

The Chapel Hill Weekly

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The Quality of the Legislature

Editorial comment in newspapers throughout the State has been almost unanimously critical of the recent General Assembly, writes Lynn Nesbit in his syndicated column of political comment. "A majority of the editors charge the legislators with wasting time, failing to comply with the Constitution on reapportionment, failing to reform the election laws and the justice-of-the-peace courts, and generally accomplishing very little."

Mr. Nisbet adds that this appraisal is not endorsed by individual citizens with whom he has talked. I notice, however, that the expressions he quotes from these persons relate to legislation affecting their own personal interest or the interest of their sections, not to that affecting the welfare of the State as a whole. For example, Marvin Blount, one of the spokesmen for the eastern tobacco-growing counties in opposing the tobacco tax, is quoted as saying that when the tobacco tax was killed the people down his way "stopped talking about the Legislature." And the chief criticism by citizens from the West interviewed by Mr. Nisbet is that the Legislature did not provide reapportionment that would give these counties better representation.

I think the prevailing editorial opinion is right.

The Legislature was guilty of two disgraceful failures: to enact a reapportionment law in compliance with the Constitutional mandate and to reform the rotten justice-of-the-peace system.

Worst of all, it defaulted on its obligation to make appropriations sufficient to maintain educational and other public services at a decent level.

Attentive observers of politics in North Carolina have long been aware that the membership of the Legislature is far from representing the State's best intelligence and best conscience. When I say membership I am talking of the average. Of course there are some members notable for their superior ability and for their devoted public spirit, but they are a small minority. The large majority are elected not because of any high regard that their abilities and public services have won for them but because they want to be in the Legislature for the sake of the publicity and the prestige they will get from membership. In many a county and senatorial district, perhaps in most of them, the nomination goes begging. Practically anybody without a police record who wants it enough to ask for it can have it.

All of which adds up to the fact that the people back home are responsible for the low quality of the Legislature. The plain truth is that they simply don't give a damn. Until they really care something about it—and I am enough of a pessimist not to expect that to be any time soon—they will continue to be represented in Raleigh by persons, who in ability and in concern for the general welfare, are far below the best of our citizenship.—L.G.

A Few Words about Old Jokes

This is about old jokes, and in the category of jokes are included here stories and anecdotes of a joke nature.

Sometimes you hear or read something derisive of old jokes. I wonder if people who make fun of old jokes are aware of the fact that in so doing they are themselves pulling off an old joke. I have no doubt jokes were being told, and many were becoming old, back in prehistoric times when the people lived in caves and went about with matted hair and a hide around the middle and a club in hand. And I can imagine one caveman's glaring at

another who has come in to call, gripping his club in a meaningful way, and growling: "You've told me that one two or three times already! Get out of here!"

One good thing about an old joke may be that it is very, very old and has been in what Grover Cleveland called a state of innocuous desuetude so long that nobody among the listeners has ever heard it before. If you are given to telling old jokes, as nearly every aging person like me is, you are lucky to have in your store some of these real antiques.

Sometimes when I am listening to a comedian on the radio I hear him tell a joke which I heard at least as long ago as 1895 when I was twelve, and which was probably old when Socrates was hanging around the marketplace in Athens, and then I hear the comedian's studio audience give voice to shouts of laughter. There may be a few persons in the audience to whom the joke is familiar and who are happy to greet it as an old friend, but to most of the audience it is evidently new.

There are some old jokes that people like to hear over and over again because of the flavor imparted them by the tellers, just as a man may enjoy hearing again and again a great actor's recital of an immortal passage from Sophocles or Shakespeare. For example, there was the famous story that the late Irvin Cobb used to tell about the wife who was a front row spectator at the hanging of her husband. Besides the offense for which he was being punished he had committed many against her and she was pleased to see him get his deserts. Now, from the scaffold, he implored her forgiveness. He wasn't brief about it—he kept on and on. When his speech became so tiresome that she couldn't stand it any longer she cried out: "Git hung! Git hung!"

Of course this doesn't sound very funny as I have here condensed it, but Cobb's embroideries—his description of the condemned man, the sheriff and his assistants, and the assembled company—made it a masterpiece. Cobb told it in innumerable platform appearances and it became famous. So famous, and so beloved, that whenever he finished a talk which did not include the story his audience forced him to tell it by staying seated and shouting: "Tell Git Hung! Tell Git Hung!"

