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Opinion and commentary

by Paul Dickson

"They laughed when I sat down to play," used to be the catch line on an advertisement which ran in national magazines for many years. It was from a company which offered to teach one to play the piano by correspondence, and they must have been able to do it, too, for they did keep on running the ad, year after year. The line frequently occurs to me as I sit down to this typewriter to try to say something sensible, or at least thought-provoking in this space.

Many editors are really very smart, and do a great deal of research and thinking on the subjects that should be on our minds from day to day, so that their comments do make sense and do get us to thinking. Some are not as smart as they would like to appear to be. Funny thing, though, but they are also doing a job, if they can just get the reader to read what they write, for then he will take the initiative and tell himself that so and so doesn't know what he's talking about, or he ought to be ashamed of himself. If this reader gets to thinking and expressing himself about the subject then the writer has accomplished something. What to think is the reader's business, but getting him started to figuring out his own attitude is often worthwhile and where editorial writers can make a contribution, in my opinion.

Politicians use two phrases to get them going, usually. They either "point with pride" to something they or their constituents have accomplished, or they "view with alarm" the actions of foreigners, the other party, or the people somewhere else. Editors quite often take the same stance, and often go a step further and outline what should be done by some group or political entity, and this is fine as long as there is reaction, either in agreement or disagreement.

This week I am going to be laughing as I get up as well as when I sat down. The following story of the late Edmond Harding of Washington, N.C., has been reprinted in several papers lately, and is typical of this great humorist, I'd say. I hope you'll get a chuckle from it too.

Mrs. George Wood, now deceased, of Chowan County, had a mule who was named Horace. One evening she called up Dr. Satterfield in Edenton and said to him, "Doctor, Horace is sick, and I wish you would come and take a look at him."

Dr. Satterfield said, "Oh, Fannie Lamb, it's after six o'clock, and I'm eating supper. Give him a dose of mineral oil, and if he isn't all right in the morning, phone me, and I'll come take a look at him."

"How'll I give it to him?" she inquired.

"Through a funnel."

"But he might bite me," she protested.

"Oh, Fannie Lamb--You're a farm woman and you ought to know about these things. Give it to him through the other end."

So Fannie Lamb went out to the barn, and there stood Horace, with his head held down, moaning and groaning.

She looked around for a funnel but the nearest thing she could see to one was her Uncle Bill's fox hunting horn hanging on the wall. A beautiful goldplated instrument with gold tassels hanging from it.

She took the horn and affixed it properly. Horace paid no attention.

Then she reached up on the shelf where medicines for the farm animals were kept. But instead of picking up the mineral oil, she picked up a bottle of turpentine, and she poured a liberal dose into the horn.

Horace raised his head with a sudden jerk. He let out a yell that could have been heard a mile away. He reared up on his hind legs, brought his front legs down, knocked out the side of the barn, jumped a five-foot fence, and started down the road at a mad gallop.

Now Horace was in pain, so every few jumps he made, the horn would blow.

All the dogs in the neighborhood knew that when the horn was blowing, it meant that Uncle Bill was going fox hunting, so out on the highway they went, close behind Horace.

It was a marvelous sight. First, Horace--running at top speed, the hunting horn in a most unusual position, the mellow notes issuing therefrom, the tassels waving, and the dogs barking joyously.

They passed by the home of Old Man Harvey Hogan, who was sitting on his front porch. He hadn't drawn a sober breath in 15 years, and he gazed in fascinated amazement at the sight that unfolded itself before his eyes. He couldn't believe what he was seeing. Incidentally, he is now head man in Alcoholics Anonymous in the Albemarle section of the state.

By this time it was good and dark. Horace and the dogs were approaching the Inland Waterway. The bridge tender heard the horn blowing and figured that a boat was approaching, so he hurriedly went out and uncranked the bridge. Horace went overboard and was drowned. The dogs also went into the water, but they swam out without much difficulty.

Now it so happened that the bridge tender was running for sheriff of Chowan County, but he only managed to poll seven votes.

