

VIEWPOINTS

If you ask me...

Some clarification is necessary before I write this article. My column as others appears on the opinion page, which simply means it is the writer's opinion and not that of the newspaper. Having said this, the following is strictly my opinion and I stand behind it.

My family and I came to Hoke County in 1967. I had a good job in Montgomery County as the high school principal; therefore I was comfortable in what I was doing. Unfortunately I am one of those individuals who is constantly looking for a challenge. Hoke High was a fine school with a good tradition, it offered a challenge.

However, when the second year rolled around I was presented with a challenge far greater than I had bargained for. The first year of my principalship, I had 663 students, the second year the enrollment increased to 1,750 teenagers. The support of a fine faculty provided us with a great opportunity to unite these three schools into one student body. Through hard work, the cooperating of our students, the superintendent, a fine school board and the community we accomplished our purpose. While other student bodies in the state were choosing up sides and fighting, we were working for the good of our high school. It was a rewarding experience. Not to say we didn't have our problems: we did at times, but in general it was a time of learning. Not only did the high school blend together, our community did the same thing. Our citizens began to share the responsibility of governing. This trend continued for years. Unfortunately, it wasn't to last; we once again began to divide up and play the race card — we got groups together in order to tell them how to vote.

This is not confined to one race, it is all three. We are all to blame for this situation which now exists. We reached a climax three years ago when from out of the sunset rode Jim Davis and Tony Hunt. In my personal opinion these two have caused more strife in our county in two years than has been done in 30. Mr. Davis' only claim to being a Hoke County citizen is that he was born here. The greatest part of his life was lived in another state. Mr. Hunt came here as a minister, therefore he has no claim to Hoke County other than in that capacity.

Jim Davis came to my peach orchard when he first came back to the county. He stated that he was interested in law enforcement and felt he would be a good candidate for sheriff. My only advice to Mr. Davis was that he should get to know the people and let them get a chance to know him before he considered that job. It is evident that he went his own way. His candidacy for sheriff got across-the-board support from all people. They were good citizens, well informed people, from all races. He put quite a group together. They did an admirable job in getting him elected. He did have some things that were suspect in his campaign, but most folks chalked that up to politics.

We all waited for the changes he promised. Cases that the former sheriff worked on for months, would be solved in 30 minutes, to hear him talk. He was going to get fine enforcement officers to help him do the job. Mr. Davis was going to work with the county officials. Let's take a few lines and see how he has performed.

Those case solving 30 minutes have kept us waiting for two years; as to law enforcement officers, he should have installed a revolving door, the brief periods served by many should have sounded a warning to those who honestly wanted to serve. From the

A View from the Country

Raz Autry

day he took office he has constantly criticized the county manager, county commissioners, and anyone else who disagrees with him.

Mr. Davis is an expert at playing the race card. When all else fails, he will shout discrimination when in reality race has nothing to do with it.

The name of the game is competency, integrity, and the decency to treat all human beings with respect, regardless of race, creed or color. He has reported supposed wrongdoings to the SBI, FBI, Justice Department, the Attorney General and to anyone who would listen. All of his charges have proven false.

I will give him credit for one thing; he has made us the laughing stock of the state. When I am asked by others in surrounding counties about our sheriff, I reply that we probably have the only sheriff in the state who wants to be Matt Dillon, but acts like Barney Fife. One citizen said to me, Mr. Davis has made it hard for another black man to get elected. I certainly hope not. If we can't look beyond color and judge people not by the color of their skin but by the sincerity of their purpose, our chances for success as a human race is just about over.

I was impressed with Tony Hunt when he came to Hoke County. His ideas for helping the county were refreshing. He seemed to have a solid head on his shoulders. However, it became apparent early in his campaign, that instead of being a county promoter, he was a self promoter. His actions should have proven such. The way he approached the city proposal in working together to have a by-pass around the city is typical for his approach to the problems of the county. To boycott a meeting because you feel like you weren't properly informed is what is called "butt on the shoulder of immaturity." To add insult to injury he had to add, "We don't need anything from the city."

Mr. Hunt needs to realize that we aren't in two different worlds. The only way we are going to accomplish anything is for the city officials and the county officials to work together. To do otherwise is to show you don't understand what makes a county successful or you are totally consumed with ignorance. It is a credit to the county that Commissioners Bobby Wright and Charles Daniels went to the meeting. James Leach followed Mr. Hunt down the road to arrogance. I personally thought better of him. If an elected office holder can't stand in his own shoes, he needs to be standing on the sidelines.

I have known many fine commissioners in my 34 years in Hoke County. Just to name a few, can any thinking citizens by the greatest stretch of their imagination see John Balfour, L. E. McLaughlin, Neal McPhatter, Wyatt Upchurch, James Albert Hunt, T. C. Jones, Cleo Bratcher, Ralph Barnhart, Riley Jordan, Jean Hodges, and Tom Howell making such a dumb decision. These individuals and others, which space will not permit me to name, only wanted the best for Hoke County. To want otherwise only proves one's lack of common sense.

Our progress in the county can only be realized with men and women of vision who lead and set examples not for what is good for them, but what is the best path for our citizens. It is apparent we need a lot of improvement in some of our elected offices, this can only be accomplished at the voting booth.



