

# Commentary

# THE NEWS RECORD

## Editorial

### Marshall Merchants Need To Remember Actions Louder...

It is time to give the Marshall Merchants' Association a firm and necessary reminder to get on with it.

The idea of an organization of town business people is a good one, through which we all, merchants and residents alike, will benefit. Unfortunately, what at first seemed a medium for town spirit may have burned out before it was lit.

The familiar cries of "he didn't do this, she didn't do that, he forgot the meeting, she doesn't like so-and-so" can be heard up and down Main Street and the Marshall Bypass, as merchants try to pass the buck to the closest scapegoat.

It's time to stop this nonsense and get down to the business at hand... the business of business, the business of stopping any more stores from having to close their doors for lack of revenue, the business of pulling together to try to solve the town's economic woes.

The Merchants' Association elected a young chairman to try to tackle some old problems. Perhaps his lack of expertise will hinder the group's efforts. Perhaps his lack of experience with local merchants is exactly what is needed, an injection of new blood to a community desperately in need of an economic transfusion.

Whoever is at the helm of the association, there remains a need for action. Simply calling yourself a merchants' association won't do it. Since forming in January, that's about all that the group has done -- elect officers and meet occasionally. The group has yet to take any positive steps to boost the town's sagging economy. Some interesting ideas -- including a brochure on the community -- have risen from the group's discussions. But those ideas have fallen to the wayside, apparently the victim of personality conflicts and a lack of communication within the group.

Shying away from getting involved is exactly why the town is in the mess it's in. Merchants who will not work together deserve to have the chips fall where they may.

John Donne said "No man is an island." No business is an island either. Marshall's business people will survive together, or die together.

This is a call for all Marshall merchants to take a good look at the future. It will be mighty dim if change does not come -- and come soon. Merchants must put aside petty differences and work together for a change.

There is no doubt the entire county would like to see the Marshall Merchants' Association succeed, but the group has to first get organized. The members must get on the ball and stop perpetrating the old myth that Marshall merchants will never cooperate.

### Judicial District Proposal Draws Criticism Elsewhere

The proposal to gerrymander mountain judicial districts is better off dead. It would have done none of the counties involved any good.

Splitting Haywood and Jackson off from the 30th Judicial District and pairing them with Madison and Yancey in a new district made no sense at all, except to those looking for a new home for Madison County.

The root of all this was dissatisfaction among some Madison County political figures with Madison County's alignment in the 24th District - Madison, Yancey, Watauga, Avery and Mitchell.

A move to put Madison in a judicial district with Buncombe drew Buncombe opposition.

If not Buncombe, then perhaps Haywood. But Haywood reacted just as strongly.

Madison wanted out of the 24th District because it was not convenient to Watauga and Mitchell -- that was the argument for all this. A less obvious reason is that Madison Democrats don't want to be tried by their Republican DA, who lives in Watauga.

But Jackson and Haywood are no more compatible with Madison and Yancey than Madison is with Mitchell. Can you see Sylva and Waynesville lawyers driving to Marshall for court? That is a waste of time.

Lawyers don't like housing female prisoners in Asheville. They would raise a fuss over meeting court in Marshall. And finally so.

Besides, Haywood and Jackson are at peace with each other, and with the other counties in the 30th.

Madison County's malcontents can address their problem at the polls. And leave Haywood County and Jackson where they belong.

THE MOUNTAINEER



## Letters To The Editor

### Junior Chandler Was 'Guilty Until Proven Innocent'

To the Editor,

As a citizen of Madison County, I feel that Andrew Chandler Jr. has been unjustly sentenced to life in prison. I strongly believe that an innocent man has been imprisoned.

Charges were brought against Chandler in May 1986. As a result, Chandler was tried in Madison County in January 1987 in criminal court. Mr. Chandler was ordered a court-appointed lawyer because he could not afford an attorney. This case was concluded after two weeks of questionable evidence. All the evidence was circumstantial; therefore, the jury came back with a mistrial. Approximately one week later, a meeting was held and the court decided to move the trial to Buncombe County without the defendant's consent.

In April 1987, Andrew Chandler Jr. was tried in Buncombe County. This case also concluded after two weeks of questionable evidence. Some witnesses for the defense were either not subpoenaed or were not permitted to testify.

Some of the Buncombe County jurors laughed openly as Chandler's witnesses testified, as if they had already made up their minds that he was guilty. As the state attorney laughed, so did the jury. And this was supposed to be an open-minded jury! One juror clapped her hands and acted comical with a man's life at stake. The acts displayed by this jury were purely childish.

Here again, all the evidence was circumstantial, but the jury came back within 2-and-a-half hours with a verdict of guilty for 12 of the 16 charges against him. Mr. Chandler was given two life sentences and 21 years. The judge also reprimanded Chandler openly and disgracefully, as though he were not even a human being.

