



# The NEW BERN MIRROR

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It was plain to see that the woman was emotionally upset, as she barged into Craven Superior court. Her brown eyes were flashing anger, and her face, was flushed. Downstairs, in the sheriff's office, she had all but exploded with indignation over the fact that she was summoned for emergency jury duty under what she considered unsatisfactory circumstances.

A first degree murder trial was in prospect, and a special venire had been drawn. Her name happened to be one of those pulled at random. She had been notified the previous night, but contended that she should have received an official notice in the mail.

Janice Williams, whose capable work in the office is always punctuated by politeness and patience, didn't argue with the infuriated lady. Waiting until she had concluded her impassioned condemnation of the way things are done in North Carolina, compared with New York, Janice explained that she should make her complaint upstairs to the presiding jurist, Judge W. H. S. Burgwyn.

When her name was called in the courtroom, she came to the bar railing with the other summoned jurors. It was so obvious that she was angry, that Judge Burgwyn singled her out and asked her what was troubling her.

"I've served on a jury twice in New York," she told His Honor curtly, "and I was mailed a notice." Then she launched a denunciation of the method used to notify her in this instance, and made it clear that she didn't think it was proper, or official.

Judge Burgwyn was surprisingly gentle as he informed her that, whatever her feelings, he expected her to serve with the others. Then he directed that the jurors be sworn in. Everyone else put his or her hand on the Bible for the swearing in, but the still angry woman made no move to do so.

"Place your hand on the Bible," the presiding jurist instructed her, "so we can swear you in." To which the woman replied, with bitter sarcasm, "I don't believe in the Bible." Judge Burgwyn scowled and said, "You may be excused. Anybody who doesn't believe in the Bible ought not serve on a jury."

The woman made no answer. She wheeled about, and stomped out of the courtroom. You could have heard a pin drop, as her heels clicked sharply and rapidly on the floor. At the rear door she almost had a collision with a man who was entering.

That she showed contempt for the court was apparent to all. In all probability she wasn't aware that Judge Burgwyn, had he seen fit, could have sent her to jail for 30 days for such contempt. And no one, not even the Supreme court, could have gone over his head to get her out of there.

The writer is glad this unhappy woman didn't end up behind bars. We're inclined to feel that a human being devoid of religious faith is in enough trouble already, without being confined in a pokey. Everyone, it seems to us, needs desperately to believe in something, and most of all in God.

One thing that the lady can say is that she belongs to a very small group. It may be, as she contended, that New York is far superior to North Carolina in its jury practices, but there as here most everybody has something in common—a belief in the Bible.

Protestants believe in it, Catholics believe in it, and Jews believe in the Old Testament, along with professing Christians. Many of us don't live up to the teachings of the Holy Book, but few of us doubt its wisdom or its sacred validity.

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MIRRORING THE MAJORETTES — Pictured here in all their cuteness and confidence are the New Bern High school baton twirlers, who perform expertly at football games played in the local stadium and lead the high school

band when it makes a parade appearance. Left to right, they are Head Majorette Mildred Gwaltney, Donna Jo Bell, Marthanette Pate, Nancy Masters and Laurel Cox.—Photo by John R. Baxter.

## New Bern's Election Choice Remains Very Much in Doubt

Most New Bernians, at this stage of the Presidential campaign, would be extremely hesitant about betting on the chances of either major candidate. They might make predictions, and thousands are doing just that, but laying money on the line to back up those predictions is another matter.

In this respect, the average citizen in our town on the Neuse and Trent is in the very same boat that seasoned political prognosticators find themselves in. Professional and amateur prophets alike agree that the results of the election, if held today, would be extremely close.

So close, in fact, that the various national polls now being taken are completely inconclusive, and offer utterly nothing to enlighten the public. Nationally it's a hazy picture to say the least, and the situation in New Bern and the rest of North Carolina is doing little to clear it up.