The person who has to be the chief victim of a teller of old jokes is his wife. She has to listen to the same ones over and over again. It is an ordeal that would justify murder and it is remarkable that so many wives not only do not wield a hatchet or a carving knife on the spouse but actually stay in the room while his recitals go on.

Everybody has his favorite old joke. He may have one favorite at one time and another at another time, depending on his mood and his memory. At the moment mine is from the great outdoors. It is about a cowboy in the West who, having had horses for company all his life and having never known anything of women, fell in love with a pretty schoolteacher from the East, proposed to her, and was accepted. After the marriage they set out on horseback for the nearest railway station to start on their honeymoon. The course led through rough country. When they were going along a narrow pass over a mountain something startled the bride's horse. It leapt suddenly to one side, and she fell off and broke her leg.

The cowboy, relating the incident later to one of his friends said: "It was just terrible. 'Way out there, miles from nowhere, and she screaming with pain. I been in a fix with a broken-legged horse many a time but never figured I'd be in one with a broken-legged woman."

"What did you do?" asked his friend.

The cowboy shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands in a gesture denoting helplessness, and replied: "Well, what could I do? I shot her."—L.G.

Two Editorials from the Monitor

The Christian Science Monitor reprints this editorial that it published after the U. S. Supreme Court issued its decision on segregation a year ago:

"Chief Justice Warren, speaking for a unanimous court, poses and answers the most momentous question to come before the nation's highest tribunal in a century.

"The justices have proved themselves aware of the worldwide challenge that the leader of the democracies make an unequivocal declaration consistent with its own principles—aware, likewise, of the strains precipitate enforcement would impose upon the sentiments of many of its people and upon the structure of a segment of its society.

"They have made that unequivocal declaration. But they have also opened the door to every affected state to join in

The Fisherman from Omaha, Texas

Boulder Dam on West Franklin Street: Obie Davis, after

16 Years of Service as Alderman, Embarks on Fifth Term

(Fourth in a series of articles on town officials.)

By J. A. C. Dunn

Talking to Obie Davis is not unlike passing the time of day with a moving steam roller.

Mr. Davis, a large man built like Boulder Dam with a ruddy face and a crew cut, has been a member of the Board of Aldermen for 16 years, and was recently re-elected for another four-year term.

A long-time Chapel Hill resident recently said of him, "He doesn't have to campaign for office—he gets votes without trying."

Aside from his work as an alderman, chairman of the board's street committee, and mayor pro tempore of Chapel Hill (to which post he was elected by his fellow board members last month), he spends his time at his Esso station on West Franklin street, where he's been in business some 23 years. He is also a member of the local Masonic Lodge and a former director of the Kiwanis Club, in which he is active.

We coaxed our Ford into Mr. Davis's service station the other day intent on worming the less personal aspects of his life out of him, and found it rather hard going. The first question we asked him was whether he had graduated from the University.

"31," he said laconically.

"And when had he come to Chapel Hill?"

"Come in 1927."

"And didn't he originate in Texas?"

"Born and raised in Omaha, Texas," said Mr. Davis proudly, "near Dallas."

We observed apologetically that we weren't sure where Dallas was.

"Why, Dallas is the biggest town in Texas," he said, and added darkly, "except for Houston."

This wasn't saying where Dallas was, but we let it pass. At this point Mr. Davis darted



—Photo by Lavergne
OBIE DAVIS

across the parking space to serve a customer, and when he came back we managed to get him to admit that he had played football in his freshman year but had hurt his knee and couldn't play any more, and that he had been on the boxing and baseball teams for three years. He then vanished around a corner to check on a wayward tire or something. When he reappeared we took a different tack, and said we had heard tell he was a fisherman.

"Yup," said Mr. Davis, and Boulder Dam unloosed.

"I go fishing down at Currituck below Elizabeth City," he said, and went on to explain that he was both a plug and a fly fisherman, that in North Carolina you catch mostly bigmouth bass unless you go to the western part of the state where the water is colder, and that he had recently caught an 11 1/2-pound bass out at University Lake. He strode briskly into a small rear office and waved at three gigantic stuffed fish on the wall.