© The Lurion-Tidger Copy News Service

Write Washington

This information on national elected officials is printed as a courtesy to our readers:

U.S. Senate
Sen. Jesse Helms
403 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3301
(202) 224-6342
e-mail:
jesse_helms@helms.senate.gov

Sen. John Edwards
825 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3305
(202) 224-3154
e-mail:
senatorj@edwards.senate.gov
josh_stein@edwards.senate.gov

Eighth District
Rep. Robert "Robin" Hayes
130 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3715
e-mail:

www.house.gov/hayes
(richard.hudson@mail.house.gov or robin.hayes@mail.house.gov)

District Office
1-888-207-1311

B. Paulette Burgess, constituent liaison, 230 East Franklin St., Rockingham, NC 28379 (910) 997-2070; FAX (910) 997-7987
Office hours are held at Spring Lake Town Hall, 300 Ruth Street, each Wednesday at 2-5 p.m.

President
George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
(202) 456-1414.

Letters

Consider county's needs first in commissioner choice

Editor:
Where do we go from here?
We've just lost one of the best men Hoke County has ever had. L. E. McLaughlin followed, and possibly even graced the Golden Rule. He was a man who never showed pride... but one that many of us were proud to call a friend. Mr. McLaughlin was truly a just, caring, and compassionate man who will be missed by those who loved him. We, who cared for him,

realize that he cannot be replaced. He left a hole in our hearts and our county government.

Dare we hold out the hope that our county commissioners will, in L. E.'s words, "do the right thing" in naming his replacement? Would the right thing be moving the third largest vote getter into Mr. McLaughlin's unexpired term, or is this too controversial?

I plead with our commissioners to get their self-serving needs behind

them and consider the needs of the county first.

One more thought... the eastern part of our county needs representation. Raz Autry? Roscoe McCollum? The list goes on.

Jeff Sumner

He pictures money wrongly spent

What is wrong with this picture? The County is short on funds, so the county commissioners go to Southern Pines to have budget meetings where they spent tax dollars doing something they could have done right here in Hoke County. Then Commissioner Charles Daniels makes a statement that the money they are spend-

ing on the outing in Southern Pines is money well spent.

I would like him to explain to the people of Hoke County how tax money was well spent in another county. For the life I cannot see how that is possible.

James P. Knott

Dale Earnhardt won his final victory

To the Editor:
Written in memory of Dale Earnhardt, April 29, 1951 - Feb. 18, 2001.

As an "Earnhardt" fan, I honestly feel for his family, friends and other Nascar fans. Like it has been said before, you either loved him or you hated him. But it is my own personal belief that more people loved him than hated him. I saw Dale as one of the "good ol' boys." He loved country life, fishing, hunting, working on his farm. He shared his earnings with ones less fortunate than himself and wanted no praise for it. I feel that he loved his family with all his heart.

Under all that rugged and tough exterior, I feel Earnhardt had a soft, warm heart. I believe he truly cared deeply about his family, friends and fans. His true love for life was racing, he drove hard, he drove fast, he drove to win! He knew the moves to make and the right time to make them. But during what was to be his final race at Daytona, he lost his life. He was in the right place but at the wrong time. We, along with so many others sat in disbelief when we heard of his death. What a sickening, empty feeling I had. I just knew he would be all right. I told my husband, he'll be fine, wait and see. We expected him to jump out of the car at any moment after the crash.

We waited, but it never happened. Coming to work the next morning was so hard; I felt like I had lost a dear friend, which I had. He will truly be missed by so many people. Nascar will never be the same. For on February 18th of 2001, the legendary "Dale Earnhardt" known as The Terminator was gone, but will live on forever in our memories! Dale had so many fans and as for me and my husband, Tommy, we are still mourning. Even though we had never actually met him personally, we feel like we have lost

part of our family. Year after year we watched him race, — he was our reason for watching.

Every Sunday of the racing season we sat in our family room by the TV eating lunch, as we anticipated the start of the race. One of my favorite parts was when the announcer said, "Gentlemen, start your engines!" My husband and daughter, Ashley, would laugh at me as I watched when "Earnhardt" was in the lead. I was on the edge of my seat, I couldn't be still! What excitement and fun it was, cheering Dale on. He was a wonderful, experienced driver who knew racing like the back of his hand. When he put that red, black and white suit on, he had "The Look." To me, he stood for everything Nascar should be. He was to us the number one man of Nascar; he was truly a legend in his time. There will never be another to take his place.

So when all you Earnhardt fans wear that big #3, "Wear it proud!"

I also wanted to mention something I did not know about Earnhardt until my husband told me. Before he would race, he had to have a verse from the Bible taped inside his car. I found a verse that I thought was appropriate in his memory.

"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest," Exodus 33:14.

I do believe Earnhardt is at total peace now and ask that everyone's prayers go out to those who loved him. There are a lot of hearts aching out there that need comforting. As a Christian, I know that Earnhardt has won his final victory. He is Home. And I know that he will be looking down from the heavens watching the race, saying, "Drive hard, drive fast, drive to win, guys. Make me proud!"

Sincerely,
Susan, Tommy and Ashley Baker

Worth Repeating

Hoke County District Attorney Kristy McMillan Newton on the sentencing in Superior Court of Aaron Goode for the murder of Tito Nations on June 19, 1995 — "It is clear to me he is dangerous and he needed to be confined so that he could not hurt anyone else."

