

Commentary

THE NEWS RECORD



Heard And Seen

By POP STORY



Area Churchgoers Do 'Do Windows'

The Rev. D.E. Lytle, pastor of Ponder's Chapel Church of Marshall and Mount Olive Church of Mars Hill, and members of churches enjoyed an appreciation dinner at Western Steer Steakhouse in Mars Hill on Saturday evening, June 6, for those who helped with new windows for the Mount Olive church.

Manuel Briscoe's choir of Mars Hill was among those attending.

"We enjoyed the dinner and fellowship," said Everett Barnett.

Speaking of Everett Barnett, here are a few of the jokes he recently submitted to me:

IT'S DISH WATER

Gen. Smedly D. Butler, always careful of the welfare of his men, when in France met two soldiers carrying a large soup kettle from the kitchen.

"Let me taste that," the General ordered.

"But General..." the soldier said.

"Don't give me any 'buts.' Give me a spoon," the General said.

The General took a taste. "You don't call that stuff soup, do you?" he shouted angrily.

"No sir," replied the soldier, "That's what I was trying to tell you, it's dishwater, sir."

USE DELTA OIL

A western evangelist makes a practice of painting religious lines on rocks and fences along public highways. One read, "What will you do when you die?"

An advertising man came along and painted under it. "Use Delta Oil - good for burns."

THAT DARN DOG AIN'T DEAD

The swain and his swainess had just encountered a bulldog that looked like he might shake a mean lower jag.

"Why mercy," she exclaimed as he started a strategic retreat. "You always swore you would face death for me."

"I would," he said as he flung a look back over his shoulder at the dog. "But that darn dog ain't dead."

Folkways And Folkspeech

Excuses, Excuses ...

By ROGERS WHITENER

As a teacher who has been in harness for more than 40 years, I have given my share of final exams: take-homes, research projects and traditional blue book concoctions.

It took me several years, however, to realize that I, too, was being examined at every semester's end by students more skillful than I in preparing their material.

True, most of their quizzes were regulation true-false, but they were demanding. Example: "My mother is getting married again so I need to take your test early in order to get home for the wedding." True or false?

Or "I need to leave a week before your final - you see, my parents are rewarding me for passing my courses by giving me a trip to Jamaica - and the second week in May is the only cruise they can fit in their schedule." True or false?

What's a teacher to do in order to pass the exam - hold the regulations, label the statement false, and be tabbed an S.O.B., or respond with a "true" and be classified as a sucker for falling for such an obvious lie?

And the stories are improving with the times - or else they represent more honesty in those who relate them.

Take, for instance, the case of a co-ed who missed the final two weeks of the semester, including my final exam, only to show up a week after the close of school to request a make-up test. Hard to mark her story false. You be the judge.

"You see, I've been living with my boyfriend in a apartment his year, and several months ago I thought I was pregnant. So I went to the infirmary for a check-up, but the doctor gave me a clean bill. I still don't feel just right, however, so after a couple of months I went home to see our family doctor. After the examination

he bluntly informed me that I was four months pregnant. Well, my boyfriend and I talked it over, decided that we weren't ready to be parents, and so I had an abortion. It was so rough that I had to miss over two weeks of school." True or false?

I marked it true. And gave her a make-up exam.

A somewhat more amusing story comes from a lady professor who was approached by a male after missing her test. He was hesitant in delivery but earnest in expression:

"You have to understand that I play baseball, and the other day when we were playing Chattanooga I tried to stretch a single into a double by belly-sliding into second. I made it, but on the way in I - well, you know, I slid on my - well, golly, the doctor says I broke my..."

"All right, all right, I believe you," the professor interrupted.

Later that day, as she related the story to her husband she began to have doubts about her response. Especially when her husband scoffed at her naivete: "Why, Gertrude, you're old enough to know you can't break those things!"

But you can break an arm and be unable to write. You can drop a typewriter and be unable to finish a term paper, and the lightning can run in on your computer and cause it to explode, destroying your research. You can even be rammed from the rear by another car and find that you can't open your trunk lid to get your prep notes for next day's exams.

So what do you do? You prepare your own true-false exam for the teacher and hope against hope that he or she marks it "true."

Readers are invited to send full material to FOLKWAYS AND FOLKSPEECH, Department of English, Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608.