The people figured that a man who didn't know the difference between a mule with a horn up his rear and a boat coming down the Inland Waterway, wasn't fit to hold any public office in Chowan County.

Rural Fires Call 875-4242

The way granddad watches a moon flight you'd think it was something great!



By LAURIE TELFAIR

I Think We Must Collect Children

We're the only people I know of who can go to a bar mitzvah with one kid and leave with five.

Our young neighbor invited us to his bar mitzvah and we took our older daughter. We arrived for the ceremony with one child and left with five, three of whom were total strangers. It seems that the three were attending without their parents and needed to ride to the reception. Those, plus the younger sister of the bar mitzvah boy and our own made five.

It was no trouble, and we were happy to do it, of course, but the entire somewhat confusing affair was symptomatic of the way we seem to attract children, much like a magnet or, more accurately, like the way a cat seems to gravitate to the lap of the person who hates cats.

One night last week our girls came in and asked permission to sleep outside on a neighbor's porch (it was during the monsoons). It seemed safe enough, so we said ok. Along about 11 p.m., as I was

Puppy Creek Philosopher

Dear editor:

According to the syndicated columnist in all the newspapers I've gotten hold of lately, the big issue in the 1972 Presidential election will be economics, a fairly safe prediction in view of the fact economics has been the main issue in elections since elections were invented.

In commenting on the current economic situation, one columnist, after citing the alarming rate of inflation, unemployment, deficit spending, etc., with the national budget over - shot by 25 billion dollars, said "something is wrong when the government's chief financial officers can't come within 8 or 10 billion dollars of estimating how much the government will spend."

I don't know anything about such matters as the rate of inflation, the economic index or the cost - of - living index, all I've got out here is a thermometer that's two or three degrees off and a rain gauge with the markings too rusty to read, although I can tell you whether it's hot or cold outside and whether I need a rain or not.

But what interested me was that columnist's not being able to understand how the government can't come within 8 or 10 billion dollars of estimating how much it will spend in the next 12 months.

It's easy. For example, at the start of the year how was I to know my hot water heater was going out two months after the warranty ran out, and how could Washington know it was going to have to pay for vaccinating 2 million horses against sleeping sickness at \$4 a shot?

I didn't know the transmission on my car was going to fall apart at a cost of \$139, any more than Washington knew that Lockheed was going to tap it for 250 million dollars.

And so it goes. If it's not one thing it's another. Anybody with kids and appliances, like a government with 200 million citizens, is in for 12 months of unanticipatable expense.

Maybe that columnist can sit down at the start of the year and tell you what's going to happen to him in a financial sort of way, but me and Washington have never been able to figure it out. Which one of your presses is going to break down next?

Yours faithfully,
J.A.

taking a bath, our seven year - old and a friend came in the living room and said they were scared. Good old dad said "why don't you sleep in here?" and by the time I got out of the tub there were seven kids bedded down on the living room rug.

The doorbell rang, and still in a state of shock, I opened the door and the four - year - old boy across the street walked in with his blanket and pillow. I never did find out how he got into the party, but he bedded down at the end of the line and went to sleep.

Soon after that, I brought larger beds for the children. Until then, we had only a single bed for each girl and they had separate rooms. So, usually, overnight guests either doubled up in the twin bed, or the group slept in the living room in sleeping bags.

What with summer, and the constant stream of children spending the night, there have been weeks at a time when I couldn't get through the living room to let an animal in or out without walking on wall to wall children.

We briefly had some folding cots for lightweight overnight guests, but our dog, in a fit of pique at being left alone one night, ate the mattresses.

Whenever we would prepare the blankets and sleeping bags in the living room, the puppy we had then was sure we were making her bed. She considered herself one of the kids anyway and loved to play with them, so she would always be right in the middle of the blankets as they were getting ready for bed. If you lured her off long enough for a child to slip into bed, she was back in the group immediately, rooting out enough room for herself. The kids never liked to sleep with Babe, though, and she was usually banished to the kitchen or put outside.

Occasionally this all pays off in a night of peace and quiet, when our two youngsters go off around the neighborhood to haunt one of the neighbor's houses.

