

VIEWPOINTS

Reached the five-year point

It is hard to believe, but I have now been writing this column for five years. I would like to thank the News Journal for giving me the opportunity to speak to its readers through these words. I was inspired to do this by a feature known as The Puppy Creek Philosopher, which ran in this paper when I was still in school in Hoke County. I was further inspired by my great friend Raz Autry's column, "A View from the Country," which ran for many years. Having never written anything for publication, this was a real leap of faith. I was trained in engineering, not writing, which meant I was too ignorant to know what I was getting into. I suppose I had nothing to lose, but the stakes felt higher when I agreed to write something every week. Failure is not one of my favorite things, and while the merits of my writing are highly debatable, I have managed to avoid being told that my writing was no longer wanted.

If I have any qualifications for doing this, they are that I am a native of Hoke County, have lived here most of my life, know how to string a few words together in complete sentences and am outspoken and confident enough in my own beliefs to put these thoughts out for public consumption. I am also interested in everything, and I try to observe the world around me beyond the superficial. Perhaps most of all, Bubba Dickson, the owner of the paper has been a friend of mine since 1960!

After the passing of Raz Autry, I missed his column, which had become a weekly point of contact with him, if only indirectly. I looked



Frog Holler Philosopher
Ron Huff

forward to reading his words and jokes and gaining his insights into local politics and other goings on. I hadn't met his grandchildren, but I



felt I knew them through his writing. I never made it to his ice cream stand, but I knew it was a special place that I surely would have enjoyed. It was this loss that was the birth of the idea behind this writing. I don't know exactly how the conversation went between publisher Ken MacDonald, Bubba and myself, but I agreed to give this a try.

I confess that the idea of writing a column appealed to my ego and my belief that we should produce, and if possible, document our productions in a meaningful way. This has resulted in the creation of these small slices of what I do, think and believe. I have a similar view of my music, and while I neither seek nor receive much public appreciation of it, I document it with recorded product that means a lot to me, and which presents a view of who I am

to anyone who might like to know. The columns I have written give a pretty clear picture of who I am, like it or not.

I calculated that between my local knowledge and history, my life at Frog Holler, my musical exploits, our travels and my views on events and politics that I could find enough things to write about. This was hard at first, even with a past lifetime to draw upon, but then a curious thing happened. I began to view the world in a slightly different way because of my commitment to write. I also began to search for subjects rather than just draw from everyday experiences. This caused me to focus more clearly on things around me. I began to try to be the eyes and ears of the readers. I also began to be more critical of my own views, knowing that

many readers would disagree with my take on things. I never want to write anything that I cannot debate using credible evidence or fact, and try to consider the beliefs of others in my writings.

The fun parts of this ongoing assignment are the comments that I receive from readers. Most seem to like the columns, leading me to believe that many just prefer to remain silent. Some have stated that the political comments just add to the overload. A few have chastised me. I have tried to limit the politics but can't be totally silent. I constantly tiptoe between privacy and over-exposure. The best reward is when someone comments on our life at Frog Holler as if they live next door. Thanks for reading!

More later.
Editor: And here's to another five!

FRANK, HERE, PRAYED FOR MORE SNOW.



YOU SHUT UP

KM2018

We Get Letters

Noise from Fort Bragg is too an issue

To the Editor:

Fellow citizens and members of the Democrat Party (you know which one I am referring to) it has been ages since I posted to "Letters to the Editor" as I sit on the Hoke County Board of Elections where I pledge to serve the citizens of Hoke County and the State of North Carolina. January's 10th 2018 Journal broke the camel's back where I have to clear the issues as seen.

In late August and early October of 2017 my wife and I undertook a vehicle journey in preparation for our upcoming drive from Calais, France to Moscow, Russia for the Soccer World Cup in 2018, where one of my favorite

teams is playing, making it worth the hassle of traveling beyond Raeford. The distance is around 1,687 miles—about 28 hours of driving in comparison from Raeford to San Diego, California, a mere 2,500 miles at 36 hours. So off I went to the intersection of Club Pond, Fayetteville Road, and Skibo Road to tune up my driving skills and reaction time for the trip. While travelling I had time to reflect on things as I transverse across the vast culture of the political boundaries on my journey where English, French, Dutch, German and Spanish, with a sprinkle of other cultures, intermix, providing the magic of one's identity. Notice I did not

say "race" as Hitler did and lost. Anyway, the Journal—relating the noise of Ft Bragg and its effect on the surrounding communities—caused a flashback to several years ago on this issue as the present two sitting commissioners up for election 2018 stated there were no complaints from Hoke's citizens. People, that very same night on the six o'clock news a Hoke citizen was interviewed by the local news station on this very issue, and eventually the Journal. As I was speaking to the commissioners on another topic I brought this to their attention. Need I say more, and it will be forthcoming!
John Harry Shannon

Has seen miracle, but board is failing children

To the Editor:

Since I was not permitted to speak at the last Board of Education meeting due to meeting regulations, I am using other sources to voice my opinion.

