

THE PILOT

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KATHARINE BOYD Editor
VALERIE NICHOLSON Asst. Editor
DAN S. RAY General Manager
C. G. COUNCIL Advertising

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"In taking over The Pilot no changes are contemplated. We will try to keep this a good paper. We will try to make a little money for all concerned. Where there seems to be an occasion to use our influence for the public good we will try to do it. And we will treat everybody alike."
—James Boyd, May 23, 1941.

Investigate the Homes

Because of the death of a young girl in a so-called nursing home near Aberdeen, this institution is now to undergo an investigation. A preliminary report from the county sanitarian states that no state sanitary requirements were being met and that the home was operating without a license.

The case has much in common with that of the convalescent home in West Southern Pines which was closed last year following disclosure of conditions there by the Pilot. Though in that case the operator held a state license, specified sanitary requirements had not been met and the home continued to operate. Apparently no regular inspections were made. Conditions were bad and there is little doubt that the inmates suffered from lack of heat and proper care. As in the case of the Aberdeen home, it took a death to bring about exposure of conditions.

It seems entirely wrong that a regular system of inspection is not in force to insure that standards set by the state are adhered to. These two places were well known by the Health and Welfare departments of the county. Workers from both departments had visited them and, in the case of the West Southern Pines home, had reported unfavorably as to conditions there. The fact that the Aberdeen home was operated by a religious sect of unusual beliefs might well have alerted officials as to the need for especially close supervision. Moore County's new corner is to be sincerely commended for his prompt report to the authorities, but it should not have required a death and a coroner's report to bring about an investigation.

Nursing homes are very necessary institutions and we need more of them; they can perform a deeply beneficial service. But it is just as necessary that they be well run as it is that our hospitals maintain high standards of operation. It is certainly our duty to see that the old and sick and destitute people who are placed in them are well taken care of.

It is to be hoped that the recent exposure of conditions in the Aberdeen home may spur on those officials whose responsibility it is to look after such matters to make an immediate survey of all such places in the county, including family boarding homes, to see if they are meeting state requirements. It should not require another death to stir them to action.

Native Music

We listen to Burl Ives and other singers of native music, we collect records of mountain tunes and hill-billy songs and Negro spirituals, we read books about the fascinating adventures of those who go hunting for such native material. How many know that right here in Southern Pines within the past few weeks, they have been hearing native music being made and sung?

How many heard it: the long-drawn call of the leaderman out on the Seaboard right-of-way, the answering chime of the workers and then the clink, clink, clinkety-clink of the lining-bars under the rails, getting set for the big "heh!" as the work-gang throw their shoulders into the weight of the steel rails, at the command of the foreman. How many heard that native music: the same kind of worksong that has been made by the Negro people for ages, immemorial, to help them do their work.

The Seaboard Airline extra gang, that is working on the 10 miles of double track now being laid, consists of the general foreman, H. G. Crump, Assistants Land and Minor, and forty workers. The boys are from South Carolina but Mr. Crump says that he is a Georgia cracker. He has been working for the Seaboard for 22 years and many of his men have been with him for a good part of that time. During most of these years the minor cadence and stirring rhythm of the worksong has floated out through the woods and fields from the men working on the railroad, laying the track straight and true.

It starts with six or eight or ten men of the gang lined up, in two rows beside the rails, the leaderman at their head and the foreman about 30 feet down the track. All the lining is done by eye, apparently, in response to signals from the foreman: move her this way or that way. At a call from the leader, the men put the ends of their crowbars, or lining-bars, under the rails. Holding them by the ends, rather loosely, they start an accompaniment to the chant: clicking the bars up against the steel rails. The rhythm is intricate; they rattle the bars together in perfect time, click them against the rail, drop a beat, catch the rhythm again. And then they break into the chant. The tune, if you can call it a tune, is mournful, stemming from the jungle of Africa in its haunting cadence. There is despair in it, fierceness, and the throb of weariness; yet, too, the exultant beat and pulse of strong muscles working together, getting on with it, making that track straight.

The Seaboard Extra Gang No. 2 sings with a

will and works with a will, making the track true, packing the good clean ballast firmly between the ties. To listen to their singing as it wafts across our streets is to think of the great contribution of the Negro race to the world's music and beauty, and to feel a thrill of pride to think of this native music being created here right in our midst.

Again—The Sharpe Appointment

The Pilot last week published a letter from Bob Harlow of Pinehurst stating that Van B. Sharpe, who was recently appointed Assistant Small Defense Plants Administrator, had been "hurt by references in The Pilot to his tax situation. He produced documentary evidence to prove the government had sent him a refund for 1952 and it was hardly likely the government would pay him a refund if he was in arrears."

Mr. Sharpe's influence must be even greater than we thought—how anyone can get a refund on 1952 taxes this early we don't know.

