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Tom Mitchell's death removed from New Bern's downtown business section one of the last of our old-time independent merchants. Buzz and Johnny — his two sons — are carrying on in the family tradition, but things won't be quite the same on South Front street, known more recently as Tryon Palace Drive.

Once there were many like him, plying their trade not only on South Front but in stores lining Middle, Pollock, Broad and Craven streets. They were a colorful lot, these oldsters, banded together in their own wisecracking, easy-going fraternity, before there was ever such a thing as an officially formed merchants association.

They abided by an unwritten but mutually understood law of live and let live. Mixing business with pleasure is supposed to be a bad policy, and yet these fellows — friends first and competitors last — never permitted dollars and cents to interfere with their get-togethers for small talk, each and every day.

Tom was never one to mince words. He was a man of strong opinions, and in keeping with the law of averages some of those opinions may have been wrong. If he erred, it was an error of the mind and not a misrepresentation of what he felt in his heart. You knew where he stood, whatever the subject, and it was a pretty good bet that he was standing on rather firm ground.

Those grand old timers had many things in common. Without exception, they couldn't bear the thought of retiring entirely from the business firms where they had spent so many hours, even when they knew that there were capable hands to relieve them of the load. Maybe the business could go on without them, but they had no intention of going on without at least a token connection with it.

That's why George Fuller (a friend of ours from boyhood) didn't stray far from his rocking chair in the music house that bears his name. Reid and Andy took care of the chores around the place, but George was there to give expert advice and great friends who stopped in to exchange yarns with one of the master story-tellers of his day.

Over next door, Sam Lipman in his last days continued to stand near the front door of his department store, where he could welcome customers or coax hesitant would-be customers into entering the portals of his establishment. Sam started out as a peddler with a pack on his back, and to him the art of trading came naturally. He remained a trader at heart, in a changing merchandizing picture where haggling over price became obsolete.

If we remember rightly, Sam's funeral procession was deliberately routed by the store he founded. This might have seemed somewhat ridiculous to a few unthinking souls, but for the life of us we can't imagine a more appropriate gesture. We're glad his family thought of the idea, and gladder still that they carried it out.

Lipman and Fuller enjoyed each other's company tremendously, although George was the outdoor type who loved to hunt and fish, and Sam to our knowledge never fired a gun or wet a hook in all his born days. They kidded each other constantly, but the kidding was never caustic, and it kept them young at heart beyond their years.

Close by, in his furniture store, W. P. Jones was always available for conversation. He was as gentle as the hint of a slight breeze on a sultry summer day, and a man of almost unbelievable goodness.

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EXCEPTIONAL SONGSTERS—Pictured here in happy mood are the soloists who help in large measure to make Donald Smith's New Bern High school choir and boys and girls choruses tops in their scholastic area. Last Wednesday they appeared in Morehead City and Beaufort, and this Wednesday they'll be featured at the annual Pop Con-

cert here. Seen with Jimmy Meredith, choir pianist are Janic Shapou, Priscilla Jenkins, Carol Nelson, Frank Milby, Mike Gooding, Phoebe Griffin, Lloyd Lane, Jr., Mitchell Stten, Frances Fulford and Sherrill Jayroe.—Photo by John R. Baxter.



DOUBLE HONORS—Election of Jimmy Meredith as State Junior President and Nara Snornieks as Senior first vice-president of the N. C. Federation of Music Clubs puts

New Bern in the limelight this year. Both are as personable as they are talented in their chosen field.—Photo by Florence Hanff.