

GUEST COLUMN

Putting People Out Of Homes, Jobs

BY THOM GOOLSBY

If bureaucrats at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development have their way, many North Carolinians stand to lose their jobs and many more will be unable to afford to purchase a new "home."

The latest assault on our state comes by way of pending federal construction standards for "mobile homes," also known as "manufactured housing" and, jokingly, as "tornado magnets."

Whether you like or disdain these modern-day "castles of the common man," the Tarheel state ranks number one in the nation in mobile home sales and number two in their manufacture.

The pending federal rules will require that newly built mobile homes withstand winds up to 100 mph. This new "safety" standard comes with a high cost. The average mobile home runs almost \$20,000. The new rules will raise the price anywhere from 25 to 50 percent.

Such a tremendous price increase for low-end housing promises to escalate costs out of the "affordable" range for most potential buyers. This means a loss of thousands of North Carolina jobs in the manufacturing of mobile homes and related industries. It also means that the hope of buying one's piece of the American dream will be dashed for many.

The government's reasoning behind the new construction standards is a popular one: safety. The question that we should all be asking ourselves is, "Do we need Big Brother to step in and save us, yet again, from ourselves?" Mobile homes, depending on location, must currently be able to withstand 60 to 90 mph winds. The people who purchase these types of residences know, un-

less they haven't watched the news in the past 20 years, that mobile homes are not safe places in tornadoes and that they should clear out in high winds.

How much should we "baby-sit" society? Are we all so used to Uncle Sam telling us what we can watch on TV, when we can retire from our jobs and how much of our income we can keep that we will even accept rules preventing thousands of people from being able to afford their own "castles," albeit manufactured housing?

If insurance companies will continue to insure mobile homes and people wish to buy them, why must the government second-guess the marketplace? The reason is a simple one. The government must show us that it's doing something with our tax dollars so we will keep sending them in. Is it attempting to alleviate poverty by doing more than giving out the equivalent of "bribe money" and "Band-Aids?" Is it attempting to

reduce crime by doing anything other than passing additional laws which simply make more things illegal? The answers are a resounding "NO."

It's the difference between "rhetoric" and "reality." The rhetoric sounds great—let's protect people. In the case of the pending mobile home regulations, the realities are lost jobs, the inability of the "little guy" to afford his own home, and another blow to our ability to make of our lives what we wish, without the all-powerful state stepping in at every juncture by telling us what we can and can't do.

In the end, maybe we will go back to caves—that is if they meet federal "radon" gas levels.

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PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

MILLIONS OF SONGBIRDS are killed each year by our actions, whether intentional or not.

Man And The Birds

BY BILL FAVER

A recent newspaper article gave the results of surveys of songbirds in the Eastern United States and how a number of our familiar birds are becoming more scarce each year.



FAVER

We all know about the effects of loss of habitat, brought about by continued development of what had been rural land. There were some other reasons, though, and some of them were surprising in their significance.

One author estimates man is directly responsible for about 270 million bird deaths each year, with about an equal number dying because of the indirect activity of humans. The majority of these deaths occur out of our sight and hearing.

About 5 million hunters each year visit the marshes and fields to hunt ducks, geese, pheasant, quail, doves, and other game birds. It is estimated mortality rates of canvasback ducks can be 50 percent or more in years with open hunting seasons on that species. With stricter regulation and increased public awareness, hunting poses less of an overall threat than in pri-

or years. Sometimes birds can be accidental victims rather than the targets. Redhead Ducks become trapped in fishing lines on the Texas coast where 10,000 or more birds die each year from drowning or of injuries while trapped.

Cars driven at high speeds on our roads kill millions of birds each year. In the small country of Denmark, estimates are that drivers kill 3 million birds annually on the highways.

Birds collide with plate glass windows and doors, killing themselves when they can't tell the glass from a natural flyway. Even those birds which appear only stunned and fly away may die later from hidden injuries.

Television and radio towers, microwave relays and satellite dishes, skyscrapers, and aircraft all add to the number of birds killed each year.

Maybe we can't do much to solve these problems. Awareness of them may make us more careful, but most of these kills happen outside of our normal experiences and we don't think about them. Maybe this will help us understand when we read articles about how birds are disappearing. And, maybe it will make us more enthusiastic about trying to save what habitat there is for our songbirds.

Walking Really Is Worth The Effort

Don and I are trying to get back on track with an exercise program.

For two or three years we walked regularly three or four times a week, with longer treks on Sunday.

Why we were able to find time then, and have so much trouble doing so now is beyond me, since both of say it's something that is important to us. Between rain, night meetings, early morning meetings and all the "stuff" that has to be done for home and work, we routinely find excuses not to walk.

Yet, on those occasions when we do make the extra effort, we're so glad we did.

Walking helps us feel better and gives us time for creative thinking. We could walk alone, but Don and I don't see enough of each other as it is, so we like walking together. Somewhere along the way we'll start talking, good deep conversations about things that really matter. That may not be good for our cardiovascular conditioning, but it is good for our marriage.

We're getting ready for a getaway to the mountains. That week away—with most of our excuses for not walking left behind—gives us a little time to try to re-establish the walking habit across some beautiful terrain.

As extra encouragement, along with the sweats and the walking shoes, I'm packing a list of nine good reasons to walk, courtesy of the American Heart Association.

Maybe this list will be all the extra encouragement you need to get out and walk. Here goes:

1. Walking can be enjoyed by

Susan Usher



people of all ages and it can be done almost anywhere.

2. No other exercise produces so many physical and mental benefits without pain, discomfort or injury.

3. Walking strengthens the muscle-skeletal system and helps to free

up tight joints.

4. It's aerobic, which means it increases the use of oxygen for improving your overall health and cardiovascular (heart and blood vessels) fitness.


5. Walking improves circulation and reduces risk of high blood pressure.

6. In conjunction with a healthy diet, walking can help you reduce or maintain weight.

7. Walking relieves tension and stress.

8. It inspires creative thinking.

9. Walking is the one exercise that can get you where you need to go (in more ways than one).



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