

# Eastern Echoes

By Gail Roberson



## Chickens: Keeping Coop Full Is Something Worth Crowing About

"You've got a what?" my friend echoed back at me. "I've got a chicken yard," I repeated. "And a coop. A big coop. All fenced in. With a wooden gate and latch and everything. Just like grandma's used to look.

Yes, I "keep" chickens, much to the astonishment of many people, but not too surprisingly to those who know me well. While I don't need the eggs that much, I do need the chickens. For many reasons.

First of all, they are great garbage disposals. I no longer have to haul off the extra leaves, grass or prunings, or even the potato and apple peels. I simply dump them in the chicken yard and watch as they are eagerly dissolved into a rich mulch that eventually ends up in my flower beds. The nests stay stuffed with a litter of leaves or straw, or whatever just happens to be available, creating a cushioned bed for "jewels" nestled in soft "velvet." There is nothing in the world more pleasurable than calling on a neighbor with a paper bag filled with fresh, homegrown (or should that be homelaid) eggs as a token of friendship. And, I make the best deviled eggs in the whole South, to boot.

My hens and their arrogant escorts, the roosters, keep busy pecking at the ground and scratching in the straw for the hand-thrown corn I deliberately scatter about the yard. There is no other country tranquility quite like standing by the side of the barn and watching brilliantly-colored domestic fowl cluck and prance while the sunset tints the Southern sky. Nothing.

My "girls" stretch their wings occasionally, and I have the scratches to prove our "chase and capture" episodes in the woods. But, mostly they mind their manners and stay put, safe from Waldo the possum (or opossum for formality's sake), and the "Red Barron" hawk circling the oaks that offer both protection from the hot sun and limited diving space for this natural predator.

The fringe benefits are immediately more recognized when youngsters visit. They press their faces to the chicken wire and giggle at the shenanigans of the barnyard ruler stretching his vocal cords, or marvel at the experience of reaching tiny fingers into a warm nest to gather both large and small, both white and brown, perfectly shaped by-products. To me, my grandmother's ancient egg basket never looked better than when it's brimming full of my "girls" handiwork. The old family feed trough still serves up a pretty colorful meal of yellow corn and bits of gray, crushed oyster shell.

In Australia they have sheep dogs. Here, I have a "chicken cat." Sir Winston Dudley, a laid-back, tabby-and-white tom, can often be found asleep in the nest, right beside Armitie, the little hen with feathers on her feet who looks like she's got her pajamas on. She even tried to hatch him once. More often than not, when one of the "girls" decides to "fly the coop," dependable Sir Winston Dudley rounds her up and brings her home. My "chicken cat." What more could a country girl ask for?

Keeping chickens has taught me about life. Literally. Every day I share in the marvels of nature, learning, witnessing and just generally standing in awe of this world that surrounds me. But I have still to learn why, once the chickens go to roost, they all eventually turn at some point in the night to face the back of the coop until dawn. But I will. One of these days.

Meanwhile, I often make a comfortable seat in the shade of the oaks and watch the birds peck and scratch, and watch me back. In fact, that's where I am right now as I write this. Out here in the fresh air. Where there's no telephone to answer, no manuscript to type, no table to dust or paper to file. Out here, just a few steps away from yesterday.

Somehow, I expect I'll always "keep" a few chickens.

# Our Opinion

## Hey! Give Us A Look

Look out Charlotte. Be wary Raleigh. Move over Greensboro. Western Craven County is on the move.

We keep hearing how the large cities in the state keep growing by leaps and bounds. We keep hearing how new businesses and industries are tripping over each other moving into these cities. We keep hearing what these cities say they have to offer. Well, it's time we did a little crowing of our own.

In the past months, the western section of Craven County has been busy growing. No loud crowing, just growing. The small towns in the area have seen several new businesses open their doors. They might not be on par with the Supercollider, but they are just as important. Maybe moreso.

We are aware of two hair salons, a meat market, a timber office and several other new businesses that have begun to provide services.

In western Craven County? In rural western Craven County? Away from New Bern? Yes! And it's bout time. Sorry, New Bern. Sorry, Kinston. Sorry, Greenville. Bigger does not always mean better.

If we remember what we were taught in school, there are many more small towns than large cities. There appears to be a trend to live rural, but work in the city. And all that population moving to the "country" means more opportunity. Instead of running down to the corner store for milk or bread, it seems to be more like running down to the crossroads store for eggs and yogurt. (There still are some city influences we can't seem to do without.)

Many small towns are creating an atmosphere conducive to growth. They are getting their piece of the budget pie (small as it may be thanks to the Legislature). They are learning how to fight the "big boys." The big cities will continue to rule the roost when it comes to getting money, but small towns are darting into the money trough instead of standing back to see if there are any leftovers as was done in the past.

