



WE CAN FIND joy in the natural world when we lead a joyful life.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

# Tidings Of Great Joy

BY BILL FAVER

Christmas is one of those times when we think of joy. We hear it in our music as "Joy to the World" and "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" are played. We see it in happy faces and holiday decorations. We are made aware of it when we hear of people sharing and helping the less fortunate.

We might even find it in the whirl of parties and social gatherings intended to gather good friends and neighbors to celebrate the season. And we experience it in our church worship services and fellowship activities.

There is also a joy to be found in our natural environment as the winter season brings a needed rest and a serenity to the cycles and complexities of our world.

Too often we think of joy as a spontaneous feeling or a special exuberance brought on by some unique experience. Maybe we should approach joy as a way of life—an outlook focused on being positive and productive in whatever situation we find ourselves.

Joy can be the absence of negativism and pessimism. It can be seeing the good in people and events and striving for the best in ourselves and others.



FAVER

Joy can mean we want the best possible world, including the diversities we find in our plants and animals. And joy can mean we want to work to make that kind of world a reality.

W. Paul Jones, writing in a journal called "Weavings," suggests there are three parts to this kind of joy: joy as yearning, joy as delight, and joy as sharing.

"Joy as yearning" is what leads us on to do our best, to strive. This is where we emphasize the positive and downplay the negative in our lives.

"Joy as delight" is the good feelings, the excitement, the fulfillment of yearning we sometimes experience.

"Joy as sharing" is the goal of living a joyful life—sharing ourselves with others, giving of our resources, helping people, doing our part to make better communities and a better country.

When better than Christmastime to think about our understanding of joy? Perhaps we can reassess the kinds of lives we lead and see which parts are joyful and which are empty or even selfish and mean. We need to see that joy is not a seasonal nor a fleeting thing. It is an approach to life and its events, and it is how we respond to what happens to us.

That surely makes it "good tidings of great joy" at this Christmas season.

# I'll Never Do It Again, I Promise

I know better. Most of my women friends do too.

But, I'm sorry to say, we still do it.

Did you catch that? Yes, I said I'm sorry...again. Really, I'm quitting. Today. You won't hear me doing that again. I promise. It won't happen again.

It was like an out-of-body experience one evening last week when, during a small group meeting, a friend started speaking and it was like hearing an echo. "Don't do that," we told her.

What was she doing? Apologizing when she shouldn't have, of course.

We women (is it just Southern women, or insecure women, or all of us?) always seem to be apologizing, for everything, even for ourselves. For circumstances and events beyond our control, for things that were never our fault, and especially, it seems, in circumstances where pointing fingers or assigning/accepting blames does more harm than good. We want everything to be right even when it simply can't be. We're even sorry (sometimes) that we're sorry.

I would probably blame myself if a drunk driver hit my car head-on. "Oh, I knew I shouldn't have been driving at night. If I had stayed home, this never would have happened..." Yes, and it wouldn't rain either.

We even apologize when complimented.

Serve a nice meal and Husband says, "Honey, that was great!"

"Well, it would have been better if I had used a little more thyme and

Susan Usher



wrinkled, even when he did the laundry.

Someone comments on a column or story or photograph in the newspaper they like and off I go: "Oh, I was trying to..." or "That was just lucky."

Why not a simple "Thank you! I'm glad you liked it." Which is what I really mean to say, every time.

"I'm sorry, I don't know what gets into me."

If you're not careful, I've noticed, spouses or other family members can pick up this bad habit.

"Geez, the forecast's calling for rain on Saturday. Sorry, honey, looks like the raking will have to wait again."

"I'm sorry," he says.

I bristle for a moment, thinking, "Why the heck is he sorry because the weather's bad and I can't rake?"

Because he's picked up my bad habit: Meaning to be sympathetic of my not getting something done I wanted to do, but coming off as apologetic, as if it were his fault.

It's not. Neither of us is in control of the weather, and neither of us has any business apologizing for the party who is.

It struck me last week that all of this inappropriate apologizing is a waste of energy and a waste of time. It's more self-deprecation than genuine humility, and it can be manipulative.

Guilt, of course, is the ultimate form of this whole apology ride. Sometimes we seem to revel in it, like a pig wallowing in muck. Spare me from myself and other women of similar ilk.

## GUEST COLUMN

# Expand Prisons, Reduce Crime

BY JOHN CARLISLE

Crime is rapidly becoming the number-one issue of concern in North Carolina — and for good reason. It keeps going up.

In 1992, violent crime jumped 5 percent. Other indices of crime have remained at dangerously high levels for years, while victimization surveys of North Carolinians (a better measure of total crime than official crime reports) show that, if anything, we are underestimating the crime problem.

