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KATHARINE BOYD EDITOR
VALERIE NICHOLSON ASST. EDITOR
DAN S. RAY GENERAL MANAGER
BERT PREMO ADVERTISING
CHARLES MACAULEY CITY EDITOR
MARY BAXTER SOCIETY EDITOR

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TOWN MEETIN'

Southern Pines people have not got the town meeting habit. Here is a case where the yankees are one up on us. We read of town meetings in New England attended by almost every citizen in town. At these gatherings important matters affecting the town's welfare are discussed and when elections are due, the candidates file in advance and appear at the meeting before election day to answer any questions. The result is that those chosen can feel an added responsibility as well as satisfaction in knowing that their election represents the thoughtful will of the majority. This is not quite the case in Southern Pines, and it is a great pity. Our town meetings are as a rule miserably attended with a mere handful of the voters present. With 472 voters registered, only 80 votes were cast last election.

The proceeding is usually the same: the appointment of a chairman, the presentation of a slate by one of the inner ring, and a speedy election. There is no opportunity to know anything at all about the views of the candidates.

In a small town where we all know each other well, perhaps this is not so unfortunate as it might seem. Under this system Southern Pines has been, by and large, well governed by men who take their duties extremely seriously, but the system is not conducive to giving the citizen the close contact with his governing board that is the aim of a democracy, and that makes for the happiest, best results. Our people do not feel very close to our board and have correspondingly little sense of responsibility toward their town. It makes for dissatisfaction and friction.

There seems to be a great fear on the part of the politicians of free discussion; dread is expressed that "crackpots" will take the floor, and rake up all sorts of foolishness. It is certainly true that too often the crackpots are the ones who try to do most of the talking, but one reason for this is that so few of the solid citizens go to the meetings, and that, because of the way they are run, our people have never grown to feel at ease and willing to express themselves or ask expressions from their candidates.

The way to change this system into one which would be truly democratic and beneficial would be to have not just one caucus four days before election day, but to have this meeting at least two weeks before election, allowing plenty of time for thought and discussion, and then to go on and have three or four other town meetings, on regular dates, during the year.

The first change cannot be made this year, but it might well be brought up for discussion at the caucus. The second proposal could be inaugurated, and we would be in favor of trying it out for this coming year, with no obligation of going on with it, if it did not seem successful. One or two of the meetings might be more formal with an outside speaker invited, perhaps one of the members of the school of government at Chapel Hill who could take up some phase of municipal government and conduct a round-table discussion. The town board and mayor should be present and a question and answer period always held.

This would make for a feeling of closeness to our government which seems at present lacking. It would stop a lot of the under-cover griping that goes on and the talk of things being "railroaded through." People with complaints could air them, and would stop a great many of them right there. And, once in a blue moon, a really valuable suggestion would come out of the meeting. That chance alone would make the system desirable, while the gain to be made in citizen-education and citizen-responsibility is evident.

This town meeting plan has been tried out in many communities and always with striking success; it has been spoken of as the heart and soul of those towns which have tried it. We hope that it will be tried here.

A VETERAN CANDIDATE

With the town election coming in a few weeks, it is time to begin to think how we are going to vote. Some of the present board have announced their candidacy, some have expressed doubt and said that it might be well to have a change, while the mayor and Commissioner A. B. Patterson have definitely stated they will not run again. Two vacancies, therefore, exist, with others possible.

The Pilot's choice for one of these vacancies would be a veteran.

We are a great believer in new blood and in young blood. The record of the last war shows how, everywhere, young men came to the fore. Even among many of the top officers the age was unusually low, with the Gavins, and McAuliffes in the majority. There is no doubt that youth is quicker thinking, more progressive, readier to take a chance and try something new than the older folks. A town board such as ours should have a mixture of ages, and of men with varied experience. A veteran on the board would bring to it vigor, the knowledge that the seemingly impossible thing could actually often be done and was worth trying. The veteran would have an impatience with a narrow viewpoint, he would help to keep the board from getting in a rut, and his varied, wide experience would be of inestimable value on all matters.

We find that the veterans are deeply interested in their home town. They have strong ideas about what sort of a place they want it to be; and they are good ideas. We could profit by them. Perhaps they see their home town from a different perspective than we do. It is likely that it means just a little more to them. We should put that interest to use. We should do so, for our town's good and also because it is the just and right thing to do. Our veterans risked a great deal for their home; it is right that they should play a part in making their home the sort of place they want to live in.

