, some of these studies show.

PORK BARREL ... "State legislators representing Dare and surrounding counties differ over so-called pork barrel spending. But the differences appear to be over the allocation of the money," as *The Coastland Times* in Manteo quotes the subject.

Cliff Blue



People and Issues

State Senator Marc Basnight says he is "Totally opposed to the porkbarrel funds." On the other hand, state Reps. Charles D. Evans and Vernon James support pork barrel funds, "if they're handled right," as Evans says.

"The lieutenant governor and the House speaker exert control over what goes on in the General Assembly," Evans said. "Decisions are often made by a small group of people. That's the way it has always been."

SOCIAL SECURITY ... Fifty years after its creation, Social Security is viewed by the vast majority of Americans as a vital successful program which should be exempt from tampering regardless of federal budget problems, according to a nationwide survey!

NEW PLANT ... General Motors Corp. has picked a small town in the center of Tennessee as the site of its \$3.5 billion Saturn small car plant, it was reported recently.

Letters To The Editor

Escape more than surface reporting

To the Editor:
Just reading *The News-Journal*, edition of August 22, a person would get the impression that Sheriff's Deputy Ronnie Lowery and Detective Weaver Patterson went out bravely on the night of August 16 and captured, at risk of life and limb, a dangerous felon who had escaped from the McCain Prison -- a man who was serving 15 years for armed bank robbery and hostage-taking, an extremely dangerous man.

Just reading *The News-Journal*. But of course there is more to the story, and that's why I'm writing.

It is not true that the man had escaped from the McCain Prison Unit. The McCain Prison Unit does not lose felons just like that. The security there is high, and before they'd lose a felon they'd shoot him. We'd have a major story even if a felon tried. No, the man did not escape from the prison, so the lead paragraph in *The News-Journal* story, catchy though it is, is wrong. The man "escaped," if that is the word, from the McCain Prison Hospital, a quarter-mile from the prison itself, and was not really all that dangerous. David Silva was nearing the end of his sentence, was an honor grade status, and didn't even have barred windows and outside guard towers where he slept. All he had to do was climb a fence or two and walk away.

As news director at Raeford's WSMR radio, I took one look at the report on file at the Sheriff's Office and said to Sarah Norris there, "This just ain't so," to which she replied, "Well, that's the report, Joe." Well, it took a phone call, that's all, to clear the matter up.

The point is, all 3,000 or so readers of *The News-Journal*, and the people they talk with during the week, have been informed that the McCain Prison Unit lets felons escape, just like that. And it just ain't so. There are three state entities at McCain -- the Youth Center, which has virtually no security, the hospital, which has weak security, and the prison, which has very good security. If you think it doesn't matter, that we're only playing with semantics talking about one or the other, let me tell you the staff at the prison take extreme umbrage to reflections on them. They don't lose felons, and they don't want anyone saying they do.

Now, Patterson and Lowery did their jobs well in picking up the escapee and are to be congratulated. But what *The News-Journal* reader wasn't told was that the man escaped from almost no security, that the person who called in to the Sheriff's Department that the man was hitchhiking near Bethel was an employee of the very hospital from which the man

had escaped, and that the Prison Department had had eight units out looking for the man all day on the day of the escape.

I know nobody's perfect. It's easy and tempting to take a report at the Sheriff's Office at face value and print it just like it's written. But a trained monkey could do that. Let's get our journalism down pat. Let's tell it all and tell it right. We are responsible for the impression we make.

Joseph V. Holt
WSMR News

Humane Society aid receives recognition

To the Editor:

As a member of the Hoke-Raeford Humane Society, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the following businesses in this area who have so kindly agreed to allow us to place containers in their stores in order to provide us with some much-needed funds so that we may be able to make life a little more bearable for the un-wanted and abandoned animals at the Animal Shelter:

Raeford Hardware, Southern Restaurant, Theresa's, Lundy's Shoe Repair, A&P, Food Lion, Hedgpeth Insurance, Jimmy's Exxon on Rt. 401, Barbee's Pharmacy, Hardin's Grocery in Rockfish, Moore's Dept. Store, Howell Drug, Hoke Drug, Cross Roads Groc. on Rt. 211, David's Groc. on Rt. 211, Valu-Mart, Cleo. Bratcher's Barber shop and the Motor Vehicle Agency.