What is especially regrettable about North Carolina's recent increases in crime is that they follow an extended period of relatively low crime, at least as compared to the rest of the nation. In 1974, North Carolina's violent crime index measured about 475 crimes per 100,000 people, just slightly above the national rate.

This was followed, however, by a decade-long decrease that culminated in a rate of 350 violent crimes per 100,000 — significantly below the national rate of 500.

North Carolina's property crime index also compared favorably with the national average during the same 10-year period. In 1974, there were roughly 2,900 property crimes per 100,000 people in the state, compared to 4,200 nationally. By 1984, North Carolina's rate had risen to about 3,200 but was still well below the national average of 4,200.

Then, in the mid-1980s, violent and property crime began a rapid increase.

Since 1984, violent crime reports jumped from 350 crimes per 100,000 to more than 500, while reports of property crimes shot up to 5,200, surpassing the national rate of 5,100.

The logical question to ask is: Why the sudden outburst of crime in North Carolina? The answer is the prison cap. In 1987, the North

Carolina legislature passed a law limiting the state's prison population to 17,460 inmates. Under this law, when the inmate population reaches 98 percent of the cap, the population has to be reduced to 97 percent within 60 days.

The reason for this draconian measure was to avoid a federal takeover of the state penal system in the wake of court rulings that North Carolina's prisons were unconstitutionally overcrowded. The effect of this cap was to significantly slow the growth of the prison population.

Between 1984 and 1990, the N.C. prison population increased 11 percent — a rate of increase considerably below the national rate of 63 percent. While the construction of new facilities has allowed the state to raise the cap to 20,900, North Carolina has been unable to incarcerate the number of criminals (as a share of total population) it has been accustomed to imprisoning in preceding decades.

The Department of Administration estimates that had it not been for the cap, the present prison population would number more than 32,000. Thus, the result of the cap has been the release of 11,000 criminals onto North Carolina's streets.

It is extremely interesting to note that during the 1970s and early 1980s, when the state's crime rate ranked well below the national rate, North Carolina had one of the highest incarceration rates. But after the prison cap became law in 1987, everything reversed. Violent crime began to significantly increase once more, and the state's murder rate surged well ahead of the nation's in just two years.

The reason for this escalating crime is obvious. Because of the prison cap, thousands of criminals are not going to prison or not serving appropriately lengthy sentences. Felons released from prison in 1987

served more than 25 months of their term. By 1991, however, felons were serving less than 19 months.

According to Secretary of Correction Franklin Freeman, only 198 of the 2,448 convicts released from prison in April 1993 "maxed out" — or served the sentence required by state law. This is significant because offenders who serve the duration of their sentence are less likely to be rearrested.

The experience of North Carolina mirrors other states' experiences with incarceration and crime. Crime researchers

Michael Block and Steve Twist write that in the 1980s, crime rose an average of seven percent in the 10 states that had either decreases or the smallest increases in their imprisonment rates; crime fell by an average of 12.7 percent in those 10 states with the largest increases in their imprisonment rates.

It should come as no surprise, then, that crime is rising faster in North Carolina than in the rest of the nation, since the state has the fourth-lowest growing prison population in the United States.

This year, the General Assembly appropriated \$87.5 million from a bond issue to add nearly 5,000 prison spaces by 1996 in an effort to combat the rising level of crime. More is needed. Instead of merely 5,000 spaces, the state should be seriously considering a construction plan that includes, at minimum, 15,000 new beds before the end of the century.

Without question this is an expensive proposition (though use of private firms to build and operate some facilities can reduce the sticker price dramatically). But the price must be paid.

Carlisle is a policy analyst at the Free Congress Foundation and a writer for the John Locke Foundation.

## MORE LETTERS

# 'The Others' At Sunset Beach Provide Input On Town Issues

To the editor:

The votes are in but the dust has not really settled in Sunset Beach since the November elections.

It was most unfortunate that the letter about "The Others" from Lloyd V. Grantham on Oct. 28 could not be responded to before the election. There was also an ad endorsed by Albert L. Consalvi referring to the "disruptive minority." And in Ed Gore's campaign letter, he flat out attacked the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association several times.

All the time and effort put into making Sunset Beach the best there is by Mayor Mason Barber, the town council, the planning board and the town administration is just not always enough. They need the input of the other 400-plus residents. Many resolutions passed by council have come from proposals by the residents at the monthly council meeting.

"The Others" were for responsible annexation but not satellite annexations. Therefore, the Food Lion construction was delayed because of a wine and beer permit that was eventually resolved.

