

THE PILOT

Southern Pines North Carolina

"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. Wherever 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.

Keep Park Block Free From Business

Every effort should be made by the town council to keep the park block free from business property.

To do this will apparently throw a heavy financial burden on the town. But in the end we think it will be worth the cost to the taxpayers.

To have this entire block devoted to recreational and municipal purposes, except for one corner lot, 60 by 110 feet, as location for business, casts the die in a form that we feel sure future residents of the town will regret.

The residence type of building, used as a physician's office, which is now on the lot is a not too unsuitable structure for a park corner—but who is to say when, or with what, this structure might be replaced? A business building totally out of keeping with the park background might well be placed there at some future date, possibly to be occupied by some business altogether unsuitable for a location next to park property.

The Pilot did not like to see the municipal center—which is after all a type of business,

too—placed on the park block, as we believe that any town lucky enough to have nearly a square block of park space just off the business section should do everything it can to maintain the park as a place for people to enjoy—a place to rest or play, a green, shady, flowering place, a place in welcome contrast to the business area nearby.

This is written before Tuesday night's council meeting, at which a request by the owner to zone the corner property for business was to be considered. We don't know at this writing what action can be or may be taken. Our news columns today may shed more light on this subject.

Now is the time of decision. Once the die is cast by zoning the corner lot for business, it would be difficult and probably much more expensive for the town to acquire it in the future.

We trust that the council, as well as the citizens of Southern Pines, who will have to pay the bill, will take the long view on this matter of keeping the park block intact.

Woods Arson: Problem For The State

Thoughtful Southerners have been shocked and puzzled by a Harper's magazine article pointing out that 80 per cent of the nation's forest fires occur in the South. But that's not the worst of it: many of these fires are deliberately set.

The U. S. Forest service has made a study of woods arsonists who have been apprehended and finds that they are frustrated, resentful people whose "basic needs" in life were not being met.

After the Harper's shocker came the Associated Press in North Carolina with the news that one out of every five forest fire in this state is purposely set. This happened 430 times last year—more than 20 per cent of 1957's 2,293 recorded woods fires.

Tar Heel forestry officials say that resentment against a landowner is the most prominent reason that forest arsonists go to work: tenants angry with landlords, one farmer re-

senting the larger holdings of another, or maybe an absentee owner angers a neighboring landowner because he won't sell out.

Speculating on what can be done about this costly and vicious business, The Greensboro Daily News suggests that education and publicity campaigns may reach some of the arsonists—and then leans over backward to wonder if sometimes there may be some real reason for the woods burners' rebellion. The News suggests that the valuation of forest lands owned by foreign corporations may well be too low in many counties.

Revaluation for tax purposes, with full publicity given to same, might allay much resentment, the News thinks.

Of course, as the News indicates, the problem is much bigger than that. Provision of schooling, jobs and recreation for potentially frustrated and resentful people provides the only long-range solution.

Adding 9 Million Years To Our History?

The discovery of the skeleton of a man-like creature, thought to be 10 million years old, has anthropologists in a dither. If what has been found is really so ancient, we can all add some 9 million years to our family genealogies.

How worthy old Charles Darwin must be spinning in his grave! For what the find shows, according to the anthropologists who made it, is that man did not descend from the apes after all but that both developed from a common ancestor resembling neither.

We must say the theory adds to the dignity of man. We have never enjoyed the thought that some ancestor back in the mists of time swung through the trees. No wonder nobody has ever found the "missing link." Under the new theory, there isn't any.

And this too: how unquestioningly we have accepted Darwin's theory of evolution. Starting and controversial in the 19th century, it was becoming a staid, old-fashioned dogma, like the law of gravity. Now somebody has stirred the calm waters and all is speculation and confusion again. Interesting.

Other concepts of life, man and history may

also change. Take Darwin's business about "the survival of the fittest." We all pretty much believe that and we think it means the rule of tooth and claw: the survival of the roughest and the toughest. But is this true?

