

Windsor makes a mark

By CHRIS CAIN
Staff Writer

Would you guess that one successful UNC graduate lives in the backwoods of Chatham County, raises flowers and wears his overalls everywhere — even to formal dinners at the Governor's Mansion?

Perhaps not, but Bob Windsor does just that.

Is he an aging radical? Hardly, for Windsor also owns and edits The Landmark, perhaps the most conservative and controversial newspaper in the state. His paper gained national exposure and an international circulation after Time magazine did a feature story on him in 1983, but the height of his local notoriety came in 1984, when, during the heat of the Hunt-Helms Senate race, he accused

Jim Hunt of homosexual tendencies.

Now, however, The Landmark cannot be found gracing the laundromats or mini-marts of Chapel Hill. The newspaper has lain dormant for nearly a year while Windsor recovers from a bout with colon cancer. The cancer was removed successfully, however, and before long, he said, the presses will be moving again. With a steady Southern drawl he promised, "This tiger ain't lost its teeth."

Teeth indeed — Windsor's paper gained quite a reputation for ripping into liberal politicians, "wasteful" spending, pro-choice advocates and, particularly, homosexuals: "I've been fighting the queers ever since I had a paper," Windsor said.

Now a man of strong words,

Windsor came from humble beginnings. He grew up a poor white in Winston-Salem during the widespread poverty of the Depression. "We were always awful poor," he said, "but I had a mother that loved me and good, wholesome food. The first time I really realized I was poor was when the other kids could go see 'Gone With the Wind' and I couldn't. That really had an influence on me — then I wanted to make money."

And make it he did. Through his real estate business in Chapel Hill, Windsor now makes well into a six-digit income. "I've been rich and poor many times. I like being rich better, but I felt more at home poor," he said.

Though wealthy, the very large man in blue slippers and blue overalls doesn't show it. "I used to play the game. I wore fancy clothes. . . . Now I wear clean, starched overalls," he said.

Those overalls have become his trademark over the past 15 years; he has worn them rain or shine, whether whittling on his front porch or covering the state legislature. "I'm proud that I'm a common man," he said, lighting one of the 80 or so Pall Malls he smokes per day, "an ordinary man."

In rhetoric as well as dress, Windsor is decidedly populist: "I represent the weak people, those who don't have any clout," he said. Windsor sees eastern North Carolina as the area most in need and said straightforwardly, "Those people need help. It doesn't matter whether they're black, white, or Indian — we need to spend money on them."

As for himself, Windsor has his needs taken care of comfortably. His large, self-designed, wooden house lies deep in the wilds of Chatham County at the end of a winding, unpaved road. Inside, beneath a cathedral ceiling, it is tastefully decorated and neatly kept by his wife of 36 years. Potted plants are abundantly evident, sharing space with less organic objects — a VCR, a word processor, even a copy machine.

A box full of old toys fills one corner of the living room. Windsor takes pride in fixing up old toys as well as making new ones — the pogo stick against the wall will go to a young relation. He also spends a lot of time with his flowers: "I've raised flowers all my life," he said just before he showed off evidence of another quite different pastime — a recently crafted pair of numchucks.

Books fill and spill out of bookcases. He figures he must have read 200 books over the past year, mostly concerning political thought and theory. But currently, he is reading the Talmud and parts of the Koran, surely an odd combination for a



Photo Courtesy of The News and Observer

Bob Windsor, editor of The Landmark, in his traditional dress

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fundamentalist born-again Baptist.

However, Windsor is a more complex and contradictory character than he seems to be at first. For the most part, he attends the all-white Lister Baptist Church, but "I go to the black church across the river some. They're fundamentalist and so am I," he said.

He counts Jerry Falwell among his friends, yet criticizes some fundamentalist preachers. "They don't want their children to question; questioning is a good thing. Don't deprive yourself of thought," Windsor warned.

