

Opinion

ONE-ON-ONE

Losing
Diane Rehm...

Diane Rehm's scheduled visit to Elon University on April 6 is reminding fans of her public radio program how much they miss her since her retirement at the beginning of this year.

For 37 years her morning talk show made her one of America's most influential people. Her program attracted smart and articulate guests from diverse points of view. Her respectful, sometimes halting questions, prompted conversation that challenged her listeners to reassess their positions on important issues.

When she faced a personal health battle

"...the feelings of guilt are overwhelming."

D.G. MARTIN



with a rare neurological disorder, spasmodic dysphonia, some-

thing that affected her voice and threatened her career, she prevailed and made her unique voice a signature asset and an inspiration for others.

In her recent book, "On My Own," Rehm deals with other challenges she has faced, including the long, gradual decline and eventual death of her husband, John.

Dealing with his death and her pending retirement, she wrote, "I began to wonder about my own transitions, not only from married woman to widow but also from national radio talk-show host to ... who knows what?"

Rehm's poignant story of her husband's gradual dying process touches readers' heartstrings and, at the same time, shouts out an important and controversial public policy challenge.

Her book begins, "On June 14, 2014, my husband, John Rehm - age 83 - began his withdrawal from life. The aides at Brighton Gardens were instructed to stop bringing medications, menus, or water."

Later in the book she describes how John's illness, Parkinson's, gradually took away his ability to care for himself, even with Diane's help. She describes the pain both felt when it came time for him to move from their apartment into an extended care facility. She writes, "One of the first feelings that strikes me is Guilt, with a capital G. I've wrestled with my conscience and the conviction that I should have taken care of John myself during his final year and a half. But that would have meant giving up my career, and I wasn't ready to do that. And John wouldn't have wanted me to do that."

But, she continues, "There are moments when the feelings of guilt are overwhelming."

Knowing that Diane Rehm has gone through the same sad experience will bring comfort to many readers.

As John's condition deteriorated and he could do nothing for himself, he wanted to die and sought a way to end his life. He told his physician "that because Parkinson's disease had so affected him that he no longer had the use of his hands, arms, or legs, because he could no longer stand, walk, eat, bathe, or in any way care for himself on his own, he was now ready to die."

But when he asked his doctor to help with drugs that would simply "put him to sleep," his doctor told him that state law in Maryland would not allow it. John was angry. His doctor explained that he could bring about his own death within a couple of weeks by stopping eating and drinking.

John followed that pathway, and death came, just not at a time when Diane and their children were with him.

Diane is still angry. She writes, "I rage at a system that would not allow John to be helped toward his own death."

Not all of her fans will agree with her controversial advocacy for laws permitting medically assisted suicide. But all of them will be grateful for her moving description of the loss of her husband and how it put her "On My Own."

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832



FARM WIFE LIFE

Why is it all my fault...

As of Wednesday of this week, I will officially be the mother of two teenage boys.

This fact alone should provide enough fodder for columns until I retire.

I also now have the perfect excuse for everything not working well in my life lately.

Late for work? Well, I do have two teenagers. Messy house? I have two teenage boys. No column this week? Teenagers.

Late bills, pounds gained, dirty laundry, no groceries, cat litter not changed, dishes piled up, meetings missed - it all comes down to teenagers.

I'm sure they won't mind being my scapegoat. After all, they blame me for everything not quite right in their lives.

Take socks, for instance.

In our home, there are at least 34 lone socks piled up in a wicker laundry basket, waiting for their partner to suddenly appear and give them purpose once again.

I have found single socks jammed down into couch cushions, behind shelves, under furniture and even on top of the refrigerator.

"...it is my fault we have no paired socks."

- DEBORAH GRIFFIN



But yet, it is my fault we have no paired socks when running late on Monday mornings.

A word to mothers of young children: don't buy variety sock packs when your sons are older.

I say sons, because girls seem to be more organized about their clothes than boys.

