

Funny Place, New Jersey

By JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Special Correspondent

Alex sat across the table with a sort of wierd, sly, sidelong grin.

"You, know, up in Jersey," he began softly, pausing to spritz a rather disgusting brown stream of tobacco juice into a paper cup, "they call sloppy joes barbecue. You'll love it."

Alex should know. He was from New Jersey until he migrated south and began chewing up our favorite crop. But what do you ask for up north if you want chopped pork with vinegar-based sauce on it?

"You asked for chopped pork with vinegar-based sauce on it," Alex said, as the wierd, sly, sidelong grin again crept across his face, then parted again to make way for another slimy brown gusher.

"But you won't get it."

Funny guy, that Alex.

Tar baby

New Jersey.

Sometimes--most of the time, even--I still can't believe that come September, I will be a resident of New Jersey. Of all the places I once thought I might end up, there were some pretty bad choices.

But never once did I think it would be as bad as Jersey.

I mean, when you think of crime, pollution, urban sprawl, traffic jams, and funny accents, you think of New Jersey. When you think of tacky towns, sleazy beaches, and barbarians who call sloppy joes barbecue, you think of New Jersey.

All that is the kind of thing I've fought and avoided all my life. But some think that life in general is like the story of the Tar Baby--you become what you fight against, sticking in its mire like the Tar Baby.

New Jersey is my Tar Baby. Fate conspired to make a sojourn to Jersey an offer I couldn't refuse, and I was stuck to the Tar Baby.

Funny creature, that Tar Baby.

Snow job

About a year ago, when Magnolia Blossom was preparing to leave Vanceboro to move up north, I thought it was real funny to make jokes about how cold and nasty life is above the Mason-Dixon Line.

The sneaker, needless to say, is on the other foot.

And these Craven County girls won't leave me alone.

Cookie knows I hate snow. I hated snow in the mountains of Virginia. I've hated what little snow we've gotten in Eastern North Carolina. There is every reason to believe I'll hate New Jersey snow even more.

For the past two weeks Cookie has discussed snow with more regularity than the Fairbanks Dog Racing Association.

Her eyes showed compassion as I patiently explained that I am nervous enough about living on the outskirts of New York as it is, without her harping on it.

"There, there," she said, stroking my head much as one would a sad-eyed puppy, "you can fly back here at Christmas." She paused before adding: "If you don't get snowed in."

Funny gal, that Cookie.

The bright side

"You'll love it here," said Jersey Jim, who grew up in Greenville and provided the only encouraging words I'd heard New Jersey-wise. "There are a lot of good people here. You'll learn to like it."

There are other advantages. Tough as it will be to get real barbecue in Jersey, it won't be much tougher than it is to get decent pastrami down here. And I hear the New York area offers numerous cultural opportunities for those who can avoid being feloniously assaulted long enough to take advantage of them.

The lifestyle will be much different from that of Craven County, to be sure. I was wondering how the ideological collision between myself and the Garden State would turn out.

"It'll be alright," said Alex. "There are some nice spots in New Jersey, like the Pine Barrens."

What he didn't mention is that the Pine Barrens, considered a scenic mecca in Jersey, would be just so much routine country-side in North Carolina.



On Sunday, May 23, the Vanceboro United Methodist Church received its newest potential member. Charity Hughes was christened by Rev. Claude Wilson at the morning service.

Have You Ever Wanted To "Sound Off"

Have you ever gotten angry about an action taken by Congress or the President? Have you ever wanted to "sound off" to your elected officials or civil servants? Chances are you didn't. Although it's everybody's right and responsibility to get involved in the governmental process, most don't. We do our complaining around the dinner table, or to the neighbors, and far too many of us don't even bother to vote. In the '80 presidential race, only 53.9 percent of the eligible voters showed up at the polls.

What most people don't seem to realize is that making your voice heard in Washington is both effective and easy to do. Elected officials are very sensitive to the views of their constituents--especially to those who are thoughtful and articulate. In short, it pays to be a loudmouth, albeit a polite one.