Editorial

No More Free Rides For Water Customers

Some Marshall residents are apparently upset that the town board wants them to pay their overdue water bills.

Well, that's just too bad. The town has allowed the delinquent water bills to go unpaid for too long. Town officials should have taken steps long ago to collect the unpaid bills. Their decision to do so is almost as overdue as some of the bills they are now trying to collect.

Marshall officials have for months threatened to cut off water service to those customers who haven't paid their bills. Until recently, those customers have realized that those were just threats, and nothing more.

But now the town is cracking down on the delinquent water customers. Pay your bill in full or a town employee will remove your water meter. If you want your water turned back on, it will cost you what you owe the town for water you've

already used, plus a \$25 reconnection fee.

That "get-tough" policy has made some of the customers angry. They want to pay their outstanding water accounts on the "friendly, monthly installment plan." Town officials are right to refuse to go this route. Those customers who have let their accounts go unpaid for a year or more have already ruined their credit ratings.

There may be one or two instances in which a water customer may have a legitimate excuse for not paying his or her water bill. In those rare cases, town officials should take the extenuating circumstances into consideration.

But for those who have simply not paid for they water they've used - allowing the rest of us to foot the bill for them - the free ride is over.

AIDS Hysteria Hinders A Sound Policy

Americans will hardly be able to protect themselves against the AIDS epidemic by falling victim to another affliction: a political paralysis of the national will. President Reagan's proposals, which fall between compulsory mass testing and sole reliance on safe-sex education, seek to avoid harmful impasse. Whether they succeed in doing that depends on how the president's plea for "routine" testing is interpreted.

Reagan calls for mandatory AIDS tests for selected people under U.S. government control: federal prisoners, immigrants and aliens. Then he proposes that states offer "routine" testing for marriage license applicants, persons served by venereal-disease and drug-abuse clinics, and inmates of state and local prisons. If, as Surgeon General C. Everett Koop believes, "routine" does not mean compulsory, the president will have found a reasonable middle ground.

Several presidential policy advisers, their fingers in the political wind, had urged a much broader program of automatic testing for the AIDS virus. There had been similar pressure on Reagan from New Right activists, whose sights

for mandatory testing are fixed on homosexuals and intravenous drug users. But with a debate raging over civil liberties versus public well-being, Reagan has chosen a more restrained course until more is known about the AIDS scourge.

Public health authorities, led by Dr. Koop, have offered persuasive dissent to widespread mandatory testing. For one thing, it would be enormously expensive. Already, the nation's AIDS bill figures to total between \$10 billion and \$15 billion by 1991. That doesn't even count the vast productivity losses when the disease claims victims in their prime working years.

Sweeping mandatory tests within the general population may be counterproductive as well. Since the testing is imperfect, a false finding can easily blight a person's life. Moreover, persons at great risk by contracting the AIDS virus may avoid tests and the medical system altogether, out of fear of losing jobs, insurance, housing and even social acceptance if they become known as carriers.

History shows that the civil liberties of Americans come under gravest threats at times of national fear bordering on hysteria. Public policy on AIDS can't be made in that kind of climate.

Prevention of the spread of the virus by education that guides - or alters - sexual conduct is still the best AIDS defense. It's clear, nonetheless, that the most vulnerable groups include prisoners and the sex partners of intravenous drug users, as well as medical workers and even children born of AIDS-carrying parents. So there's a place in the fight for carefully devised testing in high-risk categories.

President Reagan's proposals take a few tentative steps in that direction. However, he leaves much of the debate to the states as the nation's fears about the public health run head-on into individual rights of privacy. State and local leaders should keep reminding themselves that this is a war against the disease of AIDS, not against those who might become its victims.

THE NEWS RECORD

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P.O. Box 369-Marshall, N.C. 28753-(704)848-2741

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Published weekly by The NEWS RECORD, a division of The News & Observer Publishing Company, 2275 328-440 Second Class Postage Paid at Marshall, N.C.
Subscription rates in North and South Carolina: 1 year \$7.00
Outside the U.S. rates for \$7.00, include postage and handling charges 1 year \$10.00.

Postmaster: Send address changes to
The NEWS RECORD
P.O. Box 369
Marshall, NC 28753