LET'S HOPE HE'S RIGHT

The writer joins with many in having had a case of hero worship for Winston Churchill, and is still having it, for that matter. But when he pats Americans on the head, telling them as he does in his article in the current Life what good children they are, we see red.

"Of course," says the Great Leader, in effect, "you should have listened to Poppa sooner, but it is just lovely to see how, like sensible little people, you have finally seen the light." And then he goes on to describe "the light," and a good many will find his version of it pretty uncomfortable-reading.

In words of nearly one syllable, suitable, to what, clearly, he considers the mentality of Life readers, (or is it just American readers?) Churchill describes the situation, as he saw it and as we did not then see it, in Greece in 1944, and follows it through to the present time, when, at long last, Americans have recognized that Poppa was right.

And, at the end, he indulges in a very British, restrained "I told you so." He says: "On Greek affairs in 1944 and 1945, I seemed to find myself out of step. But today it seems I was pursuing the exact policy which, little more than two years later, the United States has adopted with strong conviction. This is to me a very intense satisfaction."

Doubtless, and perhaps it should be a source of satisfaction to Americans, too. But, however inevitable our present course seems, however much we may agree that it is the only thing we can do, when we read this article of Churchill's, we are reminded of a few very unpleasant facts and our confidence is shaken.

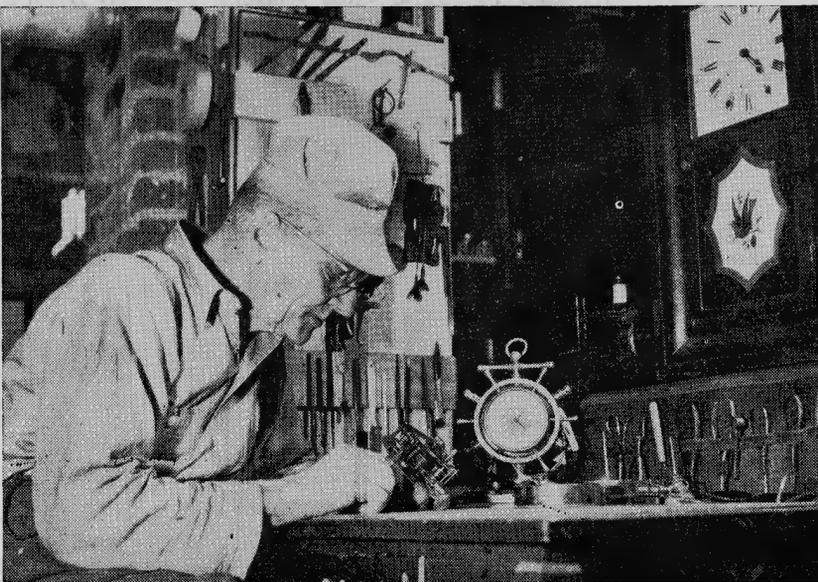
It has been said, by almost every authority on international affairs and historians of the past wars, that there were at least two occasions when, had we acted differently, we might have prevented World War II. One of those times was when the Japs went into Manchuria, the other was when the Spanish Civil War started. It comes as a nasty jolt, today, to recall that the reason why we did not act on both these occasions was because the British begged us not to and refused to back us up if we did.

Once again, at a time of great crisis, we are doing what England wants. God grant that she may be right this time.

Some 3,500,000 pages of German scientific and technical documents are being screened by the department of commerce for medical and industrial secrets to benefit American health and business.

Veterans may pay National Service Life Insurance premiums to Veterans Administration monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

Clocks Tick And Wheels Turn Again Under His Hands



L. T. Newcomer is shown above delving into the interior of somebody's clock to see what made the wheels stop turning. He'll find out, too, and start it ticking away again, good as new. Behind him, on the top of his desk is an antique clock and the old hand-crank sewing-machine he got to running again. He is wearing his khaki cap. (Photo by Madigan)

No Boasts And Not Too Many Lies In A Tale Of A Disney Character Living In Our Town

by Katharine Boyd

There is a Disney character in Southern Pines. That is, he looks like a Disney character and he lives like one. He is stooped and thin and he has a long, long nose and, above it pale but very penetrating blue eyes. They peer out at you from under a long peaked painter's cap, striped blue and white. His long chin curves up towards the end of his nose, and, between, his mouth has a tight little squirrel-like expression, that might be a sly grin at somebody's expense.