And there is hope. With the coming school year, spending the night will be limited to weekends. We can all gather our children back into our homes and count them. I am sure that we moved to North Carolina with two children and I can't remember having any more since then, so this fall, if all the parents play fair and count correctly, we should again have only two children.

I hope they are the same two we came here with, because I rather liked them.

Browsing in the files

of The News-Journal

25 years ago

Thursday, August 15, 1946

Funeral services were conducted at the home here Sunday afternoon at 4:00 o'clock for Thomas Benton Upchurch, who passed away Saturday after an illness of less than one week.

The feed and flour mill plant of the Upchurch Milling and Storage Company here was completely destroyed by fire Monday morning.

Luke McNeill S2c is expected to arrive home today, after being separated from the navy at Norfolk, Va. He spent the past 14 months in the Pacific area.

The Collins Department store here is now being managed by J.I. Hubbard, who

People & Issues

CLIFF BLUE ...

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY - With North Carolina lined up to hold its first presidential primary in May 1972 some are beginning to wonder if George C. Wallace will become the "apollo" insofar as the liberal Democrat hopefuls are concerned.

In 1968 Wallace had more support among the Democrats than did Hubert Humphrey. Nixon led in the state, Wallace came in second with Humphrey in third place.

However, in 1968 Wallace Wallace was running on his American Party ticket, but down in Alabama he has been elected governor on the Democrat ticket.

Should Wallace be permitted to enter the Democratic presidential primary in North Carolina he could very well lead the ticket as most of the Wallace supporters in 1968 were registered Democrats. This would be rather embarrassing for the party - line Democrats carrying the banner for liberals like Muskie, McGovern, Jackson and others.

Last week in Montgomery, Alabama Governor Wallace announced his intention to run again in 1972 and expressed interest in the North Carolina presidential primary.

For the "liberal" Democrats to try and keep Wallace out of the North Carolina presidential sweepstakes would not appear very "liberal."

SCHOOL BUSING - President Nixon says he is opposed to busing to achieve a certain percentage of integration, but if he is he seems a poor person to pick the right person to head - up the HEW Department to carry out his policy.

When Nixon was running for president in 1968 he made a speech in which he strongly opposed cross - city school busing, but since he took up residence at the 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue busing has increased by leaps. When it comes to school busing Nixon has two faces.

Senator Henry M. Jackson came visiting to North Carolina last week and also appeared to be talking out of both sides of his mouth when the subject was busing children.

In one statement Jackson said: "I'm not opposed to busing that can serve a useful purpose." In another statement he seemed to oppose busing, saying that forced busing to achieve integration in

Southern communities make children "victims of ideological patterns."

Jackson, like Nixon, seems to have two faces when it comes to forced school busing. The two men are probably right much alike as Nixon tried to get Senator Jackson to head up the Department of Defense, which the Washington Democrat turned down.

AFTER JORDAN - Rep. Nick Galifianakis who is thinking seriously of opposing Senator B. Everett Jordan in the 1972 primary refers to Jordan as a "dear friend of mine." Nick says that he is considering running because he is afraid that if Jordan is the nominee that "a younger, attractive Republican can take the seat unless the Democrats nominate a candidate who is able to run a strong, vigorous race."

Despite the fact that several are looking to 1972 which an eye peeled towards Jordan's senate seat, we suspect that the Saxaphaw man will be pretty hard to topple. Two have already announced their candidacies for the Democratic nomination for Jordan's seat and in addition to Nick, two from Mecklenburg are saying it, Senator Herman Moore, and William H. Boone, the latter an outstanding conservative member of the Mecklenburg School Board.

HOT RACES - With contests in the making for governor, lieutenant governor, U.S. Senator and president for North Carolina next spring it looks as if there will be a "hot time in the old town" even before summer arrives.

POLLS - Opinion polls can sometimes be right, and sometimes wrong. Generally, we suspect that they can give a pretty good idea of the sentiment at the time when the polls are being made, but sentiment can change fast.

