



Joë Lanier

**SON of A
GUN**

A group of state-paid consultants came to Duplin County at the request of the Duplin County Superintendent of Schools. These consultants made a study of Duplin's present school buildings, the population projections, trends, and other people-related matters. They then delivered to the Board of Education on September 6, a "perfect plan" or an "ideal plan." . . . (The recommendations of this study by the State Division of School Planning is in a story elsewhere in this newspaper. . . I suggest you read it). . . (DUPLIN TIMES). . . The school administration has for many years given tests to Duplin's youth in schools in practically every grade level, and in every school, the results of these tests are used for various things. . . One thing these tests do show. . . The building in which the tests were given have nothing to do with the outcome of the tests. . . The tests were uniform in the old buildings as in the newer ones. . . So, one must assume the building has no bearing on the test results. . . So, when I say I am not in favor of all this "ideal plan," I am not saying I am not in favor of education. I am, very much in favor of education. I believe Duplin youngsters should get the very best. . . To obtain this, they do need safe, comfortable buildings. They do need qualified, dedicated teachers, and parents who instill the desire to learn. . . Now, back to this school building study. . . Among the things I find hard to accept is the abandoning of perfectly good school buildings and building new ones. I do see the need of adding on to some buildings. I do see the need of replacing some old buildings. . . But, it just goes against the grain to stop using a building that is in perfect shape and construct another. The school board has not yet studied and made its recommendations of this "ideal plan." When it does, I feel sure the politics of Rose Hill and Wallace will be against the plan as there is no recommendation for an auditorium at Wallace-Rose Hill High School. . . Neither am I sure the folks at James Kenan and North Duplin are ready to combine their high schools, though it may fit just perfect into this "ideal plan." It abandons two perfectly good school buildings — Warsaw Junior High and North Duplin Junior High. The study mentioned it would cost about \$10 million to fulfill the plan. It also mentioned the possibility of borrowing the money through issuing bonds. . . This, I believe, is not the way. . . \$10 million sounds like a fair figure, sounds like an obtainable figure, but not by bonds. According to the Governor's Study, when one dollar is borrowed, the pay-back, including interest, is two dollars and a half. . . This high interest is unacceptable to me. . . However, as it seems the revenue sharing plan is to continue, and the county commissioners have not included it in their budget, once again, as in the past, it could be used to construct school buildings. Also, the new half-cent sales tax is new revenue. . . So, without much trouble, the commissioners could come up with \$1 million a year for the next ten years and construct everything that is needed — and I stress the word needed, as I do not believe all this presented plan is needed. . . But, now is the time to obligate the money before the commissioners put it to some other use. . . Also, the school administration should restudy its budget and hold its every-year increase to a standstill. . . They, too, should contribute. I await anxiously to see how the school board accepts the plan. . .

I was at a meeting recently when another person spoke before a group to make their voice known. Ellen Hardison of Wallace has a retarded daughter who is to enter Duplin schools this year. Mrs. Hardison went to the school board meeting to advise them of the unacceptable state of school bus travel for her daughter. She was not complaining about the driver, not complaining about the administration's efforts, not complaining at all. She was just advising the board of the facts. . . Think about it for a moment. . . Her daughter is five years old, but has the mind of an 18-month-old. . . Would you put an 18-month-old on a school bus? . . . Would you tie that child to a seat? . . . What would you do? . . . What is the school to do? . . . As the retarded are all bussed to one school, most have a long, long bus ride. I sure do not know the answer, but thanks to Mrs. Hardison's nerve to step forward, I at least am aware of the problem. . . Son-of-a-Gun. . .

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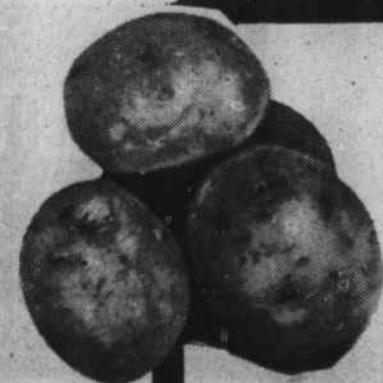
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