This Disney character spends his time in a Disney way. He passes all his days, and maybe his nights, too, for all one knows, in the midst of clocks and sewing machines. Forty-eight clocks are in plain sight on every side of him and heaven knows how many more are tucked away in cupboards, while twenty-two sewing machines surround him in his basement shop.

Tinkerer's Heaven

That's where he hangs out, this Disney fellow, in a basement, a great square cavernous place, lit by some pretty fancy illumination of his own contriving. There is much fanciness in the place that would turn green with envy all those men who hanker after a place to tinker; that slightly mad but altogether delightful tribe of whittlers and carvers and rubbers - of - old - furniture and makers-of-ship-models, whom a piece of old pine and a finely tempered tool turns into a mild sort of genius. This Disney man . . . and, of course he isn't a Disney man at all but L. T. Newcomer, carpenter and fixer extraordinary, famous in these parts for many a year. . . Newcomer, then, has fixed himself up a shop that is the most wonderful mixture imaginable of a super-efficient cabinet-maker's hangout and Nell's grandfather's Old Curiosity Shop.

Curiosity Shop

To further confuse you, you are assailed, as you enter the door at the foot of the steps, by a great humming. For a minute you feel as if you were inside a chicken brooder, or some other enclosure where a strenuous vital process of growth is going on, such a squeaking and shifting and humming burdens the air. You look around and realize it is the clocks, talking.

The sewing machines are comparatively quiet; that is, they don't make their presence known unless somebody peddles or cranks them, but the clocks carry on ceaselessly. They strike and ring bells, tick and tock, rattle and rumble from every side, in every nook and corner of the basement.

Lights shine over the workbench and desk, but the shop is dark in the corners, filled with the ticking clocks, with the great grandfathers lowering above; the hooded sewing machines of every size have eerie shapes, ghostly bumps and turrets hump up under their covers; from the ceiling hang a wild assortment of articles: more clocks, two pairs of shiny lady's shoes, circa 1860, perhaps, with many rows of but-

tons and amazing high cut-under heels, never worn; a mouse-trap (or perchance a bird-cage) sways nearby; lanterns, the pendulums of clocks, old prints, picture frames, coils of wire; all hang from the rafters and cast their wavering shadows on the walls. Above his desk hang six types of headgear, for use on varying occasions. He has two straight carpenter's caps, one grey, one khaki, a white and a black cap of nautical cut with shiny black visors and a touch of gold on one, (perhaps he wears them when working on the ship's clock now reposing on his bench). Next them is what might be a tennis visor, for use under bright lights, the one beyond has a racy air, for purposes unknown.

Down the center of the room is Disney-Newcomer's workbench, a few shining tools lying ready for the next job. Within a few feet is his desk, the desk that all those hobby-men would wish to own. It is small and tidy and has a board across the back, along the center of which is a long leather strap. It is tacked in loops and in each one is stuck a different size of pliers. There are big pliers, medium pliers, small pliers, and then the tiny pliers for going into the insides of tiny watches.

Efficiency Plus

On either side of his desk are cupboards that hold sets of small shallow drawers. One holds screws, every size imaginable in a different round box; another drawer has the small watch springs, another the larger ones, a third the big main springs of the old grandfathers. The next drawer has extra pendulums; the next is full of hands; the next of faces, keys, little wheels, big and biggest wheels. On the doors of the cupboards, again hung in little leather strap-holders, are every size of brush for cleaning, mostly tooth brushes, they looked like . . . and, in another row, dozens of paint brushes. Every one is clean, every brush hangs point down in a neat row, handy to reach.

In fact, "handy to reach" might be the slogan of this workshop. If an efficiency expert had measured and fussed and made prints galore, he couldn't have arrived at a more convenient layout. After all, perhaps it was laid out by an efficiency expert. A man who can make old clocks and sewing machines run like new must have a lot of efficiency tucked away somewhere, even if he is a Disneyish person.