"Trophies," he said, telling us everything in one word. "That's a

three-pound bream there," he said. "A record." He pointed at what looked like a young killer whale mounted on a pine board with a brass plaque under it.

We asked what the other two fish were (they might well have been two reincarnations of Moby Dick). "Bigmouth bass," he said. They seemed to be mostly mouth. "I used to have deerheads on the wall," he added, and we asked if he was also a hunter. Mr. Davis explained that he was, mostly deer, and that he usually hunted at Fort Bragg, in the North Carolina mountains, and South Carolina.

He led us back to the outer office and pointed to another trophy—an award from the Esso company for having been an Esso dealer continuously for 20 years.

"Had some experiences in the Navy," said Mr. Davis, looking anxiously out the door at a Plymouth waiting by the gas pumps. We asked what he did in the Navy.

"I came out a lieutenant commander. I was in the Pacific for 22 months on LCT's carrying ammunition to the beaches. Right when it was hot. About six months in there when I didn't know when I was going to sleep. Got so I could sleep leaning up against the bulkhead. We used to load up with food—gas—oil—ammunition—make a run to the beach, unload, go back to the nearest base, and as soon as we got back there we'd load up again and pull right out. It took about one day to make a run. Never lost a ship, but we got strafed. Used to fish off the stern of the LCT when I could; just slow the ship down and troll. Man, there's some fish down there in the Coral Sea never seen a lure—king mackerel, Spanish mackerel. I'd sure like to go down there and fish."

We left Mr. Davis chewing on a cigar and presumably dreaming of the uncaught barracuda in the Pacific.

"Yeh, I'm crazy. But I ain't stupid."

I'd like to win that Father of the Year honor. Not that I think I'm such a good father. I just want to go fishing.

During the Shrine ceremonial in Raleigh last week, several motorized equipment dealers were discussing how they had to give service after sales. "A piece of machinery, an appliance, or an automobile is no better than the service you can get on it," declared Paul Penny of Elizabeth City.

"Right," spoke up Donald Bell of Goldsboro. "But I'd like to be in the funeral business like Bill Seymour over there. After he makes a sale he never has any complaints and he doesn't have to give any service."

Bartletts on Visit

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bartlett, Jr., and their two-year-old daughter Kathy have been here several days visiting Mr. Bartlett's mother and helping her pack in preparation to moving to Florida.

I Like Chapel Hill

By Billy Arthur

Either the management of the Glen Lenox Colonial store has a grand sense of humor or one department head knoweth not what the other doeth.

When CS was going all out for cook out, one end of the meat counter had a sign, "Let's have a fish fry." In the middle was another reading, "Let's have a picnic." And at the vegetable display at the end was a third, reading, "Why Cook? Let's have a lettuce and tomato sandwich."

Another of the reasons I like Chapel Hill was the last paragraph in the recent fire story:

"The store will be closed for several weeks. Yesterday morning Huggins Hardware's secretary, Mrs. Barbara Beatty, had set up a table in front of the store and was handling accounts."

In other words, Vic has shut up everything except his accounts receivable.

Dr. I. M. Levitt, director of

the Fels Planetarium in Philadelphia, contributed a good story at the dinner held recently for the planetarium managers of the United States. It concerned the man whose automobile tire blew out in front of a mental hospital.

When he finished switching wheels, he could find only three of the six lugs. As he searched around the car for them, he began wondering aloud what he was going to do, how he was going to proceed on his journey.

"How many lugs you got?" asked a voice from a window in the hospital.

"Three."

"Well, screw on one, skip a hole, put another at the third place, skip the fourth, and put one at the fifth. Then, that'll hold you till you can get to a garage."

The motorist followed the advice, and it worked. "Thanks," he said, looking up at the man in the barred window. "But isn't this an insane asylum? Aren't you crazy?"

charting an orderly transition from the old to the new.

"Neither morality nor expediency could ask for more.

"At best, however, the nation faces a task far greater than citizens remote from the mass of the problem can readily imagine. It will take tolerance and patience in the South, the North, and the West alike. Seventeen of the states and 40 per cent of the country's public-school pupils are involved. If there is need for many in the South to realize the world has changed incredibly, there is equal need for many others to grasp that much of the South is itself quite a different world from that which they see out of their windows.