That brilliant and interesting 19th century Russian liberal, Prince Peter Kropotkin, thought Darwin was dead wrong. Between exploring in Siberia and getting thrown into the Prison of Peter and Paul for his political notions, he wrote a fascinating book called "Mutual Aid" which contends, with hundreds of illustrations from the history of man and the life of animals and insects, that the species that survive are those who learn how to cooperate and help one another for their mutual benefit.

The real tooth and claw creatures, seemingly the fittest, like the sabertooth tiger (or say Adolph Hitler, in the modern world) become extinct because they can't learn to live with other creatures or with themselves.

All this gives the late Mr. Darwin a hard time, but it dovetails much more sensibly than the other theories with the conviction that there is some Divine spark in the lumps of clay which form mankind.

Reading: Elfrida's Secret

(The Winston-Salem Journal)

There has been a good deal of hand wringing of late about the way television allegedly has caused the downfall of reading. However, for those thus disturbed, some comfort may be gleaned from a couple of news items which appeared recently.

One was a report from the Public Library of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County that the demand for books by youngsters of all age groups this summer is greater than ever before. That can be taken to mean that Mickey Mouse, Captain Kangaroo and Wild Bill Hickok haven't played quite the dastardly deeds some may have imagined.

The other is a story by Elfrida von Nardoff about how she came to know enough about so many things to win close to a quarter of a million dollars on television's "Twenty-One."

"My success would never have been possible," she said, "without that secret mystery ingredient, the reading habit. From my earliest childhood, I've been a reader. I loved to read, my parents encouraged my reading, and I had access to all the books I wanted. . . A lot of recommendations came from my father; Henry James, the Restoration plays, Voltaire, Dostoevski. I read modern American writers, too—Hemingway, Faulkner and O'Hara were my favorites.

"You might not think (aside perhaps from Shakespeare) that these writers would stand me in very good stead on 'Twenty-One.' But the truth is that reading is a tool. When a child learns to love reading, he learns how to read—how to get the most out of a printed page in the least time. He learns,

in short, how to learn. I think this is the single most important thing that my whole mad, whirlwind and wonderful experience on 'Twenty-One' has proved."

Now here's an up-to-the-minute testimonial for you—and maybe a very effective one. For if today's TV-addicted youngsters won't listen to their old-fogey parents and teachers, they may very well heed a television heroine like Elfrida von Nardoff. And if she can inspire them to read—well, then, maybe television isn't such a threat to the cause of reading as some have let themselves think.

Hail To The Broiler!

We hereby pay our respects to the broiler—a bird that brought Moore County a nearly \$2 million increase in farm income for 1957, as compared to 1956, thus putting Moore at the head of the state's 100 counties in per cent of increase in farm sales volume. And this in a time of generally declining farm income, because of tobacco acreage cuts, too.

So—hail to the broiler, a friend indeed to the Moore County farmer and to all the rest of us with whom the farmer spends his income.

While we wouldn't go quite so far as the suggestion of one enthusiastic citizen and place a statue of a broiler on the courthouse lawn in Carthage, we can with justice pay tribute to this prosperity-producing bird—and to the farmers and Extension Service workers who made broilers so important to the county.

"And I Say It's Spinach And I Say T'Heck With It!"



A SENTIMENTAL LINK WITH THE PAST

Superstitious? Many Tar Heels Are

In the current 25th Anniversary Edition of The State magazine, Bill Sharpe relates a number of North Carolina superstitions.

The State's article extends a list of folk sayings and superstitions that appeared recently on this page. Mr. Sharpe's list includes some of which we had not previously heard.

The State's 25th Anniversary Edition, titled "Omnibus of North Carolina," reprints items that have been especially well received by readers during the past 25 years.

Mr. Sharpe's article follows:

Do your kids still "stamp white horses"?

How about pulling the wishbone? And in your house do you throw salt over your shoulder to ward off bad luck for having spilled it in the first place?

If such foolishness goes on, it doesn't mean your family is hopelessly superstitious. It is just clinging close to some old folk customs.

North Carolinians continue to do these things more as a sentimental link with the past than with any idea of their merit. Especially in the country and small town, where congestion, hustle and bustle have not rubbed off all the folkways of the people.