Towns do something like Vanceboro did — erect a water tank to provide water to whoever needs it. Promises to attract industry or business might not hold water, but that tank sure does. It is more than just a water tank. It is a visible signal of

commitments, dreams and hopes.

Cove City saw about four new businesses open their doors this past summer. They weren't IBM, but they did put people to work and did get money flowing. Dover had a meat market open up earlier this year. The owner maybe decided to grab the bull by the horns after taking stock of the situation and hopefully he is carving up some nice profit for himself.

A new restaurant has opened up on U.S. 17 between Vanceboro and Bridgeton. We haven't sampled the food yet, but we hope the owners get a taste of success soon.

We might not have a Research Triangle. We might not be as big as Charlotte and the almost deity-like Mecklenburg County. We don't have a Duke University, N.C. State or UNC in our backyard. We do have a medical school up the road at East Carolina University. We do have people who know what work is all about. We do have something that the cities seemed to have lost forever, or at least forgotten how to use them. What we have are dreams and desire.

Let the cities keep building their malls. Seems to us most of the big names at those malls started out like the many mom-and-pop stores that dot our landscape. Remember, before there was a Sears Tower in Chicago, there were just two men, one named Sears and the other named Roebuck, who formed a partnership. We would rather have a "Ya'll come back now" than a "Here's your receipt. Next, please."

Tired of traffic jams? Sick of concrete and steel? Feel like a bum steer in the stampede at the malls? Give small towns a look.

Our little businesses will not shake up Wall Street or the White House.

But they sure might do a world of good for Main Street and your house.

## Drip, Drip

Water, water everywhere. But not a drop to drink — especially if some residents in western Craven County are going to have to fork over almost 300 percent more for water.

If what we hear is true, it seems as if some residents are really getting soaked when it comes to recent increases in their water bills. Unless the tide has turned drastically, we cannot fathom why such a huge increase is warranted.

We see where a Township 7 resident is making waves about a 74 percent increase. Craven County, which buys water from the City of New Bern, received a 74 percent increase in its cost thanks to the New Bern aldermen. City officials claim that the city's increase in rates is only a part of the county increase. County officials maintain the rate increase — above the city's increase — was needed for the first time to allow for depreciation of the water system.

But guess who's taking the bath when it comes to paying the bills?

We understand that Cove City residents are looking at almost a 300 percent increase in water charges. Cove City buys its water from New Bern. Residents have a right to be concerned about the rising level of their water bills.

If it is true that the increase is needed to pay for the system, then somewhere along the line someone needed to put his finger in the dike to keep the floodwaters of cost from rising. Maybe county residents should have been paying a little more from time to time. But asking them to open the monetary floodgates to pay for governmental mistakes or mishandling seems unfair. We think they would rather have poured a little money back into the system a bucket at a time.

Remember the commercial in which the mechanic tells the car owner: "You can pay me now, or you can pay me later." Somebody goofed. Residents may have to pay a lot when they could have been paying a little more.

We would expect a legitimate increase, considering all the new water lines being put down in the county. But we also recall some problems with that project. Some residents were promised gallons and they still don't have even a trickle.

We expect to hear area residents telling those who have authority over the issue to "go soak your heads" and "you're all wet."

What might be the answer for these towns and residents? Well...

## Obituaries

### Elvira G. Johnson

Mrs. Elvira Gatlin Johnson, 78, of Rt. 1, Vanceboro, died Sept. 9 at Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville.

Services were held Sept. 11 at Paul Funeral Home with the Rev. Claude T. Wilson officiating. Burial was in Celestial Memorial Gardens.

A native of Craven County, Mrs. Johnson was the daughter of the late Gardner and Maggie Smith Gatlin. She was married to John Clyde Johnson, who died in 1969. Mrs. Johnson was a member of the Vanceboro United Methodist Church, the United Methodist Women and the Annie Peterson Circle.

She is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Richard D. (Patsy) Jewell of Rt. 3, Vanceboro; two sons, John A. Johnson and Gerald C. Johnson, both of Rt. 1, Vanceboro; a sister, Mrs. Anna C. Deaton of Woodbridge, Va., six grandchildren and a great-grandchild. Mrs. Johnson was the mother of Shirley Frances Johnson, who died in 1968.

Ottis Gatlin, Ray Gatlin, William Stille, Clifton Mooney, Alton Lewis and Willie Dudley will serve as pallbearers.

### Mrs. Clyde Fillingame

Mrs. Clyde Warren Fillingame, 84, died Tuesday night in the Craven County Hospital.

The funeral service was held at 3 p.m. Sept. 10 in the Juniper Chapel Free Will Baptist Church by the Rev. MacDonal Bennett. Burial was in the Juniper Chapel Free Will Baptist Church cemetery.

