

Opinion

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

Billy Graham and N.C. eateries...

Billy Graham loved Bridges barbecue in Shelby, his family's friend Sally Pereira told Charlotte Observer reporter Bruce Henderson for an article about Graham's private life and common touch.

Other North Carolinians sing the praises of Bridges, too. Famed novelist Ron Rash, when asked about his favorite place to eat, answered emphatically, "Bridges Barbecue in Shelby."



D.G. MARTIN
Today In
North Carolina

Good, but there is a problem, as any barbecue lover can explain. There are two Bridges barbecues in Shelby. They are both mighty good and both have their ardent fans.

These two Bridges barbecues belong on everyone's bucket list of North Carolina's iconic eateries, the ones we should be sure to visit before we die.

Coincidentally, I am working on such a list for a chapter in a new Roadside Eateries book.

Here are some of my candidates for inclusion in any list of North Carolina's iconic eateries.

*The group of seafood restaurants in Calabash: Together an icon for fresh seafood.

*Sanitary Fish Market, Morehead City: Open since 1938 and now seats up to 500 people.

*Bum's and Skylight Inn barbecues, Ayden: Two restaurants in the same small town that have attracted worldwide attention and praise.

*Meadow, Benson: Bountiful buffet. Sad news, though. Long-time owner Julia Raynor died on Feb. 10.

*Wilber's Barbecue, Goldsboro: Wilber Shirley is still the king of eastern N.C. barbecue.

*B's Barbecue, Greenville: As described in Our State Magazine, "No phone, no frills, and no equal."

*Cypress Grill, Jamesville: Down by the river, but open only during the season from January through April.

*King's BBQ, Kinston: Offering world famous chicken and barbecue since 1936.

*Ralph's BBQ, Roanoke Rapids: Much more than barbecue with a wonderful buffet.

*Sunnyside Oyster Bar, Williamston: Has been in operation since 1935 and is a mainstay in Martin County.

*Parker's Barbecue, Wilson: Feeding the families of eastern North Carolina and beyond for over 40 years.

*Mama Dip's Kitchen, Chapel Hill: Southern cooking at its best.

*Merritt's Grill, Chapel Hill: Mouth-watering bacon and tomato sandwiches.

*Keaton's Barbecue, Cool Springs: Unique barbecued-fried chicken.

*Bullock's Bar-B-Que, Durham: A fixture serving a diverse clientele since 1952.

*Lexington Barbecue #1, Lexington: Called "Honeymonks" by insiders, a holy site for Piedmont style barbecue.

*Big Ed's, Raleigh downtown: Gathering place for powerful legislators and hard-working taxpayers.

*Short Sugar's Pitt Bar-B-Que, Reidsville: Boasts about being voted Best Bar-B-Q in the nation by members of the United States Congress.

*Red and Alston Bridges barbecues, Shelby: Both great. But note that WSOC-TV reports that Billy Graham's favorite was really Red Bridges Barbecue Lodge.

*Johnson's Drive-In, Siler City: Claxton's legendary hamburgers are a crowd-drawer at lunchtime.

*Stephenson's Bar-B-Que, Willow Springs: Since 1958, when the late Paul Stephenson switched from growing hogs to cooking them.

I would like to hear from you, too. Share your thoughts about the list by writing me at nceateries@yahoo.com

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Sundays at 11 a.m. and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.



The trial birthday cake disaster...

In six short weeks, my youngest child, Cheyenne Grace, will be turning 7 years old.

Cheyenne Grace takes birthdays seriously, especially the birthday cake. So I decided we should start planning now.

She has been planning this year's birthday celebration since the day after her birthday last year. The one thing she has made clear is she wants a unicorn cake.

I decided last Friday to call the local and popular bakery to put in an order for her birthday. I quickly began to panic when I was told she was completely booked for April 14.

After I had a mini-tantrum sitting in the carpool line at her school, I decided I would look into what options I did have.

One option I did have would be to attempt to make the cake on my own from scratch.

I had done it in the past and had survived it.

I made her a three-tiered Minnie Mouse cake for her third birthday. I stayed up all night baking, making icing and praying the cake came out edible. It didn't come out as a complete disaster other than the fondant-icing ear drooped overnight due to the humidity.

I researched recipes for cake batter and homemade butter cream icing.

I decided I would try to make a trial cake over the weekend. It wouldn't be the actual cake. I wanted to see if I could make a decent homemade cake.