I want to publicly state what an exceptional personal care assistant Karen McLean has been for my daughter. She is the ultimate example of a dedicated worker who is committed to the success of the student. It is difficult for children with special needs to adapt to a person, environment, and routine. Since Day 1, Ms. McLean has been the defining factor for my daughter's incredible speed of progress this past year. It has been her hands over

my daughter's, her eyes helping my daughter see things, and most importantly her voice speaking with and for my daughter—a nonverbal child.

Since this is my daughter, I am not breaking any HIPPA rules. I can state that she is a child with Cri du Chat syndrome, a rare genetic syndrome that occurs 1 in every 50,000 births. To see her go from not responding to questions, not knowing if she was hungry or thirsty, no potty training skills to everything she has learned from Ms. McLean is no more than a miracle from God through the angelic dedication of Ms. McLean.

Recently, however, the Board

of Education has made certain decisions that impact my daughter. After various attempts, no one from the board has responded to my emails and concerns. I wanted to express how disappointed I am and how I feel the Exceptional Children's department has failed my daughter and me as her mother in her emotional and educational path. If they are truly looking at the success of ALL students (specifically the disabled children) more thought and consideration should be taken in addressing their special needs (physical, educational, and emotional).
Barbara Mena-Pena Raeford

Party puts forth viable candidate

To the Editor:

Earlier this week the Hoke County Elections Director notified both party chairs of the status of the congressional district court case. As it has been widely reported in the national news media, a three-federal-judge panel unanimously ruled that in 2016 the North Carolina Legislature gerrymandered the congressional districts to favor Republican candidates. The court further ruled that North Carolina's congressional districts unconstitutionally disadvantaged certain voter on the basis of their political affiliation.

While we Democrats applaud the court's ruling, we are eagerly awaiting the final determination and resolution of this court case. It is going to be interesting, as we move further into the 2018 election cycle. As you know, Hoke County was restricted from

the seventh congressional district back into the eighth congressional district. Republican incumbent, Richard Hudson currently serves in that capacity. Well, we have some good news right now. I say, right now, because the 8th Congressional District leadership has recruited a very viable Democratic candidate in the person of local businessman, Frank McNeill. However, it is unknown how the newly redrawn district lines will affect the party's recruitment effort. The North Carolina General Assembly is supposed to have new district map drawn by January 24, 2018.

Frank McNeill is the owner of the McNeill Oil and Propane Company here in Raeford. He lives in Moore County and is the former mayor of Aberdeen. Frank's candidacy is attractive enough to garner him national

attention. He is going to give Republican Richard Hudson a run for his money.

Currently as a member of the 8th Congressional District, the Hoke County Democratic Party will continue planning for a successful elections cycle for all democratic candidates. To that end, we will continue registering citizens and establishing related auxiliaries. Our senior Democrats, young Democrats, Hispanic Democrats and the Democratic women will be calling, knocking on doors and having events until next November. All politics are local and every vote count. Once again, the call for UNITY is a national initiative for Democrats and we are going to do our part here in Hoke County.
James A. Davis, Chairman Hoke County Democratic Party Raeford

New tactics aren't new at all

BY THOMAS MILLS
Politics N.C.

In the wake of the Brown v. the Board of Education decision in 1954 that ruled segregated schools are unconstitutional, Southern states started looking for ways around the decision. In North Carolina, our government came up with the Pearsall Plan. The plan would allow students to be exempt from attending court-ordered integrated public schools and would allow for tuition vouchers for students in areas with integrated schools to attend private ones.

The plan was passed by the General Assembly with only two dissenting votes and then put on the ballot as a constitutional amendment that passed with 80 percent support. Of course, very few African-Americans had the right to vote. The plan was eventually found un-

constitutional but succeeded in keeping North Carolina schools segregated for another 15 years after the Brown decision.

Today, the GOP is revisiting the principles of the Pearsall Plan under the guise of school choice. Charter schools and vouchers allow students to opt out of public schools, taking with them resources and support that help the most vulnerable students. A study from Duke shows the growth of charters takes money from traditional schools, leaving them strapped to provide services to students.

The GOP took office complaining about our failing public schools. Their solution was to cut per pupil spending, lift the cap on charters and introduce a voucher program. The result has been the beginning of a re-segregation of our schools. Students in charter schools are more affluent and more white.

Now, the GOP wants to enforce an unfunded mandate on public schools in the form of lowering class size without providing the money for the change. It's a pattern of continuing to put pressure on public schools and then accusing them of being broken when they struggle to meet the needs of students. As students flee underfunded schools, traditional schools will increasingly be left with children from less privileged families.

Children have different needs and a one-size-fits-all public school system can leave a lot of children without the support they need. However, we can fix that problem without segregating our schools by race and class. We certainly don't need a modern day Pearsall Plan.

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We welcome your letters

The News-Journal welcomes letters to the editor and encourages readers to express their opinions.

Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. The street address and phone number will not be published, but are required so we may verify authenticity. The name of

the writer and, in some cases, the town the writer is from will be published at the end of the letter.

We are not able to publish letters that are essentially thank-you cards.

We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, as well as those that exceed 300 words. We will not

publish letters that we consider to be in poor taste or libelous. In some cases we may add an editor's note as a postscript when we believe a correction, explanation or amplification is warranted. We may also, at our discretion, limit the number of times an individual writer may submit a letter for publication.

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