

Editorial And Opinion Page



AS I SEE IT

Bruce Barton

Eddie Hatcher ruminations

I like Superior Court Judge Greg Weeks' legal style. He was quoted in the local papers over the last few days as saying that it was time to get serious about handling murder and assault charges against Indian activist Eddie Hatcher. I agree. Judge Weeks was quoted as saying, "It's time to stop all this posturing and playing games. It's time to proceed with the business of serving justice in this case." Amen, brother!

It's like this. If Eddie Hatcher cannot get a fair trial in Robeson County then neither can you ... or me. Weeks said he brought Hatcher to court because he read in the newspaper last month that Hatcher was unhappy with delays in his case. Two judges have previously removed themselves from Hatcher's case and Hatcher has written a complaint to the state's chief justice about various matters that trouble him about his case.

It amuses me to see people get up in arms about Hatcher's activism in his case. He's representing himself. Someone said, maybe it was a judge, that a plaintiff who represents himself in court has a fool for a client. I can't say that about Hatcher. He is not the most popular fella in Robeson County, and lawyers aren't lining up to represent him. They ought to be. When Hatcher's case is settled, all of us, including and especially Eddie Hatcher, ought to be able to say, without fanfare, that he received the very best legal defense possible. If not, then justice will not have been served in this matter. Period. With that in mind, I can't say that he ought not represent himself. He will be vigorous in defending himself; that's for sure. He better. This is a serious life and death matter ... for Eddie Hatcher.

Judge Weeks called Hatcher into court Monday and ordered that a private telephone line be installed at the Robeson County jail for Hatcher who is facing murder and assault charges. The killing happened May 31, less than two weeks after Hatcher was involved in another shooting. Weeks lowered his bond in the shooting case to \$25,000 but refused to set bond in the murder case. Lawyer Sue Berry is helping Hatcher in the assault charge.

Judge Weeks is to be commended for being business-like in the matter, and applying the law as equitably as possible without playing so much to the audience as DA Johnson Britt likes to do.

People in the news I would like to get to know better ...

The headline read: "Lee Petty dead at 86." Winner of the very first Daytona 500, and father to Richard Petty and grandfather to Kyle Petty and great-grandfather to Adam Petty, Lee Petty was a true patriarch. All the aforementioned Pettys drive race cars. Lee Petty set the standard for them, and all the other NASCAR drivers, as I see it. I admired him immensely. I would have liked to have known him better. He died in Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro Wednesday, April 5. He was 86. I like all the Pettys and I extend sincere condolences to them upon the loss of their father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Congratulations also to Shea Ralph. I am one of her biggest fans although I have never met her. I have been following her career in the pages of the Fayetteville Observer, and later on ESPN Television, for many years. I first read about her when she was a basketball player at Terry Sanford High School. I always thought she was quite graceful and cool under pressure. Later on she won a basketball scholarship to the University of Connecticut. Her career culminated recently when the Lady Huskies won the National Championship and she was named Most Valuable Player for the tournament. Good for her! I like her because she is gracious and works hard. Those are two nice qualities to possess, and they usually are translated into success whatever one's vocation might be.

And IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE THRONE OF MERCY, PLEASE PRAY FOR ME. I am crying out to God, in the name of his Son Jesus, to aight my spiritual drift. I have lately seen a lot of fault in a lot of people. I might have a beam in my eye. I don't like it and I am praying furiously and seeking His Face.

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Letters to the Editor

Reader asks More questions about LRDA and Tribal Rolls

Dear Editor:

I haven't chimed in recently, and I guess I have been sitting on the fence post looking on with keen interest what has transpired in our tribe during the last few months. I am proud of the work the committee and Jim Lowry have done to help mend the rift that has divided our tribe for years. I understand that the coalition committee's plan is to attempt to hold a Lumbee Tribal election to choose an interim government before December 2001. However, Judge Manning has decreed that to have any kind of election that 30% of the enrolled tribal members will have to turn out to vote. You may want to know like me where are they getting 30% from and who would make up this magic percentage.

As far as I can determine the 30% comes from the Lumbee-Cheraw tribal government constitution. The great all knowing Judge Manning has declared this constitution invalid, but remains steadfast that since we stated we have to have a 30% turnout in an election, in our null constitution, we have to live with it. Have you ever heard of a gubernatorial, presidential primary, senatorial or dogcatcher election or any other type of election where the judiciary has set a magic number to reach to get anyone elected or anything done? Second, from what I understand, this magic 30% turnout will come directly from our tribal rolls. Do you realize that our rolls are so outdated that deceased individuals are shown as living, breathing, and voting tribal members on this role? This brings me to another point.

I read with shock recently that LRDA, even though it is supposedly working in good faith to form a coalition government, will begin construction on a 13,000 sq. ft. LRDA family life center on the Union Chapel road in the very near future. First, since the Lumbee people were not given an opportunity to vote or voice their opinion, I want to ask LRDA is this center going to be built on privately owned land? Also, what will happen to this center when eventually a coalition/interim government is formed? And

In conclusion, I am not out to put down anyone but when I see people with their eyes on themselves and what they can personally gain and put the cart in front of the horse and go off half-cocked and have another disputed election or build a "family life center" on private land that we're not sure who will use after we finally straighten this mess out. Why can't we use a very small part of this family life center building fund and the millions of dollars that pour into our tribe every year to hire out our own census takers to get up to date information and fix our tribal rolls? Folks, to steal a line from our great deceased President Kennedy, let ask not what our people can do for us, but let's ask what we can do for our people.

Thank you for listening.