I went to Walmart with a list in hand and purchased all of the needed ingredients, including neon food coloring and several bottles of bright-colored sprinkles.

Later that evening, I decided I would hope for the best and attempt to bake a cake.

I mixed the ingredients precisely, separated the batter into two bowls and added food coloring to each.

After the batter was in the pans, I placed the pans in the oven and decided to move on to the icing.

I was about 10 minutes into mixing the icing when the oven began to smoke.

The cakes has run over the pans and spilled out into the bottom of the oven.

I just stood there, wondering what I had done.

As I scraped burnt cake batter from the oven, I decided I would try it again.

After I cleaned the mess up, I mixed more batter and tried again.

The same thing happened, except I caught it early and decided to scoop some of the batter out

of the pan.

The finished product was the ugliest cake I had ever seen. Half of the cake was flat as a pancake.

I divided the icing into two bowls and decided to make some orange and some green. As I stirred in the food coloring, I noticed the icing was not thick enough to hold its position.

I decided I was going to ice this cake and enjoy it, whether it was ugly or not.

When Cheyenne Grace saw the cake, her smile lit up the room. She was excited and squealed, "It was the most beautiful cake."

Gabriel walked through the kitchen and just stared at it. After a few moments he walked over to me, patted me on the back and said, "You tried mama."

Later on that evening, we sat down, cut the ugly cake and enjoyed some of it. Cheyenne Grace even ate two pieces.

The lesson I learned was two-fold: first, there is no need to cry over a cake disaster, and second, I may need to find someone to make her birthday cake to preserve my sanity.

"A party without a cake is just a meeting." - Julia Child

Leslie Beachboard is a Staff Writer for Bertie Ledger-Advance and the Martin County Enterprise & Weekly Herald. She can be reached via email at lbeachboard@ncweeklies.com.



LESLIE BEACHBOARD
Small Town
Girl

Time for spring sports...

Although the calendar still says we are in wintertime, this week marks the start of spring sports in Bertie and Martin counties.

On any given day, there could be as many as 16-24 events going on combined between the county's high schools and middle schools.

I would like to publicize your team's sports results in our newspaper each week.

But to do that, I need your help.

If you have not done so, I need updated schedules and numerical rosters with first and last names. Please inform me of any changes to schedules or rosters.

There are several ways for coaches to get me the information - by telephone, by email, by fax, or by a program such as MaxPreps, Game Changer or NC Prep Track/NC Milesplit.

Because of the volume of events each week, and limited space available, these results should be sent to me or posted on the appropriate aforementioned websites as soon as possible after they have concluded.

I check my email and these sites multiple times daily.

Here are a few tips about information I am looking for.

• Baseball and softball: You may post your information to

MaxPreps and/or Game Changer or another program. If necessary, send the appropriate information link to my email address. MaxPreps does not have an area for a scoring summary, so you may have to include it separately.

Pitching and batting stats should be accurate - meaning, pitchers should be listed in order of starter, then relievers, who earned the win, who pinch-hit for whom, etc.

If Game Changer is your method, please send your login information to my email address so I may access the information. You are also welcome to send game information to my email address, either by writing it out longhand or taking a picture of each side of your scorebook and emailing the sheets to me.

Please use the largest saved settings on your camera so that may print out those sheets. Be sure to include the date of the event and the opponent.

• Track: Track results can be sent to my email address. I can also be notified by you when they are on NC Milesplit.com or NC Prep Track.com.

• Tennis: Full game reports, which include singles and doubles results, can be emailed, or faxed. Please include first and last names of all players.

• Golf: Match results can be sent to my email or faxed in.

The same tips apply for those

coaches who want to publicize their middle school teams.

The best tip I always provide coaches is to get me that day's information by the next day if at all possible. Space runs out quickly, and I would like to include as many teams as possible each week in the newspaper.

You should send game results regardless of whether you see me with a camera at your event or not, unless we have made other arrangements (when I can, I take pictures of the scorebooks when I am at the event for the duration). Many days I am photographing more than one event in different locations.

Please do not wait long to post/send results. I photograph several events per week and try to rotate that coverage as best I can. Having results sent in consistently - not just when you're winning - will help me plan future coverage.

Rarely will I be able to publish results turned in more than a couple of days late.

The goal is to have as many teams in the newspaper each week. Organization and diligence are important.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me (252-794-3185 or 252-792-1181) or email me at jgreen@ncweeklies.com.

Jim Green is Sports Editor of the Bertie Ledger-Advance. He can be reached at jgreen@ncweeklies.com.

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