"They must comprehend that the constitutional objections which Southerners such as Senator Richard B. Russell raise to the decision arise no longer from any rejection of the concept of equal opportunity. They stem from a deep-rooted conviction that the heart of a federal system is a presumption that its component states be allowed to work out for themselves the problems they believe local in nature.

"And all Americans could well remind themselves that the affirmation of a great right carries with it no automatic invalidation of other rights. If it be in harmony with the Constitution that a minority shall not be set apart by law in public education, it is also in harmony with that instrument that wherever possible in human affairs association be voluntary. There is a right not to be forced together as well as a right

not to be forced into exclusion."

Now, a year later, the Monitor publishes an editorial in which it says:

"When seven years ago the Supreme Court ruled restrictive covenants on real estate sales unconstitutional it did not declare that Negroes, forthwith, must buy homes in white neighborhoods or vice versa. It simply said that such covenants cannot be enforced by the courts.

"The high tribunal has ruled that legislation which forces whites and Negroes to attend separate schools imposes a situation which is 'inherently unequal,' equal facilities notwithstanding, because one race is arbitrarily set apart—that it is thus deprived of 'the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the fourteenth amendment.' But the court does not say that the races may not attend separate schools by choice or by voluntary agreements.

"To be sure, should members of either race elect to violate such voluntary arrangements the law would be on their side. But how often and on how large a scale would that occur where the mores of the community run strongly against mingling?

"Once this is seen—that law may no longer compel separation but neither is separation, per se, illegal—large areas for voluntary accommodation between the races are opened up. We would not predict in what forms such accommodation may be worked out. But we believe we can foresee that in several states of the Deep South this is the direction in which gradual solutions will be sought and found."

On the Town

By Chuck Hauser

THE HIGHWAY PATROL HASN'T gone into Bermuda shorts yet, hot weather or no hot weather, but it has given in to summer styles insofar as headgear is concerned. The gentleman on the right is wearing the Highway Patrol's summer-issue straw hat, which officially became part of the uniform a couple of weeks ago. Our model is Edward Robinson, patrolman stationed in Chapel Hill. I snapped his picture standing in the front door of the new courthouse in Hillsboro last week. What does Mr. Robinson think of the new straw hat as opposed to the old sun helmet which used to be part of the summer uniform? "Well," he said, "it's a lot lighter . . . and a lot more comfortable on hot days." He might have added that it's a pretty sharp looking topper, too.

I RECEIVED THE ANNOUNCEMENT of Gordon Gray's going to Washington as Assistant Secretary of Defense with mixed emotions: (1) I hate for the University to lose his services; (2) I am glad to see Mr. Gray take over a key position in a government which badly needs persons of his caliber; (3) I am fearful that the prestige and honor which now attach to the Gray name will be smudged by association with an administration which seems to be galloping off in all directions at once.

I hope Mr. Gray's "leave of absence" will be no more than that; I am afraid it will become permanent. In an editorial Saturday morning, the Raleigh News and Observer contributed to general misunderstanding of his position by observing as follows:

"Gordon Gray should not go to Washington and do a half job for defense. He should not do a part, absentee job on higher education in North Carolina. For the sake of the quality of his own work, the measure of his own service, he should make up his mind to do one job well—and let some other able man do the other job well."

The News and Observer missed the boat. The editorial seems to ignore the fact that Mr. Gray did not request a leave of absence; he tendered his resignation. It was the decision of the trustees to refuse to accept the resignation and to impose a forced "leave" on Mr. Gray. He is going to Washington not to do a "half" job on anything, but to serve his government to the fullest extent of which he is capable.

They came from Oklaohma, in the summer after several where Mr. Bartlett has been weeks' with the Schaefers.

working for the Superior Oil Company. After leaving here they will move to Denver, Colorado, where Mr. Bartlett will join the staff of the Gulf Oil Company as a geologist trainee.

They plan to go to Asheboro this week for a visit with Mrs. Bartlett's parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Schaefer. After a few days there Mr. Bartlett will proceed to Denver. Mrs. Bartlett and Kathy will join him there later.

Allied Arts News
 Allied Arts of Durham has listed two events of interest to persons in Chapel Hill during the month of June: On June 15 at 8:15 p.m., in Page auditorium at this week for a visit with Mrs. Bartlett's parents, Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Schaefer. After a few days there Mr. Bartlett will proceed to Denver. Mrs. Bartlett and Kathy will join him there later.

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