

# The Warren Record

Published Every Wednesday By  
Record Printing Company

P. O. Box 70, Warrenton, N. C. 27589

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ENTERED AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER AT THE POST OFFICE  
IN WARRENTON, NORTH CAROLINA, UNDER THE LAWS OF CONGRESS  
Second Class Postage Paid At Warrenton, N. C.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**  
In Warren and adjoining counties \$10.00 Per Year \$6.00 Six Months  
Elsewhere \$12.00 Per Year \$7.00 Six Months

## A Fortunate Decision

Warren County commissioners took a commendable step this month when they hired a Rocky Mount architectural, engineering and planning firm to provide the county with a space needs assessment which would take into consideration the possible use of several existing Warren buildings.

Warren could have an appreciable blessing in some disguise in the form of buildings which have outlived their present usefulness. Two which easily come to mind are the John Graham High School building and the Warren County Jail. With respect to the latter, commissioners are wise to seek an alternative use to the structure rather than demolishing it should a new jail be built.

The Rocky Mount firm selected by the board ap-

pears to have expertise in its field based in part on what it has done for counties similar to Warren which have an inventory of old buildings with architectural appeal and historical significance.

Among projects handled by the firm are a space needs study for Wilson County, and facility assessment programs for Hertford, Currituck and Halifax counties. The firm maintains that due to this experience and interest in older building renovation it is in an excellent position to determine the feasibility for reuse of local buildings.

We agree that this experience could be a valuable asset to Warren County. We are glad to see our Board of Commissioners opting for a long-range plan which could preserve and utilize some of our older buildings.

## The Warren County Scene



A spring-like afternoon and a favorite fishing spot afford ample opportunity for a little boy talk—an ingredient of boyhood almost as necessary as sunshine and fresh air.

(Staff Photo by Dianne T. Rodwell)

## Carolina Commentary Jay Jenkins

### Seat Belt Law Repeal Sought

A noisy minority of North Carolinians has been agitating for repeal of the mandatory seat belt law.

The argument goes that such a law curbs a Tar Heel's freedom of choice, is an intrusion on individual rights and is just another example of government sticking its nose where it doesn't belong.

If a person doesn't want to buckle up, goes another refrain, it's his or her right and his or her neck in case of an accident, and nobody else is involved. Of course, that's wrong: injuries and deaths shatter families, saddle survivors with exorbitant expenses and shove insurance rates higher.

Nor is there any doubt that seat belts are lifesavers. Casual readers of newspaper accident reports are aware of the frequency of the state trooper's comment, "None of the victims were wearing seat belts."

Foes of seat belts have ideological ancestors whose lineage is ancient in North Carolina. Their opposition to virtually every highway safety measure proposed in the General Assembly is a matter of record.

More than 35 years ago, the first motor vehicle inspection law lasted only two years before it was repealed. An inefficient state system of inspections contributed to the initial failure. Inspection's revival was a tortuous operation.

Opposition has cropped up to other safety proposals of demonstrated value: radar devices, and chemical tests, to cite a couple of examples. In some instances, this opposition arose from individual legislators' personal experiences, not from a groundswell of sentiment back home.

An example was the grounding of the State Highway Patrol's airplanes which once were used to detect speeders. The late I. C. Crawford of Asheville was the most persistent foe of the planes.

Crawford questioned the accuracy of the instruments used by the planes to clock speeders. He said the spies-in-the-sky increased highway risks, demonstrating how he craned his neck out of the window to look for them as he drove to Raleigh.

"Sir, if you were driving within the speed limit, you wouldn't have to look out the window," a patrolman once responded. But, Crawford prevailed, and the planes remain grounded.

The Safe Roads Act, adopted during the administration of Governor Jim Hunt, represented one of the major safety advances

in North Carolina. It greatly broadened the sanctions against drinking drivers, the most dangerous threats on the highways.

As of the end of February, the highway death toll for 1986 stood at 1,636, and the figure may go higher as severely injured persons die later. That figure is greater than the population of Harrisburg, of Bladenboro, of Blowing Rock.

Gail Gilmore wrote the following letter to the Raleigh News and Observer:

"My daughter's rights were taken from her when the seat belt law came into effect. She felt this was one law that could not be handled correctly and could never be enforced. She therefore would not, unless ordered to in someone else's car, wear her seat belt. She refused in her old rattle trap, and refused again in her new Escort simply because she would never need her belt and would never get caught or fined anyway. Because of this insistence not to use her belt, she has had to change her place of residence.

"She now resides on South Wilmington Street at the Montlawn Cemetery.

"Belts may be an issue of rights, but when only one person loses, it affects hundreds. It leaves them hurting badly and leaves one person who will never hurt again."

### Editor's Quote Book

For a man seldom thinks with more earnestness of anything than he does of his dinner.

Samuel Johnson

### Courthouse Squares



## Maybe Life Does Begin At 40

The 30's can be pretty awful—especially the late 30's. You are not quite old enough to be a senior citizen, and you certainly don't want to be called middle-aged. The latter description brings with it an automatic spread at a certain part of the anatomy that does not need to become more bountiful. Folk in their late 30's especially tend to counter that tendency with a flippant "I'm not overweight—I'm under-tall."

