

Commentary

THE NEWS RECORD

Editorial

Getting Down To Business

The Madison County business community has finally grown weary of sitting idly by while hundreds of thousands of dollars a year are funneled down U.S. 25-70 and U.S. 19-23 into Asheville.

On both ends of the county — from Hot Springs to Marshall — merchants have come to realize that their days may be numbered if they do not take steps to prevent the continuing flow of would-be customers into the Asheville area. They have come to recognize that their economies have become stagnant; that economic growth is not at a standstill, but actually on the decline. They have come to see the deterioration of their downtown areas for what it is — a deterrent to potential customers.

It is a deterioration that has been ongoing for many years in both towns. These economic problems are not new. They have not sprung up overnight. Nor will they go away in rapid fashion.

But the rot has not set in, in Marshall nor in Hot Springs. That much is evidenced by the recent resurgence of interest in the revitalization of the faltering economies of both towns.

In Marshall, a group of concerned residents has formed the Marshall Neighbors Association, which is working hand-in-hand with the newly reorganized Marshall Merchants' Association to find ways to promote the town's businesses — both downtown and along the Bypass.

In Hot Springs, more than 30 businesses and individuals have joined forces to resurrect the long-defunct Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce. Their purpose? To promote industry and economic growth in the western end of Madison County.

Both organizations have formed or re-formed since the beginning of 1987, perhaps as fulfillment of a New Year's resolution to do something about the slow, painful death of business in much of Madison County.

Their job will not be an easy one; nor will it be impossible. There is much work to be done in the way of attracting new industry into the county, luring tourists into town, halting the flow of Madison County dollars into Asheville and attracting passing motorists off of the new four-lane highways.

Tourism is one great, untapped resource. The mountains of Madison County are among the most beautiful in Western North Carolina. Yet Madison has failed to capitalize on that natural resource. Nearby counties, on the other hand, have made tourism a multi-million dollar industry.

Tourism alone, however, will not do the trick. Summertime visitors may help fatten pocketbooks during the warm-weather months, but will do little to help put food on the table during the cold of December and January.

Other types of industry must be brought into Madison County. The county has a large, hard-working labor force, but most of it must travel out of the county to find work.

Retail business, too, needs a boost. Madison County towns are not alone in this battle. Other towns in Western North Carolina — Waynesville and Hendersonville, to name just two — have been faced with dying business districts. But, by taking advantage of state and federal programs, both of those towns are now enjoying newfound success — and are reaping the economic benefits of that success. A similar effort to spruce up the towns of Marshall and Hot Springs would do wonders for the economies of the towns.

The strategies for revitalizing commerce in Madison County are many. But all the strategy in the world won't work without the means to put that strategy in action.

Some forward-thinking folks in Marshall and Hot Springs have already taken the first step by setting up the new merchants' group and chamber of commerce.

Now it's a matter of getting down to the business of saving Madison County business. Here's a word of encouragement for their efforts, and efforts to come.

DOE Still At It

The Department of Energy is at it again — talking about the possibility of storing the nation's most dangerous radioactive waste in our mountains.

John Herrington (U.S. secretary of energy), who called off work on a repository in Eastern America last May, told Congress Thursday it could be started up again if Congress does not concur with the halt.

It was Herrington's public admission that what he had done ran counter to congressional intent — the Nuclear Waste Policy Act requires identification of an eastern site — and his willingness to correct his error.

The second best thing about Herrington's remarks is that at least the DOE's intent is on top of the table. Not that the DOE had any real choice. Congress has final word, and if Congress intends for DOE's studies to proceed, they will proceed.

The long and short of what Herrington had to say was that the search for a site is still on, unless the Congress stops it.

The best thing in Herrington's remarks was his confirmation that a second repository is not needed because the first repository, scheduled to be built in the West, will hold the waste now expected to be generated.

If the DOE cannot justify a second site, Congress will have a tough time explaining to taxpayers why they should pay for one.

But then taxpayers have done precious little to keep Congress from spending money for anything else.

Our worst fears about high-level nuclear waste storage may yet be realized.

The best thing we can do to guard against it is to raise an uproar every time someone even mentions this outrage.

THE MOUNTAINEER



The Billboard

Hey Stud-nick, About That Editorial . . .

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Welcome to "Surnames 101."

Lesson one — this editor's last name.

Studenc. Not exactly what you'd call a typical Madison County name, like Ponder, Roberts, Cutshall, Shelton, Chandler or Rice.

It's not a typical Western North Carolina name, or even — dare I say it — a typical American name.

It's a Czechoslovakian name. (No, we're not communists).

Best we can figure, an immigrant ancestor — let's call him Vladamir Studencovich — came to America way back when. When old Vladamir chugged into harbor, the port authorities discovered they couldn't fit Vladamir Studencovich onto his immigration papers, so they simply whacked off part of his name.

And the rest is history.

Studenc. Not a common surname, to say the least. As far as we Studences know, we're the only ones in the whole state.

And that explains the problems folks have had trying to pronounce the name.

Wife Margaret, up until recently, had the easily pronounceable "Arrington" surname. And what a shock for her poor students at Bethel Junior High School in Haywood County — from Miss Arrington to Mrs. (or is that Ms.) Studenc over the summer.

Margaret is only now beginning to realize what I've had to put up with for 25 years.

Well, maybe, "put up with" is a bit too strong. Actually, mispronunciation of the surname over the years has resulted in some pretty amusing incidents.

The most frequently heard pronunciation of my name is the way it is spelled — Stew-dink. The first couple of weeks here at The News Record were spent trying to break our office manager from saying, "Bill Stew-dink is our new editor's name."

In high school, where nicknames are a must, my unusual surname resulted in three — count 'em, three — nicknames.

"Studebaker" was the first of them — and probably my favorite. It had, or so I thought, a kind of classy ring to it. And it sure beat the heck out of "Barhead" or "Skippy" or "Booger."

But Studebaker quickly went the way of the Edsel, thanks to our principal, Charles Lytle. He called me to his office one day. It was my junior year, which goes to show what a boring kid I was; I didn't get called to the principal's office until my junior year. And that meant Lytle had never had to pronounce my last name.

I can still hear his booming, Conway Twitty-voice on the school PA system. "Bill Stud-nick to the office, please. Bill Stud-nick to the office."

Great. Just great. I preferred Studebaker.

The name Stud-nick stuck for a while, until someone in my high school clique decided to abbreviate it to "Stud." Either this friend knew something I didn't, or had a keen sense for the ironic.

I like to think it's the former, but I tend to think it's the latter.

All this to explain the proper way to pronounce the surname. It's easy. "Students." Just like kids at school.

Repeat after me — Bill Students, Bill Students, Bill Students. Now in Spanish — Guillermo Students, Guillermo Students, Guillermo Students.

If you want to call me up and complain about a misspelled name in a wedding announcement, criticize the coverage of the Marshall town board, disagree with an editorial on the county commissioners, or just shoot the breeze, you can pronounce my name correctly.

Editor's Note: This column is revised from a column originally written while a reporter for The Mountaineer newspaper in Waynesville. Mispronunciation of my last name seems to transcend county lines. But on the other hand, Madison County folks must be getting used to odd surnames. After all, my predecessor was named "Koenig."

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