Every now and then I'm with someone who shows real concern if a black cat crosses his path. You still see men cross the fingers of their left hand in a dice game, confident it will bring them luck. Rabbit's feet repose in many a Tar Heel pocket.

It may be just modesty or a social act, but most people still rap on wood after making a boastful remark. And a man in a card game will get up and walk around his chair or table in an effort to break a streak of bad luck.

There's some merit in stamping white horses or mules. When you see one of these critters, moisten the tip of your right forefinger with your tongue, place the tip of this finger in the palm of your left hand. Now double up your right fist, and smack down hard into the left palm. The smarter the noise, the better the luck.

If your nose itches, it's a sign some unexpected "company" is coming. Children used to chant: "Cream and peaches, My nose eatches, Yonder comes a man with a hole in his breeches."

If either a man or woman drops a fork at the table, it is a sure sign that a visitor of the opposite sex soon will appear.

Some people regard the sight of the moon under certain circumstances to be an omen of bad luck; that is, to get a sudden glance at the lunar sphere through a tree or glass portends an unspeakable doom, but if a

pin is found the following day, the spell is likely to be broken, it is said. If one should unwittingly spill salt, in order to avert the "evil spirit" that is about to descend, a pinch of the salt must be thrown over the left shoulder.

There's a story behind the horseshoe's luck, too. Some North Carolinians believe that if you find a horseshoe, the thing to do is to spit on it and then throw it backwards over your left shoulder.

Others hang the horseshoe over their doors, the open end up "so the good luck won't spill out."

According to legend, a long time ago a saint, while attending his duties as a blacksmith, was annoyed to see one of his regular, but unwanted customers coming in the door.

However, he greeted his old customer, the devil, pleasantly enough and began shoeing one of the devil's hoofs. Hoping to rid himself of the devil, the saint bared one of the nerves in the devil's foot which caused the devil such agony that he promised never to enter a dwelling as long as a horseshoe was hung over its door, "points up." Most everybody agrees that the devil never kept his promise.

To ward off nightmares, place your shoes under the bed, toes out, before retiring.

Or place a flour sieve beside the bed. The witches for some reasons cannot attack the unsuspecting sleeper before they have counted every hole in the sieve and by that time, it is said, dawn has come, bringing the rule of the nocturnal visitors to an end. A sign of bad luck is to meet

someone either ascending or descending a flight of stairs.

If two friends should permit a tree or post to separate them while walking, it is a sure sign that they will "fall out" before the walk is over, but if one of the friends will retrace his steps and go around the tree or post, taking the same path taken by the friend, the spell will be broken.

If two persons should accidentally speak the same words simultaneously, they can close their eyes, clasp fingers, make a wish and have that wish come true; but if either of them speaks before the wishes are made, the spell is broken.

To drop a dishrag is the most lamentable of misfortune. Others claim that if a soiled dishrag can be successfully stolen and concealed beneath the house of the kitchen from which the rag is taken, the action will remove warts forthwith.

Here's the story back of the belief that Friday the 13th is a bad day. When Jesus was carrying to a conclusion His mission, He was being tortured and crucified; the day was Friday. Just prior, Jesus was at supper with 11 of His 12 disciples when a thirteenth man came in and betrayed Christ; hence the belief that Friday and the number 13 signify ill luck. It is also said that the people "close at hand believing that it would bring to them good luck, tapped upon the wooden cross." Out of this, it is said, arose the belief that knocking upon wood would ward off bad luck.

IN N. CAROLINA 160 YEARS AGO

Frontier Wedding Lively Event

Writing in the Sanford Herald, W.E.H. (Publisher Bill Horner) says that an article he saw about the high expense and complexity of modern weddings—leaving the bride virtually a wreck by the time the vows are said—recalls something he read about weddings on the North Carolina frontier 160 years ago:

Communities had no public diversions and weddings were anticipated eagerly, both for the sumptuous feast served at the bride's home, where the vows were usually exchanged, and for the merry-making and fiddling and dancing afterwards.