"The Others" were against a high-rise bridge. It took a court action to get DOT to even consider an alternative. Hopefully this delay will give us a bridge that we and the environment can live with.

"The Others" initiated the 35-foot height limit on the island. It was brought up three times before council took action on it.

"The Others" were responsible for the combined sewer and storm-water management project. Before that, it was a single sewer system.

"The Others" established the Bird Island Preservation Society to obtain funds to offer Janice Pace Price a fair market value for her property. This is an alternative to developing Bird Island. State Rep. David Redwine will soon introduce legislation to obtain funds for this endeavor. He is supported by Rep. Dewey Hill and Sen. R.C. Soles.

"The Others" went to council and presented a proposal for absentee voting. The council later voted for this resolution.

"The Others" went to court to refute Ed Gore's claim to Lot 1A. After the lawsuit, then and only then did the council provide funds for the free parking lot and the beautiful gazebo.

"The Others" should be all who are interested in the best for Sunset

Beach. They should be able to have their suggestions and opinions listened to by the town council with respect.

Peggy Smyly  
Sunset Beach

**Agreed With Column**

To the editor:

I'm writing to express my agreement with Lynn Carlson's recent column on TV violence.

I don't condone violence as shown on too many TV programs; however, the decision as to what is watched in any home is that of the head of the house.

Until parents take an interest in what their children see, read and believe, we will have a generation of misguided individuals prone to all sorts of antisocial behavior.

The solution to the resulting problems is not in more prisons, but in concerned parents, better schools and an economic system that provides a future for everyone. Poorly paid teachers, crowded classrooms and low wages are all contributing factors to the present unruly state of our society.

It is an easy out to blame TV vio-

lence, guns and dope peddlers for our problems. We should be eliminating the reasons for our young people being easy targets for the temptations of quick money, false peer status and idleness.

I hope you will continue to write thought-provoking articles. You are in the enviable position of being able to influence the future of young people in your area.

Robert B. Somerville  
Tryon Communications

**Commendable Youth**

To the editor:

I and the parishioners of St. Brendan's Catholic Church wish to commend the youth of the parish for the following:

The teenagers of St. Brendan's Catholic Church collected more than 1,800 cans of food and some \$300 at Thanksgiving time to help feed the local hungry people. This was their part of Operation Hunger Action for Youth.

We their fellow parishioners commend these youth. Thank you from all of us.

Betty Zegan  
Social Ministries Chair  
St. Brendan's Church

## JENNY'S PAWN

Hwy 130, Holden Beach Rd., (1 mile from Hwy. 17) Shallotte, 754-2717  
Open Mon.-Sat. 8:30-6:30

OPEN 12:30-5 TIL CHRISTMAS

OVER 200 GUNS TO CHOOSE FROM  
AK 47s, Mak 90s, M-14s (new, used)  
SKS 7.62x39 (new, used & milled)  
New Youth Guns—12 ga., 20 ga., & 410s \$99  
New Pellet Guns—starting at \$24.95  
30-round mags for SKS and AK47  
JEWELRY FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY  
10K Pink Ice—Charm Bracelets \$50  
Zodiac Rings—10K \$49.95  
Diamond Engagement Rings as low as \$79.95  
Diamond Earrings starting at \$17.95  
1 Ct. Diamond Tennis Bracelets starting at \$299  
10K & 14K Herringbone & Rope Chains  
as low as \$19.95  
VCRs starting at \$99  
Nintendos • Radios • TVs • Microwaves  
Car speakers and much more!

## ONE HOUR EYE GLASSES

Complete Pair <b>Single Vision Lenses</b> Any Type Any Power CR-39 Plastic <b>\$12<sup>95</sup></b>	Complete Pair <b>Bifocal Lenses</b> Any Type Any Power CR-39 Plastic <b>\$29<sup>95</sup></b>	
Complete Pair <b>Progressive Any Type Lenses</b> Any Power CR-39 Plastic <b>\$79<sup>95</sup></b>	Complete Pair <b>Trifocals</b> Any Type Any Power CR-39 Plastic <b>\$39<sup>95</sup></b>	

Frame Size 54 Eye and Above Add Just \$10.00  
Coupons Expire Dec. 31, 1993

## CLEAR-VUE OPTICIANS

We can make arrangements to get your eyes examined today.  
(910)395-6563 3901-A Oleander Dr., Wilmington  
1-800-634-1085 Mon.-Fri. 9:30-7p.m., Sat. 9:30-5 p.m., Sun. 1-5 p.m.  
Other locations—Kinston, Greenville, Jackson, Wilson, Raleigh & Goldsboro.