

Through
THE
Looking
Glass

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One of the first things a fellow who writes a column should learn is not to confide in his wife about subject matter. Heed her warnings, and a lot of the stuff you turn out won't reach print.

Like last week, when we made the mistake of reading to her in advance the item concerning those ultra thin slices of ham that Louis Daniel once served to a score of disappointed guests at his home.

Maybe you, too, got the impression that it was a low blow on our part against a guy who has to stack up as one of New Bern's best liked men. "You'll offend him," our better half said. "I certainly wouldn't do it."

Informing her that we knew Louis a whole lot more intimately than she did, and allowing as how he could take it as well as dish it out, failed to stop her severe criticism. "I don't care, I wouldn't do it," she persisted.

Married long enough to know you can't win an argument with a woman, or even settle for a scoreless tie, we picked up the phone and dialed the Daniel home. Louis answered, with that low pitched drawl of his.

He laughed about the problem confronting us. "Sure, it's true," he admitted. "I can slice ham so thin that I've been invited to parties, and got steered into the kitchen just to do the carving."

And, with pride he boasted convincingly that his slicing compares favorably with the astounding exactness that Mr. Charlie McSorley consistently exhibited at his establishment on lower Middle Street many years ago.

Aside from setting our Missus straight about Daniel's lack of sensitiveness, the phone call paid another dividend. Louis, in his usual talkative mood, got around to Jarvis Arthur.

It is no secret that Jarvis has a widespread reputation for tall tales, and once when Louis was in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, he dreamed up a prank he knew would make Arthur's eyes bulge.

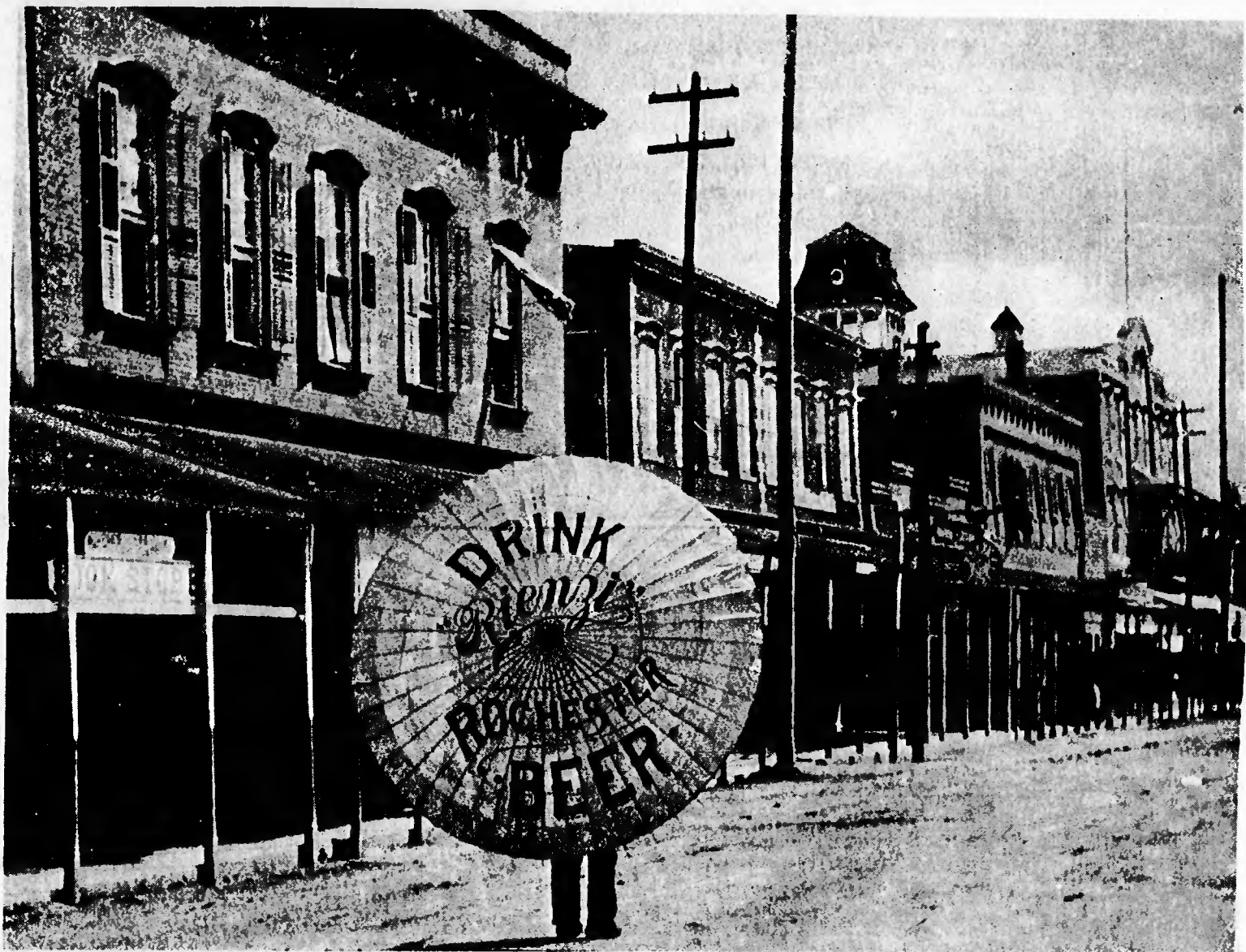
Daniel bought a postcard, put a stamp on it, and asked the Oak Ridge postmaster if he would cancel it, and give him back the card. The postmaster, figuring Louis was a stamp collector, readily agreed.

With the card properly postmarked, Daniel addressed it to LYING JARVIS ARTHUR, U. S. A. and mailed it in an envelope to Walter Smith, one of his former Coco-Cola employees then working, as now, at New Bern's post office.

Louis enclosed a note, asking Walter to see that the card went out on the rural route where Jarvis was living. Smith followed instructions, Arthur received the card, and proudly showed it to everybody he ran into.

When Louis finally returned to New Bern, Jarvis backed him into a corner and wanted to know how something mailed to him with no more address than U. S. A. on it promptly reached him.

Daniel lied a little himself. He
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JUST IN CASE—NEW Bern's Middle Street had the appearance of a deserted ghost town on this day in 1901, but somebody must have been circulating. If not, why would this gent be meandering down the center of the dirt thoroughfare, advertising the thing for dusty tongues and parched throats? It had to be summer, with a breeze blowing, since a frayed curtain or ragged remnant of an awning waves from one of the open windows in the first building to your left. You're gazing at the east side of Middle, below Pollock, and surely you can identify a certain building still standing that, through the years, served as a series of hotels. Last of the lot was the New Bernian. Before that it was the James, somewhat ill famed as a place where romance could be purchased, and poker games flourished. That clock suspended in front of one

establishment marks the location of S. K. Eaton Jewelry Store. In its last days of sustained operation, the late Twenties, a gentle and sweet spinster, Sadie Eaton managed it. Dr. E. F. Menius, Jimmy's father, was the optometrist there, and jovial Jake Ziegler the watchmaker. Middle Street holds its memories for those no longer young. They remember merchants like Sam Lipman, George Fuller, Abe Block, Guy Gaskins, Phillip Howard, W. P. Jones, Leon Cohen, and others. No one, with or without a giant umbrella, walks in the middle of Middle today. Crossing it is hazardous enough. Even so, the more New Bern changes the more it remains the same, and if you love it as we do, that ain't the worst thing that can characterize a town you were born in.—Photo from Albert D. Brooks Collection.