We understand that Pat Taylor and Robert Morgan are going to have polls made before finalizing their plans for 1972. If both got together and had one poll made they would probably come out better with half the cost. But, this is not the way you play politics. Taylor, Morgan, Bowles and Morton will all have their individual polls made. If all the candidates would chip in and let the Party have one comprehensive poll made for governor, lieutenant governor and maybe other offices money could be saved with what might be sounder results.

Just One Thing After Another

By Carl Goerch

Postmasters from all over North Carolina held a meeting recently. Quite a number of women attended the convention, and this reminds us again that officially there is no such person as a postmistress. The government recognizes both men and women as postmasters.

We have a subscriber to our magazine named Mr. Gray Friday of Gastonia.

At lunch the other day, one of our friends asked us to correct this sentence: "He told her about he and Sam going fishing."

The grammarian in the party, however, said that both "he" and "him" are wrong. The correct way to say that sentence would be: "He told her about his and Sam's going fishing."

"Played checkers the other night with Tom Baker," writes Louis Andrews of Durham. "We played five games and I won twice as many as Baker did. How many games did Baker win?"

Well, that isn't so hard to figure out, so we'll let you do it for yourself.

Tradition says that at Stinking Quarter in Alamance County a party of hunters camped before the Revolutionary War. So much game was killed there that their offal became offensive and they moved camp to another place nearby and named their first camp for the odor left behind - Stinking Quarter. At their new camp a great snow fell which held them there many days. The stumps of trees, felled for firewood, stood head high after the snow melted away. On this account the place was called Snow Camp.

After the battle of Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis retreated toward Wilmington and stopped at Snow Camp, selected the home of Simon Dixon and ordered the Dixon's out. He used this home for his headquarters. In a short

time Cornwallis heard a confusion at the front door and asked what it meant. It was old Mrs. Dixon demanding admission to get her pipe which she had left behind. Cornwallis granted her request and the old lady left with her pipe. The chair that Cornwallis is reported to have sat in is still in existence.

Do you know where Atkinson is? It's a little community in Pender County and we passed through it recently and stopped at a service station there. Got to talking to a Baptist preacher who told us some interesting things about Atkinson and the surrounding country.

The Black River is located about four miles from the town and at one time there was considerable freight hauled up and down this stream. And through most of this area you'll find churches located close to the river shore a considerable distance from the nearest community. Reason for this is that these churches were built a long time ago, before there were any decent roads. Easiest way to travel was up and down the river, so that's where the churches were built. People went to church by boat. Due to historic and sentimental reasons, these churches still operate at the same location, even though they are located now in rather isolated spots.

Point Caswell was the shipping point on the Black River and it's about four miles distant from Atkinson. It is somewhat of a "ghost town." Way back in the days when waterway transportation was at its height, it was a right prosperous little community, with five or six stores, a hotel, three barrooms and fifteen or twenty residences. With the decline of steamboating Point Caswell began to go backwards. Today the stores, barrooms and hotel are gone. A good many of the houses also have been torn down and only a few of those that remain are occupied. High oak trees, covered with Spanish moss, add to the quietness and serenity of the place.

STORIES

BEHIND WORDS

By William S. Penfield

SHODDY

In the Yorkshire factories of England the fluff or wool that was shed during the spinning process was called "shoddy," from a Middle English word "Schode" - to shed or divide. Later, the name was applied to cloth made from reclaimed wool.

The wool was reclaimed by shredding old garments into the original fibers. Then the fibers were spun into new cloth.

The old fibers were weak. Even though new wool sometimes was mixed with the old, the resultant cloth still was of decidedly inferior quality.

Eventually "shoddy" was used to denote not only the inferior cloth, but also any cheap thing masquerading as something of quality.

came here from the Collins store in Lake City, S.C., to relieve P.A. Wilson, who has managed the store here since before the war.

From Rockfish News: Rockfish is very proud of the new bus service.

From Poole's Medley: Apple pie is America's most popular dessert and in that case I am with the majority. The cheapest and best apples I know of are at Riley's orchard near Montrose.

15 years ago

A.R. Currie of Blue Springs Township brought the first open cotton boll of the season to The News-Journal office this morning.