



Joé Lanier

**SON of a
gun**

I have been moving some of my old notes and papers upstairs to be stored away with some others. In this moving and storing process it seems a 15-minute job turns into an all-day affair. . . Not so much because of the work involved, but as you are moving this and that about you stop to read and remember. . . 10 years ago. . . 12 years ago. . . Five years ago. . . Three years ago. . . Last year. . . Amazingly enough, the minutes on the county commissioners' meetings from one year to another read almost the same. . . Some names have changed, but the problems, issues and sometimes even the quotes are just about the same. I was reading some of the remarks made by commissioners from other counties — when Duplin's commissioners were making a study to determine if there was reason enough to hire a county manager. . . One commissioner made the remark, "I would not be a county commissioner if there was not a county manager in my county." . . Think about that remark a minute. . . That commissioner has forgotten why he is a commissioner. It is not for his single benefit, but it is for the benefit of the people of his district and county. . . He asked the people of his district to elect him to represent them. He did not ask for the job so the county manager could do his work. . .

In this mass of papers I was storing there was a story, or a fact I saw that I thought was worth telling in regard to a county manager. . . The number of county employees, excluding one office, is about the same as it has been for a number of years. The budgets of these offices, or departments, has increased as the cost of living has increased. . . The duties are about the same; maybe a little more defined for county employees. . . So, the only thing changing was the addition of a county manager's office and those additional employees — highly paid employees — whose experience in the matters they are dealing with was nil before the office was created. . . The point in all of this — nothing has changed except the expense of a county manager's office has been added. Those things that the county manager's office is handling now were being handled by someone else before at quite a bit less money. . . Duplin County's board of commissioners, in my opinion, are forcing the tax-paying public in Duplin County to support financially an office created by them that is an absolute liability. If there is a Duplin County commissioner on the board who thinks he would not have the job if there was not a county manager, then I say this commissioner is in the wrong job. . . If he (or she) did not have a sufficient amount of time to put into the office he was elected to, he should not have asked to be elected. . . Quite frankly, if the commissioners feel this way, I don't think they should run in the next election. I think they should resign now — get out so someone with the desire and time can help Duplin County — not harm it. . .

I was in Wilmington this past weekend in one of the large so-called discount stores. I saw this lady from Magnolia. She had a shopping cart going about this big old store adding an item now and again to the cart. Some time later as I was leaving the store I saw this lady and her husband leaving empty-handed. . . I gave them a big old country howdy and we stopped to talk for a bit. . . The lady said she had gathered up several items in the store to buy and as she was going to the check-out counter, she got to looking at what she had in the cart and decided they were all things she wanted, but did not need. . . She decided she would rather have her money. . . Now, what she did next was prove she was a good country girl from Duplin County. She didn't just push the buggy aside and leave it; she put each item she had in the cart back on the shelf from where she had gotten it. . . It makes me feel real good to know people like this. . . No one would ever have known that some lady from Magnolia filled a cart with this and that and then just left it in the store. . . That is, no one but the lady from Magnolia. . . She is responsible for herself and lived up to it. . . We who live in the country (and if you live in Duplin County, you live in the country) are sometimes called red-necks. . . It's ladies like this one who put a whole new meaning to the word. . . Son-of-a-Gun. . .

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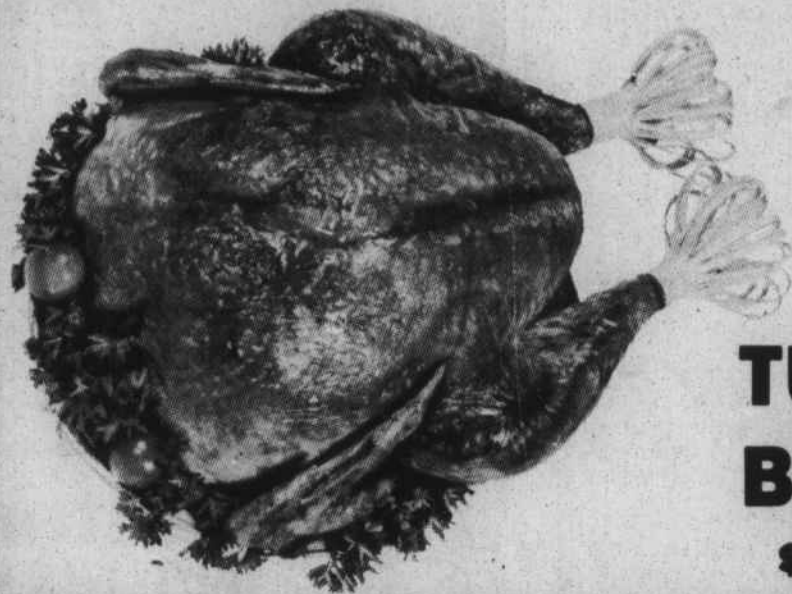
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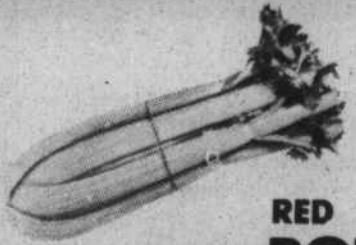
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