Arvis Boughman



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Ol' Lady Justice is a whore, folk

Rantin' and Ravin'



Garry Lewis Barton

I know you've seen it before -- a not-so-pretty woman in flowing robes who is supposed to represent Ol' Lady Justice. In her hand is held lop-sided scales which are supposed to represent the scales of justice. And a rag of some kind is invariably tied around her head, covering her eyes to imply that justice is blind.

But I can't help wondering if Ol' Lady Justice has that rag covering her eyes for an entirely different reason.

I'm reminded of the O.J. Simpson trial a number of years ago when he was acquitted of the gruesome murders of his wife Nicole and her male friend, Ron Goldman. Despite the verdict, the majority of folk seem to continue to think he committed the crimes. That if he couldn't have afforded the best lawyers money could buy, he would be behind bars now awaiting his execution. Or at the very least settling into a life sentence behind bars. In fact, another jury found him responsible for the murders in a civil action brought by the family of Goldman later on. I guess he had spent so much money paying his high-priced lawyers in the first trial, he couldn't afford them in the second one.

Another travesty of justice occurring that same year involved the pop singer Michael Jackson who was accused of molesting a little boy when he was allowed to spend the night in the Wierd One's mansion. Before the authorities could throw the book, or anything else handy, at Jackson, as well they should have, he hid out in another country. Eventually, some of Ol' Lady Justice's high-priced pimps, masquerading as lawyers, worked out a deal whereby "Chester the Molester" paid millions of dollars to the little boy's parents to keep the case from going to trial.

Like with O.J., that seemed like another case of Ol' Lady Justice prostituting herself to anyone who could afford her. Some may call it justice. I call Ol' Lady Justice a call girl. A whore! A prostitute! A harlot!

The latest incident of the ol' girl selling herself to anyone who could afford her seems to be the case of six-year-old Jon-Benet Ramsey being murdered in her own home while her little brother, her mama Patsy, and her filthy-rich daddy John allegedly slept. I say allegedly because a lot of the evidence seems to suggest the mama murdered her.

Because the parents were rich and among the very elite in Boulder, Colorado, they were handled with kid gloves during the following investigation. Whereas you or I would probably have been put under the jail and interrogated vigorously, the detectives seemed to be expected to make appointments with the parents, always the prime suspects, for interviews.

A book recently published, written by a retired detective who worked on the case, said the evidence suggests that mama Patsy accidentally delivered a fatal blow to her little girl in the bathroom after becoming upset about her wetting the bed. That she hid the body in a small room in the basement that was so out of the way it could not have been found by an intruder. Upon noticing the child was still breathing, the mama panicked, according to the book, and strangled the little girl. Evidence from the autopsy also revealed that the little girl had been sexually assaulted. The book concludes that Patsy told her husband what she had done in a fit of passion and that the two conspired to cover up the crime.

I don't know who killed little Jon-Benet. Or who sexually assaulting her. But I do know that the parents seemed to receive special and preferential treatment because they are rich, which seriously impeded the investigation. No wonder no one has yet to be charged with the horrendous crime!

It seemed another case of Ol' Lady Justice prostituting herself, using high-priced pimps, masquerading as lawyers, to do her bidding.

These were just a few cases of folk apparently receiving preferential treatment because of who, or how rich, they are. They received a lot of media attention and publicity for being such high-profile cases. There's really no telling how many other cases there have been of the rich literally speaking, getting by with murder but not receiving a lot of attention and publicity because the media didn't think they were sensational or gory enough to be exploited.

Indeed, Ol' Lady Justice might be depicted with a rag tied around her eyes because she's ashamed to show her face in public. I know the scandalous hussy ought to be.

I know I'm shamed to admit I live in a country where Ol' Lady Justice is far too often a whore who can be bought by any-one rich enough to afford her. And where JUSTICE is far too often spelled "JUST - US," "us" being the rich and famous.

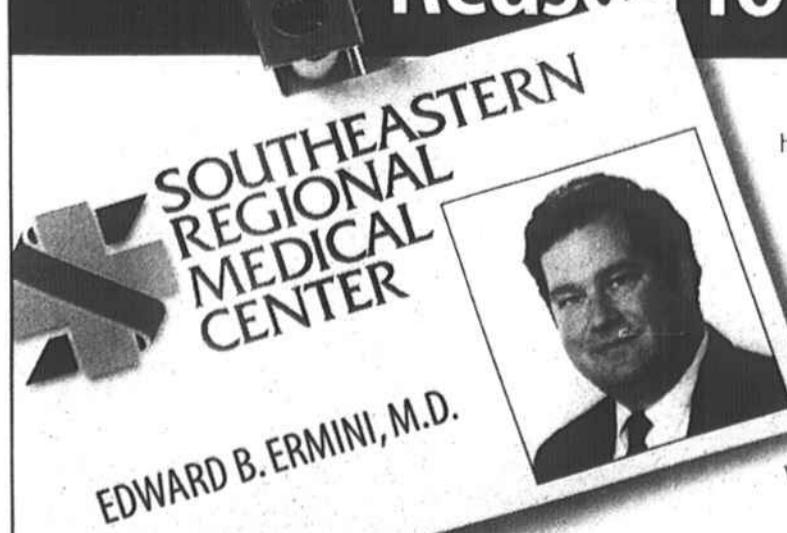
We'll talk again, folk.

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Edward B. Ermini, M.D., a board-certified otolaryngology specialist, has joined the medical staff of Southeastern Regional Medical Center.

Upon earning his medical degree from the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Dr. Ermini completed residency training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His general otolaryngology practice includes ear, nose and throat surgery, treating patients who have allergies or sinus problems, and professional voice management.

He serves both adult and pediatric patients from his private practice at 4303 Ludgate Street in Lumberton.

We can all feel good about his decision to join our community.

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