At the end of last month, I came one year closer to the "Big 40"—37. To celebrate, a friend treated me to a wonderful dinner at the Dockside Restaurant. (They've got the best prime rib in the world!)

The dinner was a part of a pact made last October when I treated him to a similar feast at the Dockside. At the end of that meal, precisely on cue, a group of waitpersons appeared at our table bearing a slice of New York-style cheesecake complete with lighted candle. My friend was serenaded with a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday." Everything was perfect!

Last Saturday night my prime rib was perfect. There was a shortage of baked potatoes, but since I had not started my diet, the waitress-substituted home fries were okay. At the end of the meal, nothing happened. (I pretended not to notice—after all, it was supposed to be my surprise, even though I was given a blow-by-blow description of what was going on behind me.)

My friend went back to the counter to inquire on the status of the birthday troubadours. He was assured that all was under control. Well, the cake came, but there was no candle. There was no chorus of "Happy Birthday" either.

What my friend did not understand (that I did not understand either until now) is that the late 30's are jinxed. We celebrated his post-40th birthday. Of course, everything went as planned. For my 37th I was blessed with snow. I was blessed with rain that fell in buckets. I was blessed with mud and mire with such adhesiveness that my good boots will never be the same. And I was blessed with a "quiet" piece of birthday cake.

Well, there are three more years between now and 40. Although I certainly don't want to rush them (after all, I was a part of that "don't-trust-'em-if-they-are-over-30 generation"), his experiences, especially at birthday times, lead me to believe that the music and life begin at 40.



Kay Horner

## Harbingers Of Spring

My friend Mildred Adams every now and then calls my attention to matters I need to know about, but sometimes overlook.

As we walked across her yard on Ridgeway Street recently, she pointed to something of significance going on in the yard of the Baptist parsonage next door. There, in the midst of a remnant of glistening snow, was a splash of purple, a sure harbinger of spring—a row of crocuses.

It was a welcomed sight.

Mind you, I have nothing against winter. I often wonder what folks in tropical climes do without that blustery season when we see the backbone of nature, the world about us stripped of all the lush plumage that the other seasons sport so well. Without winter, we might never see the true lay of the land, the way things are underneath it all.

And just when we think it's too much to bear, we see the crocus. Elated by my sighting, I headed home to Littleton. En route, I passed a house where mother and children were bringing all their energies to bear on the task of splitting and stacking wood.

They must not know about the crocus, I thought, or perhaps they're getting a jump on next year.

At home, as temperatures began to find their way into the sixties, I lost no time shucking my boots for tennis shoes, my woolen sweater for a cotton pullover. Nature was giving us a balmy prelude of the season to come. This past Sunday, I could stand it no longer and shed my tennis shoes to go barefooted.

Any doubts about the imminent arrival of spring were dispelled as I watched Teddy, the neighborhood feline, stand poised over a clump of leaves, watching eagerly for the first lizard of the season.

So carried away was I with nature's spectacle that I almost washed my car.

Then Monday night the skies grew dark and the wind whipped around the windows of our house in a frenzy befitting the coldest December.

Tuesday morning I pulled the bedroom drapes on the new morning and saw that the world outside my door had been blanketed with a dusting of snow the night before.

I could almost hear Mother Nature whisper with a chuckle, "Gotcha!"

Well, spring may not be here yet, but it's not far behind, either. On my way to work this morning I saw, peeping through a patch of snow, a yellow jonquil...

## Looking Back Into The Record

March 7, 1947

Men of Norlina were scheduled to display their manly charms on March 14 in the beauty contest sponsored by the Norlina Home Demonstration Club. Admission to the entertainment was listed as 20 cents and 35 cents.

County commissioners agreed Monday night to ask Representative John H. Kerr to use his influence in the Legislature to have a state law passed removing the sale of wine and beer from stores of towns into the county ABC stores as a result of complaints from certain Warrenton merchants who found the current retailing system objectionable.

March 9, 1962

Approximately \$148,059 is lost in annual taxes due to citizen migration, according to a report presented Monday to county commissioners by Selby Benton, president of the Bute Development Company.

Appearing on a recent broadcast of the Peggy Mann Show were Mrs. C. P. Rooker, Mrs. J. T. Rooker, Mrs. A. S. Wyckoff, Mrs. Fannie Bell Bobbitt, Mrs. R. E. Eller, Mrs. K. C. Severance, Mrs. Eleanor Hayes, Mrs. R. J. Sumrell, Mrs. F. D. Draffin and Pete Rose.

William Woodruff Taylor, III, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Taylor of Warrenton, received the prestigious Morehead Scholarship to the University of North Carolina. The scholarships are worth \$5,100 to state residents for four years of study.

March 10, 1977

A comprehensive development plan designed to serve as a guide for orderly town growth was presented to Norlina commissioners Monday night. Drafters of the plan concluded that the town should encourage the location of industrial types to offset a dependency on one industry and offer a wider spectrum of employment opportunities.

A tornado Friday afternoon destroyed a residence on the old loop road from Manson to Soul City, taking off part of the roof and twisting part of the home off its foundation. No one was injured.