The taxes to which The Pilot referred were those of 1943 and 1944, and included both income taxes and withholding taxes on the Carthage Weaving Plant payroll. Of course he had paid them. Uncle Sam has a way of getting paid or you go to prison. It took several years to get them paid, with a padlocking of the Sharpe plant and a re-audit which sealed the bills down to one-fourth, but they got paid, with no credit due Mr. Sharpe.

Mr. Harlow also notes that the Carthage Weaving plant was for three years "one of the very few institutions keeping people off the dole in this community." There was little question of "dole" in those years of full employment. Also—what dole? We know of no dole except state unemployment compensation, paid from reserves of employer and employee contributions. These contributions, Mr. Sharpe failed to pay for the years in question, and the State of North Carolina got several judgments against him and all have not yet been paid.

It strikes us as odd that Messrs. Harlow and Sharpe ignore the rest of the picture, which shows that Van Sharpe's operations in private enterprise have been disastrous, marked by a reckless disregard of other people's money; irresponsibility in paying off debts, or incurring new ones; the use of politics and every technicality of the law in staving off the day of reckoning.

We are not against Mr. Sharpe personally, and we appreciate his undoubted talents. We feel, however, that some way should be found to employ them in private enterprise; and that the place for him is definitely not on the public payroll, through political appointment.

It is just such appointments as these which have given politics a bad name today, and have the present Administration, and perhaps the very nation, fighting for its life. Though promoted this time from the grass-roots rather than from the top, it is the kind of thing which causes confidence in the very structure of government to be lost.

Mice From the Chandeliers

The time is rapidly approaching when something will have to be done about scientists. There is no doubt that they are extending the scope of their inventions beyond all reason. While one group goes into a huddle and comes out with the atomic bomb, another, as we have just read in the news, invents mice with hooked tails.

The possibilities are almost equally terrifying. While the bomb will probably blow a good many people to bits, the mice, equipped with such capabilities for hideous activity, will undoubtedly drive the rest of the world crazy.

Consider the present state of things as regards mice. One mouse alone, armed with nothing more unusual than his four feet, snuffy nose and whiskers, and straight tail, given the smallest scrap of paper can, in the dead of night, make a noise like twenty rending, tearing tigers. Furnished with a shred of dried leaf in the fireplace, one mouse can create a rustle to outdo ten grass-skirted hula dancers. Give that mouse a bit of cracker . . . and you don't need to give it to him, he'll find it and get it out of the sealed box with the ease of a Houdini. . . allow him the merest crumb and you have a munching, a rattling, a rolling matched only by the todo in the weaving-room of the Robbins Mill.

That's an everyday, common-or-garden, mouse. With the tail straight as a nasty string. But put a hook in that tail, and you turn a week-old baby into Hitler. It's obvious. The non-scientific mouse is on the floor. His horrid adventures are confined to one plane, but if he's got a hooked tail, he can go anywhere. Given the mouse's incredible ability to be in the wrong place, where no mouse should be, doing things no mouse, or any decent creature, should do, the thought of widening his sphere of activity is too much to be born.

He will swing from the chandelier, hook himself into the window shade, use his tail to hoist himself up the bedpost and sit eating crackers over your head. He and his mates, linked tail to tail, will turn trapeze artists and perform dizzy swings about the room. He will probably be able, once and for all to defeat the trap that might control him by hooking his tail carefully to the top part before reaching for the cheese. And, ladies, there will be no use climbing on chairs; he will come hooking right up, tail over tail, after you.

They say that it is fatal to set any controls over scientists. Even the security measures now in effect in atomic energy plants are frowned on as seriously hampering the effectiveness of the work.

That is all very well when dealing with atomic energy mouse energy is something else. It is high time a law were passed to put a stop to all such dangerous research and meddling with creation. Natural mouse is bad enough.

Grains of Sand

When Dorothy Swisher was crowned National VFW Beauty Queen in New York City last summer (a never-to-be-forgotten event in the annals of her home town of Southern Pines!) the page-whirl around New York as prize . . . However, they knew that for a beautiful young girl, night clubs, shows, etc., required a dashing young escort. . . At hand were three potential escorts—an Army man, a Navy man and a Marine, young veterans of Korea, who were representing their respective services at the National encampment.

They drew lots to see which should have the honor of squirreling the beauty. . . The Marine won out, and from all accounts made a delightful escort.

Shortly afterward the Marine, Duane St. John, who lives in New Jersey, was mustered out of the Corps and returned to his studies at Washington and Lee university at Lexington, Va. . . And Dorothy entered college, too, taking up her pre-med studies at Ohio State U., Columbus.

They've been corresponding. . . And last weekend Dorothy flew to Lexington as Duane's guest for the annual Fancy Dress Ball, a great social event for Washington and Lee and the state of Virginia.