Carpentry and furniture repair had been Newcomer's lifelong trade, but all of a sudden rebellion swept through him. He decided he couldn't look another old chair or table or spinning wheel in the face again. Clocks, though, that was another matter. He had always had a special feeling for clocks. So clocks are accepted as before, but anyone who comes with a delapidated stool carries it off, still delapidated and forlorn.

The clocks kept on, and then, one day, an anxious lady with a clock began to talk about her sewing machine; something had

gone wrong. With a sigh, Newcomer capitulated: "Bring her in," he said, "I'll see what I can do," and from that day on sewing machines began to join the clocks in the basement shop.

"Lemme show you!" says Newcomer. Taking you by the arm, he hustles you between the aisles of hooded and draped machines and snatches off a cloth: "Look here, now. What would you say that was? Huh? Why that's a hand-crank machine! See?" he whirls a little crank and the wheels turn, the needle starts to pop up and down. "Lady brought me that; said it belonged to her great-grandmother. Look at this one! I found this out behind a colored woman's cabin; her two children were dragging it around by a string, playing horse. It was so covered with dust it was just a lump of dirt. Look at it now! Hey! Want to see how she runs?" and he grabs a chair and starts to pump the treadle. The machine whirrs as smoothly as the finest Singer. "Good as new" he says, and it certainly seems so.

A Cozy Company

So do the clocks. There are some beauties among them, lovely old square wooden clocks, with roses and moons painted on their faces; two splendid grandfathers, the walnut one with a fine chased brass face. There is a lovely little pine clock with a heart on its maple base. And there are alarms, Big Bens, delicate French and Swiss makes, Seth Thomas banjo clocks. Newcomer owns some of them and has fixed them up for sale; the others are all waiting for their owners to pick them up. A cozy company, they gleam and tick away as if unusually at home in that friendly atmosphere, as if they knew they were with someone who had a peculiar understanding and respect for the whole clock tribe.

On one side of the basement stands an old carpenter's chest. It is Newcomer's first tool chest.

"I made it back in 1907," he says, "when I started out on my own as a carpenter. It's got some of my old tools in it." He opens the lid and shows the top compartment layer, then raises that to show the tools beneath, each in its own compartment, with a special triangular nook for the folding saw clamp he devised. Each tool shines with polishing, oiled, ready for use. Nearby stands the bandsaw Mr. Fownes gave him.

Born in 1879, in Clark County, Ohio, between Springfield and Dayton, Newcomer and his family moved to Lancaster. There he spent his boyhood and learned the carpenter's trade. When his father died, an uncle took him in while his mother went to live with relatives in Denver. The boy never saw her again, but, later on, found where she was and kept in touch till her death a few years ago. Newcomer and his wife moved to Florida in 1914, and the Sandhills saw their arrival in 1927, when they settled in Pinebluff.

"Too Crowded"

In their house by the side of Highway 1, he ran his shop and Mrs. Newcomer had her garden

and the goats. The combination of goats and garden worked miracles and the Newcomer shrubs and flowers became almost as famous as the carpentry.

Two years ago the family moved to Southern Pines, because, Newcomer claims, with the true Disney touch, "Pinebluff got too crowded."

In response to his listener's dubious stare, he goes on to say that "too many people came barging into my shop, bringing chairs and tables and all such. I just had to get away from it all. So I came to Southern Pines," and eliminated all but clocks and sewing machines from his workshop.

Newcomer is a philosopher besides an expert tool-welder.

"Never made nothing," he says, waving an airy hand, "and I'm holding my own!" The good house, with its so-neatly kept grounds, not to mention the Newcomer family's standing in the affection and respect of their adopted-town, rather belie part of this statement. But, at that, isn't it a pretty good way to be? "Don't tell too many lies, and don't boast in that article," says

this character, but he goes on to end up with sort of a boast himself, told with a gleam: "You know," he says, March 11 was our wedding-anniversary! Forty-seven years ago, we were married!"

And then he has a sudden thought. "Hey! Lemme show you one more thing." He hustles you out and up the steps, to where, on a sort of parapet, there is a long leather automobile seat with another as a head rest. "See this? I can lie here" and he does so, "and look out at the lumber yard, and watch the children playing. And if the sun gets too hot, I just do this. . . ." a turn of the wrist drops a fine green venetian window blind between you and the speaker. "Hey! How's that?" comes his voice from the other side.

That, we'll say, is pretty good, and so is all the rest of the Disney-Newcomer outfit.

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