In both cases, the outcome was a definite case of "guilty until proven innocent." All evidence was circumstantial and no evidence could be introduced that would help Chandler's case.

I believe a 29-year-old innocent man, with two children of his own, has been unjustly sentenced without any hope for the future. The conscience of the general public questions the justice of this conviction and we, the friends and family and community, are looking at this entire matter. We will find the truth, and you can count on it!

Sincerely  
Jerry Gall Gunter

### What More Do You Need?

To the Editor,

In response to the petition circulating around in Madison County in reference to Andrew "Junior" Chandler: The petition states the majority of Madison County feels Mr. Chandler is an innocent man.

I don't feel these people are speaking for the majority of Madison County. I feel they are speaking for the community where Mr. Chandler lived, not for the majority of Madison County citizens. Everyone I know personally feels if a people from dif-

ferent backgrounds can find enough evidence to convict this man, he must be guilty or he would have been set free.

I sat through this trial in Buncombe County. I didn't believe at first that such a crime could ever occur here. It's time the people in this county wake up and face reality. What more proof do these people need? Would the crimes have to be committed in their presence for them to believe it really happened? I suppose had all the acts been committed in their presence, the people that can't believe this would still say this didn't happen.

Five of seven children testified. Two were much too young. Five parents testified to the change in their children after they started to ride the van. Three pediatricians, certified specialists in determining child sexual abuse, testified. Four eyewitnesses that rode the van testified. Five witnesses that saw the van in the areas in question testified. One protective service worker testified.

Wake up! What more do you need?  
Mary Searcy  
Marshall

### The Children Didn't Lie

To the Editor,

I am saddened. The events of the past months have made me realize a deep problem exists in this county.

I once thought that "Bloody Madison" referred to an act that occurred decades ago. I was wrong. "Bloody Madison" now means that many people here still believe blood is thicker than water, and many relatives back their own, whether right or wrong.

Recently, I have seen a petition circulated for signatures in an attempt to free a guilty man who was tried and convicted by a jury of his peers. This happened to be in another a county.

Threats of violence plus outright lies placed against assurances through trial-by-jury only add up to one thing: The people who have signed the petition must realize that the guilt he carries is now shared by each of you. His guilt has been proven. Your guilt is being proven by your signatures, because you are attempting to help a sickness in this county be denying its existence.

Blood is thick, but guilt is undeniable. Your ugly threats will return to haunt you. The cure to this sickness is the truth. Please, do not lie to yourselves, because the children did not lie to any of us.

Jimmy Gaskins  
Marshall

### Comparison 'Blasphemy'

To the Editor,

It astounded me to discover that Junior Chandler, a convicted child molester, was compared to Jesus Christ. That is blasphemy!

Anyone who managed to attend both of Junior Chandler's trials

knows he was and is guilty of those heinous crimes he was convicted of. And anyone who has any doubts ought to take the time to go to the courthouse and read the transcripts. Mr. Chandler is behind bars, where he belongs.

Now, let's let those very young, innocent victims finally get on with their lives, and try to forget the nightmare they were put through.

Diana Laws  
Marshall

### Heard And Seen

By POP STORY



### Going Visitin'

By POP STORY

"Bill" and I finally visited the attractive home of Arthur and Florence Duck on the Burnsville Highway last Sunday afternoon. I had previously been to their home but it was "Bill's" first visit there.

As always, Florence and Arthur were most cordial and gave us a tour through their home which we enjoyed.

While Florence was showing Bill the many displays of her handwork and interesting wall decorations, etc., Arthur and I compared our physical problems with our cataract. We also discussed his expertise at growing hugh gourds and other plants and flowers.

Both Arthur and Florence are lovely people and are active in many projects which promote progress in the community and are considered to be two of the most popular senior citizens in the area.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit with them.

Florence also commented that she has been a regular reader of this column for many years.

### The Month of May

Each year during the month of May, I marvel at the beauties of blooming flowers, the budding of trees and the gorgeous scenery in this area, including the dogwood and other colorful flowers.

Truly, we live in the most beautiful section of the state. For this we give thanks for our many blessings.

## THE NEWS RECORD

Serving The People Of Our Communities Since 1901  
P.O. Box 389-Marshall, N.C. 28753-(704)648-2741

Cheryl W. Koenig, General Manager  
Bill Stender, Editor  
Brenda C. Parker, Office Manager  
Anna Mitchell, Staff Writer  
Randy Cox, Photographer

Published weekly by The NEWS RECORD, a division of The News & Observer Publishing Company, 2025 S.W. 4th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. Subscription rates in Madison and Buncombe Counties: 1 year \$7.50 (plus applicable 9% sales tax for \$8.25), Outside Madison and Buncombe Counties: 1 year \$10.00.

Member North Carolina Press Association

Postmaster: Send address changes to  
The NEWS RECORD  
P.O. Box 389  
Marshall, NC 28753