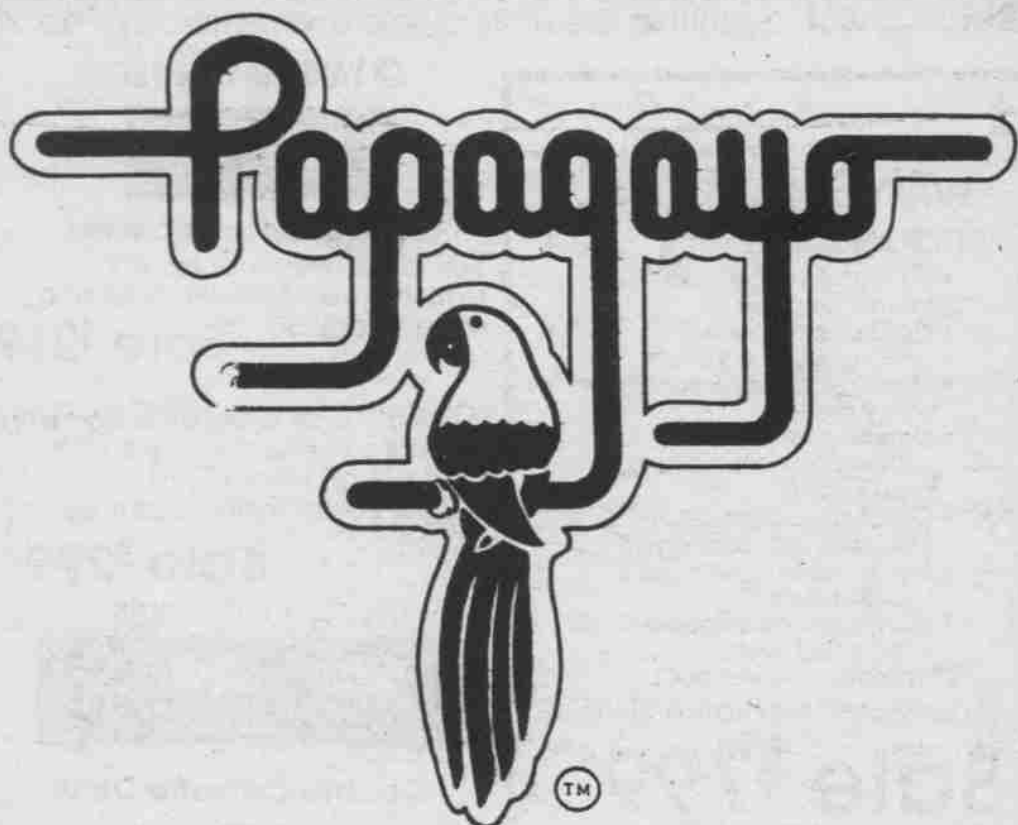
He recalls fondly his own days of questioning as a student at UNC during the Korean War. "I remember sitting around with a bunch of boys at Lenior Hall, drinking coffee and

asking 'How long is infinity? What is God?'"

Windsor graduated in 1954 with a degree in history and political science and then went on to UNC School of Law. In his days at UNC, he was president of the Young Democrats Club while Charles Kuralt was writing for the Daily Tar Heel. Though most of his views run completely counter to Kuralt's, Windsor said that he has always liked the man. "All us fat people are jolly," he said with a low burst of laughter.

Windsor says he also gets along well with Chancellor Christopher Fordham and likes the look of the new UNC president, C.D. Spangler. Regardless of UNC's liberal reputation, its anti-apartheid rallies, its CGLA, Windsor said that he loves the college. "It's a place where you can go and think," he said. He has been an admirer of former UNC-system President William Friday for years. "I'd always sort of idealized him until the last couple of years. Bill Friday sort of caved in to the power," he said.

Bob Windsor may be steadfast in his controversial views, but he is not beyond concession: "Who says I'm always right?" he said and then paused for a moment. "Just let everyone have their say, then decide for yourself."



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