Surviving are her husband, Ed Fillingame; three daughters, Miss Eulabelle Fillingame, Mrs. Pearl Mae Boyd and Mrs. Elizabeth Ipock, all of Rt. 2, Vanceboro; one son, Ray Fillingame of Rt. 2, Vanceboro; one sister, Miss Nora Critcher of the home; 13 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

## Football

From Page 1

Starting from the Panther 10, where possessions begin in overtime, a clipping penalty nullified a Bronswell Patrick run for a touchdown. On the next play, Patrick threw a 27-yard pass to Martin Patrick for the touchdown and the extra point attempt was good.

Both teams had chances to score in regulation. Conley marched 80 yards in the third quarter, but a holding penalty ended the threat inside the Panther 5-yard line. North Pitt also moved the ball inside the Conley 5, but a penalty and subsequent fumble thwarted the scoring bid.

# Washington Report

By Sen. Terry Sanford

The greatest responsibility of a United States senator, with the possible exception of voting on a declaration of war, is selecting justices of the Supreme Court. With the nomination of Robert Bork due to come before the Senate this fall, it is worth considering how a senator should approach appraising and voting on nominees to the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court justices are not ordinary presidential appointments, like Cabinet posts and other administrative positions. Those appointments are largely the president's business, and his nominees should be confirmed, with the Senate satisfied to screen out rogues or those with severe conflicts of interest.

The Supreme Court, however, is our only "non-democratic" institution. Sitting on the court is a lifetime job which the Founding Fathers did not intend to be filled by the vagaries of a single individual's discretion, not even that of a president of the United States.

The way we select justices was agreed on only after much debate. An early draft of the Constitution — a draft actually adopted — had the Congress elect justices. But in the waning days of the Constitutional Convention, delegates who favored a stronger executive branch suggested that the president appoint justices.

Our Constitution has a com-

promise between those two extremes. It says the president "shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the Supreme Court." Thus, selecting justices is a two-step process. The president nominates, and the Senate confirms — or rejects.

A misconception has arisen in recent years, one which holds that Supreme Court appointments are the president's alone, that justices should be "his people," and that the Senate should perfunctorily "rubber stamp" his nominations unless the candidate is clearly unqualified or unethical.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, since our Constitution was ratified 200 years ago, the Senate has refused to confirm one out of every five presidential nominations to the Supreme Court.

The Senate exercised early and vigorously its duty to advise and consent. Its rejection of John Rutledge in 1795 is the first example, and one of the best. As an author of the Constitution and a member of the Supreme Court from 1789 to 1791, Rutledge had unquestionable qualifications. President George Washington nominated him to be chief justice.

But Rutledge's views on foreign policy alienated many in the Senate. Although Washington objected strongly, the Senate re-

jected Rutledge.

A primary question since then has been whether the Senate can properly consider the political views and ideological leanings of a nominee. I join those who argue that it is entirely proper. I join them in maintaining that the Senate indeed has a duty to examine carefully all aspects of a nominee's background and qualifications, including his or her political views and judicial and philosophical inclinations.

This is not to say that a senator should impose his or her own view on the Supreme Court. Rather, as Walter Dellinger, a professor of law at Duke University, has written, ". . . a senator ought to probe for evidence of intelligence, integrity, and open-mindedness — a willingness to be persuaded by cogent argument."

Dellinger argues further that if a president takes philosophy into account when nominating, then senators should take philosophy into account when voting on the nomination.

In 1968, when Justice Abe Fortas was nominated to be chief justice, Senator Strom Thurmond urged the Senate to take an active role. "The power of the Senate to advise and consent . . . should be exercised fully," he said.

To say that the Senate should limit its consideration to Fortas' professional skill and personal character, Thurmond argued,

would be to "hold to a very narrow view of the Senate, a view which neither the Constitution nor history and precedent have prescribed."

I agree with Senator Thurmond. Ideology should be an element of our consideration. Ideology, whether sympathetic to the left or to the right, generally suggests a closed mind. An ideologue knows what he knows and doesn't want to be distracted by reason or facts or new evidence. That is not the kind of person we want on the Supreme Court.

The architects of the Constitution intended that it grow and expand as new knowledge, new environments, and new generations emerged. Their goal was to create an imperishable spirit, one that emerging generations would be called on to apply to their time and place in history.

They succeeded. The Constitution is not a dead document, but a living force. Its genius is that its interpretation is enveloped by the warmth, the compassion, the understanding of human intelligence.

To fulfill the vision of the Founding Fathers, we need justices who continue to grow as long as they are on the bench. We need justices who look at the facts in the case at hand, and then seek to do justice and be fair. We do not want a justice who brings with him an ideology into which he attempts to stuff each case.

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