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Yesterday was when New Bern had an 86 year old shoe shine boy at one of its downtown barber shops. Foscue Mitchell not only held down a full-time job, but did extra work for several stores.

"I was a railroad fireman for 40 years," the dapper octogenarian told us, "starting with those old wood burners on the Atlantic and North Carolina line." His run from Morehead City to Goldsboro was an all-day affair.

In fact, sometimes the train left the Carteret town at 7 in the morning, and didn't arrive at its destination until far into the night. Not the kind of work that would appeal to today's complaining clock watchers.

Mitchell, who we found to be an interesting talker, fondly remembered that Mr. Jim Bryan was president of the railroad, and Mr. Joe Green the master mechanic. Retirement for the elderly black, at long last, didn't please him.

"I felt like a throwed-out mule," he said. "A man won't get in trouble when he stays busy." Shortly after he was pensioned, the retired railroader ceased to be "throwed-out." He became the town's best shoe shine boy.

Mitchell liked to quote from the Bible, as he wielded his rag and brought brightness to dull shoes. Naturally, he was partial to the observation that man is expected to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

There aren't many Foscue Mitchell, black or white, around nowadays. Maybe he was a fool to love work, and get joy from laboring to the point of exhaustion. But he did stay out of trouble, and stayed young also.

Yesterday was when, in the summer of 1958, one of New Bern's better eulogies was delivered by a small boy at the City Recreation Department's Joy Corner in Riverside, where Elizabeth Cotten was director.

The glowing words, spoke for a deceased bird that had been run over by an automobile, would have served well for a departed king or potentate. All the other kids in the group of mourners were tremendously impressed.

Prior to the last rites, a grave had been dug, so that things would go off without a hitch. Instead of a hymn, those in attendance made up some appropriate lines, and sang them to the tune of Old Ned.

The tiny bird, carefully wrapped in leaves, was much too small to need pallbearers for the funeral procession, so he was gently placed in the basket of a bicycle.

They buried him underneath a tree, and a tombstone was fashioned out of construction paper. Flowers were placed upon the mound. Having paid their respects, the children went back to their play.

As long as there are kids in the world, a fair percentage of the expired cats, dogs, squirrels and birds they encounter will be

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Now Where Do I Go To Round Up
A Few More Votes, Just In Case...