We doubt if any romantic conclusions can be drawn from this, as far as Dorothy is concerned. . . She has lots of beaux, and a girl who's planning the study of medicine is not going to be easily deflected by a random dart from Cupid's bow. . . But we're sure that both she and Duane had a wonderful time, and that our lovely Queen Dorothy was the belle of the ball.

News of illness, operations, etc., are generally items for our colleague Bessie Cameron Smith in getting up her society page. . . However, we have one on hand which seems to rate special treatment, and we want all to share the pleasure of the patient in the successful outcome of his operation.

It reads: "Grady Patterson age 10 has returned to school after a nose operation at Moore Co. hospital after carrying around a big nose for almost 10 years its back to normal. Thanks no more big nose for me."

Three distinguished Moore County citizens have recently rated special attention in The State magazine. . . We are pleased at the honor that has come to them, and have enjoyed the stories about them.

Carl Goersch, in his interesting department "Funny Experiences," wrote up an incident in the life of Bruce Cameron, of Manly, who as a boy stayed with his ill mother while others of the family went out to shoot quail for her. . . The doctor said that was what she should have. . . The hunting party came home empty-handed—while in the meantime Bruce caught one which flew into his mother's bedroom, killed and cooked it for her.

Smoky: A Good Citizen

By Wallace Irwin

(Editor's Note: The Pilot welcomes back to these pages Wallace Irwin, who used to send us his column, "The Sandbox." It was full of gritty, witty bits of chaff, flinty barbs with a cutting edge, and, along with the digs and the foolishness, a good many pearls of mellow wisdom. There were also those pieces about dogs. Meandering along, as our dogs meander along the streets, they filled with delight the heart of many a dog-lover. Which means, we would guess, just about everyone in this town. Now comes a dog piece, by no means meandering, but in tune with the brisk and forthright nature of its subject. We believe our readers will admire Smoky in print as much as many of them admire her in real life.)

Slowly, watchfully, as one aware of dangers lurking for the trusted courier, every handsome hair from nose to tail bristling with awareness, she rounded the corner of New Hampshire Avenue, made her steady way past the Police Station, the ABC store and up the steps of the Southland Hotel.

She was an Alsatian of the police dog kin and in her mouth she carried Duty, a folded newspaper. When the horde of idle dogs, with nothing to do but interfere with serious business, scampered around making frivolous noises, the courier didn't take the trouble to growl; she merely turned disdainful eyes and went on with her job.

Len, who drives me, giggled,

Last week, "Funny Experiences" dealt with a happening of the European tour undertaken last summer by J. Talbot Johnson, Aberdeen attorney, and Mrs. Johnson. . . The story really made us laugh and laugh. . . It related how Talbot went shopping alone in an Italian city, to buy presents for his anticipated grandchild. . . He bought what he thought were two charming little lacy bonnets and found he was the possessor of an extra fancy ladies' brassiere.

And a week or two ago Bill Sharpe came out with a story we have been anticipating with interest. . . On the Carolina Orchid Growers, a unique and fascinating business, and Mrs. W. A. Way, its charming proprietor.

Along with the story, and picture of Mrs. Way, there was also published a picture of a new orchid recently developed at the greenhouses, as yet unnamed. . . With the orchid itself offered as prize for the name Mrs. Way liked best.

She told us last week the response was simply staggering. . . Entries forwarded to her by The State numbered two or three hundred, with more coming every day. . . She had not yet been able to choose a name, and probably would not until she was sure all entries were in.

There were all kinds of names, beautiful, ludicrous, poetic and picturesque. . . With many submitting the same. . . What interested and puzzled her however, was, "Why do they do it? Do that many people really want an orchid?"

Our guess is that they do. . . Many people have never had an orchid all their own. . . Also, people love to test their skill in contests, and this one was unusual, to say the least.

And here's our friend "Reader" again sending a card postmarked "Pinehurst" . . . As we've said, we usually pay no attention to anonymous communications, but "Reader" is different. . . We rather like her (him?) especially when he (she?) combines her (his?) sharp inspection of our columns with a sense of humor.

"Perhaps my 'sense of humor' slipped again (as in previous reference to the Common Gold) but—How about that 'base' section of the Madrigal Singers as mentioned in today's Pilot?" Reader wants to know.

Well—once in a while, you know, the two are interchangeable!

To another anonymous writer, sending a letter on current affairs last week, we'd like to state: The reason your letter wasn't published was not that we are a "Fair Deal" paper, but that you didn't sign your name. . . Whether the names are published or not, the letters must bear the writer's name. . . All newspapers that we know of require this.

We still have your letter, and if you wish to let us know who you are it will be published. . . For those who wish to accept no responsibility for what they write, The Pilot certainly won't, no matter what topic they write about or which "side" they're on.

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