In addition, we would also like to thank the Wagon Wheel Restaurant, J&L Clover Farm and Sky City for allowing us to place pamphlets in their stores explaining our low-cost spaying program. We would also like to thank Dr. Tate and his associate Sandy Ramey for assisting us in our campaign to help eliminate the problem of un-wanted and un-loved animals.

Last but not least, we deeply appreciate those of you who put their spare change in these containers. By the way, any merchant who reads this letter and would like to have a container placed in their store I would appreciate it if you would call me at 875-8666 or Sheryl McGinnis at 875-5746.

Remember - the animals at the shelter do not lead a very happy existence. Your CHANGE can make a CHANGE!

Very truly yours
Jack Letzgus

Reporting was biased

To the Editor:

The biased, distorted and subjective writings of Ed Miller certainly give credence to Thomas Jefferson's notable quote: "Advertisements are the only truths to be relied upon in the newspaper."

Ethelyn H. Baker

Summer's end not what it used to be

It is about this time of year I begin to scratch my head and wonder, along with other adults, where the summer has gone.

"It's hard to believe, but the summer is gone. The kids will be going back to school soon," my wife said the other evening as we sat in the back yard.

"Yeyup. They'll be going back this week," I said, as I watched a storm cloud move across the setting sun.

For many parents this is a time of great celebration, and some can be heard whooping it up in anticipation of school bells ringing. However, for kids it is a time of depression.

"Gee, it seems like only yesterday the kids were shouting, and the parents were singing the blues," my wife said.

As the sounds of rejoicing adults echoed throughout the neighborhood the other night, we watched as children quietly drifted on the street, like shadows, dragging skateboards behind them.

Some kept mumbling "nine more months" as they moved toward home.

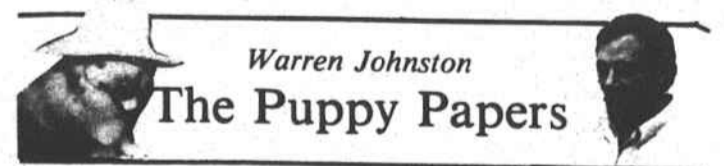
Summer is not as special as it was when I was about seven or eight years old. That's when everything in my life revolved around June, July and August.

Now, it's just another time of year, except it is much hotter. Work goes on as it did in the winter, fall and spring.

There are some noticeable advantages to summer. Vegetables taste better and sitting outside in the yard at night is much more fun in July than it is in December. There are also the annual treks to the beach to look forward to, but otherwise, summer is pretty much like the rest of the year for me.

At seven, I was like most kids. I thought about summer all year. I spent each fall dreaming about the past season and making plans for the good times which were sure to begin the next June.

"Only nine more months," I would say to myself in September. Christmas got me through December, and I endured January,



February and March, knowing only two months remained of the school year.

In April, the celebration of spring began and continued until the final bell gonged around the first of June.

Although I worked during the summer after I reached 12, the warm months still remained the center of my calendar through high school and college.

Then I graduated from college, and the routine of counting down the months in anticipation of summer came slamming to a sudden halt.

"It's time to get a real job," my father said, shortly after I was handed my diploma. That was the final end of summer for me.

During those boyhood school days, I felt cheated this time of year because of the brevity of summer. There had not been enough time to get everything done. I wanted to turn back the clock and have a go at it again.

Now that summer passes with barely a notice, except for the abundance of tomatoes, squash and cucumbers and the warm evenings in the yard, I still regret shortness of the season and muse briefly of the coming of the next June.

In fact, I was so overcome the other night by the traumatic reality of the end of summer that I found myself quietly saying "only nine more months" and thinking about dragging a skateboard down the street.

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