Unemployment Declines

RALEIGH--Total unemployment declined significantly in April to a rate of 8.2 percent, according to figures announced today by Glenn R. Jernigan, Chairman of the North Carolina Employment Security Commission (ESC). The rate represents 239,200 jobless state residents. In March, the unemployment rate was 9.7 percent. For April 1981, the rate was 6.1 percent.

Jernigan pointed out that the state has once again fallen below the national unadjusted rate of unemployment which stood at 9.2 percent in April.

Jernigan says, "Declining unemployment is due to increased seasonal employment activities in agriculture and some increase among nonagricultural wage and salary workers. Indications are that some 20,000 people also left the labor force between March and April."

Manufacturing jobs overall showed a net gain of some 2,600 (+0.3 percent) largely due to employment gains in textiles where employment advanced by 4,800 (+2.1 percent) over the month and in furniture and fixtures which showed an increase of 1,000 (+1.2 percent). These gains were partially offset by the loss of some 1,500 (-2.9 percent) in electrical machinery.

Four nonmanufacturing industry divisions showed healthy employment increases. Services and construction showed seasonal gains of 3,900 (+1.1 percent) and 1,400 (+1.3 percent) respectively.

The average hourly earnings of production workers in manufacturing in North Carolina were \$6.28 in mid-April, up 3¢ from the previous month and up 49¢ from April 1981.

The average weekly hours worked by North Carolina's manufacturing production workers were 37.0 in mid-April, down 0.4 hours from the mid-March average, and down 2.0 hours from the average in April 1981. ESC suggests that decreasing hours may result from employers' attempts to maintain operations and staff even at reduced levels during the economic crisis.

Notice . . . We appreciate letters to the editor; however, we cannot print those without a signature or a representative body.

Maybe Sparky said it best.

"Hey," he drawled, crushing out a Camel Light, "they're just gonna have to adjust."

Funny guy, that Sparky. Hope he's right.

Preserving N. C.'s Highways

RALEIGH--In an effort to further reduce costs, protect North Carolina's existing highway system from deterioration, and improve operating efficiency, the license/theft/weight enforcement section of the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has been reorganized. Commissioner of DMV R. W. Wilkins, Jr. explained that, "This reorganization should benefit both the public and private sectors," and that it "ties in with Governor Jim Hunt's cost reduction and efficiency programs in state government."

Effective June 1 some license/theft/weight enforcement personnel will be reassigned to accomplish the efficiency objective. No personnel will be added, rather some personnel may be shifted to other specifically designated areas. For example, weight enforcement districts (and district supervisors) will be reduced from eight to four. These four district supervisors will oversee the individual inspectors and coordinate weight enforcement activities between the uniformed personnel and the plain-clothed officers.

The weigh stations in Apex and Salisbury will be closed because they are older and lack modern equipment. These two facilities, over time, have been bypassed with the rerouting and building of new roads and highways.

The enhancement of the roving crew concept is a new educational approach to prevent further highway deterioration and preserve North Carolina's existing highway system for its residents as well as visitors. Because the approach is new, Commissioner Wilkins has suggested that any trucking organization or individual trucker contact in advance the lieutenant at a nearby weigh station and request information as to legal weight limits and on how to load trucks correctly and how to achieve an even distribution of weight to meet requirements.

Commissioner Wilkins added that "By educating private enterprise to correct loading procedures, we help the truckers comply with the laws and thereby avoid penalties and protect the public's highways from preventable damage."

Because of the increase in activity in the Wilmington port, the traffic flow of truckers entering and exiting Wilmington has steadily increased. Therefore, a portable weight crew will be assigned to the area to assist the growing numbers of truckers.

For more information, representatives of the trucking industry may contact local weigh enforcement stations or 919-733-7872.

West Craven

HIGHLIGHTS

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