



The NEW BERN

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By Mrs. A. N. Murphy
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Everybody is a soft touch for something and our strongest weakness happens to be any kid who is out trying to sell the Grit.

Invariably, when he approaches us, we see in him the little boy we used to be. And, to this very day it is painful to remember the disdainful looks and curt refusals you had to endure before someone came along who was willing to part with a nickel.

Fifty years ago or thereabouts the well-known Williamsport, Pa., weekly was much bulkier than the edition that now sells for three times that much. There were several sections, and as an added inducement you got a colored portrait of a President or somebody else quite important that was suitable for framing.

Here was a newspaper that had everything. Covered rather promptly with words and photographs were all the current events of national scope, and tossed in for good measure were pictures of two-headed cows, cats mothering a litter of orphaned puppies, and sundry other freakish things in the realm of nature.

There was a special section devoted to fiction, and a full page of poems old and new. Editorials were pertinent and timely, and the comic strips were slanted to appeal to children from eight to eighty.

A nickel in those days looked as big as a county biscuit to the empty-pocket lads we grew up with, and was as hard to come by as a four-leaf clover in the middle of Neuse river.

Looking back, nickels must have been pretty precious to grown folks, too. This or else just about everybody we tried to sell a Grit to was tighter than a girdle two sizes too small at the conclusion of a dinner of stewed chicken and dumplings.

Peddling Cloverine salve or flower seeds to the neighbors was a picnic compared with disposing of a dozen copies or two of the Grit. Before you got rid of the last threadbare copy, you were certain to trudge all over town.

Included on the beat we staked out was the Union Station at the corner of Queen and Hancock streets. Counting the curious loafers who congregated there to see who was coming to town on a train and who was leaving, you could figure on soliciting a lot of folks there.

Unfortunately, train passengers didn't exhibit the slightest interest in reading. As for the village loiterers on hand, they were there to see the sights, including the trim feminine ankles displayed. No newspaper, most especially the Grit, could compete with the face and figure of a pretty girl who had just come to town.

Later, with our typical lack of juvenile shrewdness, we became a salesman for the Literary Digest. This publication was even harder to sell than the Grit. For one thing, it cost a whole dime and its appeal was aimed at intellectuals. There weren't many intellectuals in New Bern, we discovered, and besides the citizens who qualified were dime squeezers with



THIS IS IT—Donnie Wilkins, son of Sgt. and Mrs. Don Wilkins of 2104 Griffin Avenue, is proud of his Air Force father and points to the spot on the globe where Viet Nam is located. His sister, Donna, knows little about geography and less about the war being waged thousands of miles away, but she does know that it isn't much fun not to have your Daddy around. As the poet has said, "They also serve who stand and

wait beside a cottage door," and the sadness in Donna's eyes is part of the tragedy confronting our nation as it wrestles with the Viet Nam problem. Everyone has emphatic feelings about the matter, but finding somebody with the right answer is something else. Meanwhile, what is happening in a distant land will deeply concern Donnie and Donna, here in New Bern.—Photo by Eunice Wray.