Democratic leaders—cheerfully optimistic on the outside—are behaving very much like the small boy who loudly whistles a happy tune while fearfully passing a graveyard on a dark night. Republicans are boasting and claiming with reckless abandon, but they too are exhibiting a boundless optimism that somehow doesn't ring true.

Picking a horse, or to be more specific, the donkey or the elephant in this one isn't for the gambler who prefers to wager on a sure thing. The religious issue—and no one can ignore its tremendous significance—has already erased party lines. How complete this erasure

is on the local, state and national levels is anybody's guess.

It can be said with absolute certainty that a large segment of New Bern voters will vote for Richard Nixon—not necessarily because of a hankering to have him in the White House—but rather because John Kennedy's religious faith makes him an unsatisfactory Presidential candidate in the eyes of a high percentage of the heavily dominant Protestant population here.

This, of course, comes as no surprise to Kennedy, to the Democratic party nor Catholics in New Bern and elsewhere. His nomination was a calculated risk, and if nothing else a tribute to the stature of the man. All fair minded persons admit that he demonstrated courage as a bonafide hero in World War Two, and they concede that his career in the United States Senate has revealed wisdom, leadership and vision.

But for these factors, he could never have achieved the Democratic nomination, his fantastic personal wealth notwithstanding. An abundance of available funds, in his own right, didn't hurt Kennedy's chances in seeking the role of Democratic standard bearer, but to say he "bought" the nomination is a mis-statement of fact.

Nixon, here and elsewhere in the Old North State, is going to get heavy anti-Kennedy support. Or to put it bluntly and truthfully, he will profit in large measure from anti-Catholic support. This too will be a powerful factor in varying degrees throughout the nation.

Nowhere in New Bern have we found pronounced affection and enthusiasm for Nixon. Whatever his qualifications may be to rate election as President he lacks the capacity to engender popularity in these parts. Many local citizens feel a deep dislike for him—few warm up to him in the manner that they warmed to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower in Ike's earlier days as the nation's Chief Executive.

By the same token, it is also true that Kennedy seems to lack popular appeal, even as Nixon. Locally, his admirers far outnumber Nixon's, but the average New Bernian doesn't feel a closeness to him. It's the same political handicap that hampered the scholarly and brilliant Adlai Stevenson, and, in the final analysis probably kept him from becoming President.

Like Roosevelt, Kennedy has a social and cultural background that few New Bernians and few other Americans are privileged to have. Unlike Roosevelt, he lacks the God-given knack to do as Kipling wrote—"walk with kings, nor lose the common touch."

But for this weakness, Kennedy's chances of overcoming the political handicap that his religion has injected would be greater in New Bern and North Carolina. As it is, he can be thankful that New Bernians feel an equal absence of warmth for his opponent. Nixon too is scholarly, and despite his determined efforts to appear otherwise, has a stiff and stand-offish manner. In some ways he puts one to thinking of Thomas E. Dewey,

who lost a horde of votes, we believe, when Harold Ickes implanted in the public mind a picture of "the little bridegroom on a wedding cake."

It is doubtful Kennedy ever really believed that the religious issue wouldn't confront him in the South. Here in New Bern, the Protestant clergy lost little time in preaching about the matter from the pulpit. And, it is merely stating a fact to say the sermons, with few exceptions, were well prepared and effectively presented.

Whether they swayed the congregation that heard them to abandon their usual practice of voting Democratic remains to be seen. A Protestant minister, or for that matter a Catholic priest or a Jewish rabbi, would be the first to admit somewhat ruefully that a flock doesn't always follow the paths suggested for it.

Ironically for Kennedy, and fortunately for Nixon, the heated race for governor that North Carolina went through a few short months ago is going to have a decided bearing on the Presidential election at polling places from Manteo to Murphy. This despite the fact that the same issue injected in that instance wasn't religious but racial.

Terry Sanford's victory did nothing to subdue those who had opposed him, and in some quarters Terry hurt Kennedy's chances in the state when he quickly and emphatically identified himself with the Kennedy cause before the Democratic national convention was held.

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