It also helps that currently there is a dubious, female trend of wearing mismatched knee socks - on purpose - at least in middle school.

I bet that was started by a mother of teen boys.

Crusty clothes wadded up in the far reaches of the bedroom that are not magically cleaned, folded and put away when the week begins, is again, my fault. For the record, I do wash clothes that make it happenstance into the laundry baskets.

A lost phone charger cord and it is my fault their phones are not charged. (Don't judge me for hiding my own phone cord.)

Speaking of phones - the most convenient thing in our modern day lives - cell phones are the reason this age group is missing out on things that shaped generations before them.

I find it interesting that children today will never know what a jukebox is or what a pinball machine is.

They will never have to search for a pay phone, or know the excitement of a drive-in movie theater. Arcades are now obsolete.

They experience all these things - music, games and movies - at their fingertips with the magic wand of cellular service.

That is, unless all their data is gone.

And, I suppose, that also is somehow, my fault.

If only individual socks could be exchanged for cellular data - we would have unlimited access.

Deborah Griffin is Staff Writer at the Bertie Ledger-Advance. She can be reached at dgriffin@ncweeklies.com.

SOMEWHERE OUT IN LEFT FIELD

Interesting N.C. Governor facts...

The Governor of North Carolina has been in the forefront of a number of political fights over the past five years.

For many years, our state's governor was the only one who didn't have the power of veto, which made him one of the country's weakest chief executives. I believe it hurt the stature of our governors, which led to their not having the same national prominence as some of our neighbors - particularly Virginia.

For the four years of the McCrory administration, North Carolina was involved in a variety of political battles that helped bring attention to the state - and much of it was unwanted.

The people of North Carolina narrowly chose Democrat Roy Cooper to take the executive mansion setting up all kinds of legal and legislative battles.

One of the most unique parts of the Cooper administration is that he was sworn in at the earliest possible moment, just after midnight, which while allowed by law, has happened rarely.

He was supposed to have a public inaugural, but snow prevented much of that from happening. It makes his inauguration one of the most unique in North Carolina history.

As part of the plans for the in-

"He was suppose to have a public inaugural."

THADD WHITE



augural, the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources sent an email that I tucked away to share with you once I had a moment to put in in this space.

It provides what they call the top 10 facts about the governor's inauguration. I found them interesting and thought you may too.

Here are the top ten facts about N.C.'s gubernatorial inaugural:

1. First large-scale ceremony that was also snowed out: Zebulon Vance, 1877.
2. Last inauguration to wear top hats: James E. Holshouser, Jr., 1973.
3. Inauguration with only a \$600 budget: J. C. B. Ehringhaus, 1933.
4. First chief executive inaugurated in the 21st century, and the first born after World War II: Mike Easley, 2001.
5. Governor who spent much of his 22-month term in office confined to bed: William B. Umstead, 1953.
6. First governor to reach the office by way of a statewide par-

ty primary: Thomas W. Bickett, 1917.

7. First governor elected by popular vote: Edward Dudley, 1836.

8. First N.C. governor: Richard Caswell, 1776.

9. First governor elected to four-year consecutive terms: Jim Hunt, 1976 and 1980.

10. First governor who slept in the Executive Mansion, and died there one night in his sleep: Daniel G. Fowle, 1889.

For those interested in knowing more about the governors of North Carolina, the N.C. Museum of History has come to the rescue. The museum currently offers a free exhibit called Discover Your Governors through Aug. 6 that introduces children (and other museum visitors) to the office of North Carolina's top elected official, past and present. Kid-friendly graphics, hands-on interactives, artifacts and photographs will help young people learn about the role of governor and explore more than 200 years of gubernatorial history.

Thadd White is Editor of the Bertie Ledger-Advance. His favorite N.C. Governor is James B. Hunt Jr., whom he once wrote in for President of the United States. He can be reached via email at twhite@ncweeklies.com.

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