On the day of the wedding, the groom and his attendants assembled at his home, set out to reach the bride's home by noon, often the hour of the wedding. When they got a mile from the gal's home, the men raced horseback to her door; the first one there won a bottle of liquor.

After the ceremony, the company sat down to a backwoods feast of beef, pork, sometimes bear meat, or venison, with vegetables, spread on a table made

of a large slab hewed out with a broadaxe and supported by four legs in augur holes. Meanwhile the younger members of the company were trying to steal the bride's shoe; it cost a dollar to redeem it and the bride could not dance until the forfeit was paid.

After dinner, dancing began, lasting till morning. During the late evening bridesmaids slipped the bride out and put her to bed; the groomsman then stole off to the groom and ensconced him snugly by her side.

Then instead of the bride throwing her bouquet as now, the attendants amused themselves "throwing the stocking." The maids stood in turns at foot of the bed, threw a rolled up stocking over their shoulder; the first to succeed in touching the bride's head with the stocking would be next wed. Groomsman did the same.

Meantime festivities, dancing and drinking continued downstairs with this typical toast: "Here's health to the groom, not forgetting myself; and here's to the bride. thumping luck and big children."

Grains of Sand

On "Writing Spiders" In view of this column's interest in oddities and in wildlife, we pricked up our ears when Henry Belk of Goldsboro mentioned "writing spiders" in his Greensboro Daily News column, about two weeks ago.

We didn't know then, however, that a sequel to Mr. Belk's item would be written by a Southern Pines resident.

Mr. Belk's column dealt with the reminiscences of a group of Goldsboro men who met in a barber shop. Among the things recalled was a writing spider—"a big spider an inch across"—which one of them said was a family pet in his youth, with a web in the back yard.

When somebody asked what a "writing spider" was, the man explained that they write names and letters in their web. . . "and if you knew how to read them and understand such things, you can explain many things."

"The spider at our old house," the man said, "once wrote on his web in big letters, 'PAUL' just as plain as printing. We never tore up that web and the word PAUL stayed there a long time. Paul was my brother."

Then in his News column Sunday, Mr. Belk expatiated further, quoting a letter on the subject of writing spiders from Mrs. Katharine McColl of Southern Pines. Mrs. McColl wrote:

"The writing spider comes late in Summer and is a sign of approaching Fall. He is large and his web, spread on a hedge or a flat bush looks like a page from an old-fashioned pocket book. With a little imagination, you could stretch the 'writing' into letters, though I was never able to get a word."

This comment from Southern Pines is, we must say, a little disillusioning—but it adds to the interest in the subject of writing spiders.

General Gavin

"War And Peace In The Space Age," the book that Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin wrote largely during his stay of several weeks in Southern Pines last Spring, has been published and is getting fine reviews. It was the featured book on the front page of The New York Times Book Review on Sunday.

Comment on the book is not the purpose of this column which tries to see the lighter side of life—but we were interested in the Times reviewer's summary of some personal information about General Gavin, from the book:—

"Orphaned at the age of 2, he was brought up by rough but kind Irish people in the Pennsylvania anthracite country. Hard at work at tender years, and his school over at the eighth grade, he was an Army recruit at 17. The Army opened his way to West Point. He caught up in studies by rising at 4 a. m. with 'lights out' to cram on his recitations in the lavatory, where the lights were on."

Persons who met General Gavin in Southern Pines may not know this aspect of his personal background. We didn't—and it only deepens our respect for this brilliant man.

Ads From 1919

Advertising phrases seen in a Sandhill Citizen of January, 1919 (then published in Southern Pines):

For the Royster Guano Co.: "Fertilizer with personality."

For the Dixie Opera, a movie theatre that had shows three times a week: "Not a bad place to spend an evening."

For the Maria Sandahl shop: "Antiques, cards, pottery, jewelry, toys, jokes." (Wonder what the price of a joke was.)

For Chandler's (dry goods, etc.) "We invite you to visit our store before buying elsewhere." (Now they didn't really mean that, did they?)

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