

Viewpoints

Upchurch band served as county ambassadors

Two weeks ago the band from Upchurch Junior High School marched in the Red Springs Appreciation Day Parade, and by all accounts, did an excellent job as Hoke County's only marching representative.

The band was able to get to the parade and back to Raeford with the help of buses furnished by Red Springs. In addition, the town made a \$100 donation to the band for playing.

When told of the donation, the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce agreed to reimburse Red Springs to help defray the town's costs of putting on the parade.

We commend the Upchurch band members, their director Gil Clark and those responsible for the group taking part in the parade and doing a good job as this county's ambassadors.

Their extra effort put forth to spread the neighborly spirit of Hoke County paid off.

It is that sort of effort which will continue to let others know that this is one of the best communities in the state in which to live and work.

Hats off to the Upchurch band.

New spirit emerging in Hoke County now

After years of disappointments, good things are beginning to happen again in Hoke County, and there is a new spirit emerging.

Last week, a Hookerton firm was given a green light to construct a 100-bed nursing home facility in Raeford. The \$1.59 million project, which will be built and managed by Britthaven Inc., will employ from 55 to 70 persons and will give this county a new level of medical care.

Britthaven had the endorsements of the city and county governing bodies and from the board of directors of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce. Local officials and concerned residents appeared last week at a public hearing to help argue the firm's case before the Cardinal Health Agency, and had they not done so, this county could have suffered.

Arguments put forth by the local delegation overcame the objections of the Cardinal staff and landed the approval for Britthaven, whose announced interests seem to parallel those of the entire county.

Britthaven plans to begin construction in the spring and to open the doors on the new facility the following year. Once completed, the care unit should attract skilled workers from the ranks of those who live here and from those who could become new Hoke County residents. The added employment, the additions to the tax base and the improved level of health care, should make Britthaven a welcome asset.

Hoke County was also remembered last week by the state Department of Transportation (DOT), whose board of commissioners voted to return U.S. Highway 401 to the state's construction priority list.

The work is scheduled to begin in 1988, but with effective lobbying by county leaders, the timetable could be moved forward. The road would not have been restored to the construction lists had it not been for the effort of local residents joining with political leaders like Congressman Bill Hefner and state Rep. Danny DeVane to force the DOT action.

Now that the road is on the priority list, pressure on the DOT must be redoubled to insure that the four-lane project is constructed.

A widened Highway 401 is vital to this county's future and now the project, which has been a dream for more than a decade, is within our grasp.

Another hope for the future also came true recently, when the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad made a Christmas gift of the old Depot building on Main Street jointly to the city and county. Plans are to use the structure as an office for the Chamber of Commerce and the industrial recruiter.

With a little community effort, the building could serve as the cornerstone of the downtown revitalization movement in Raeford. It is hoped that once the old terminal is remodeled and the lot landscaped, others with Main Street property might follow the example.

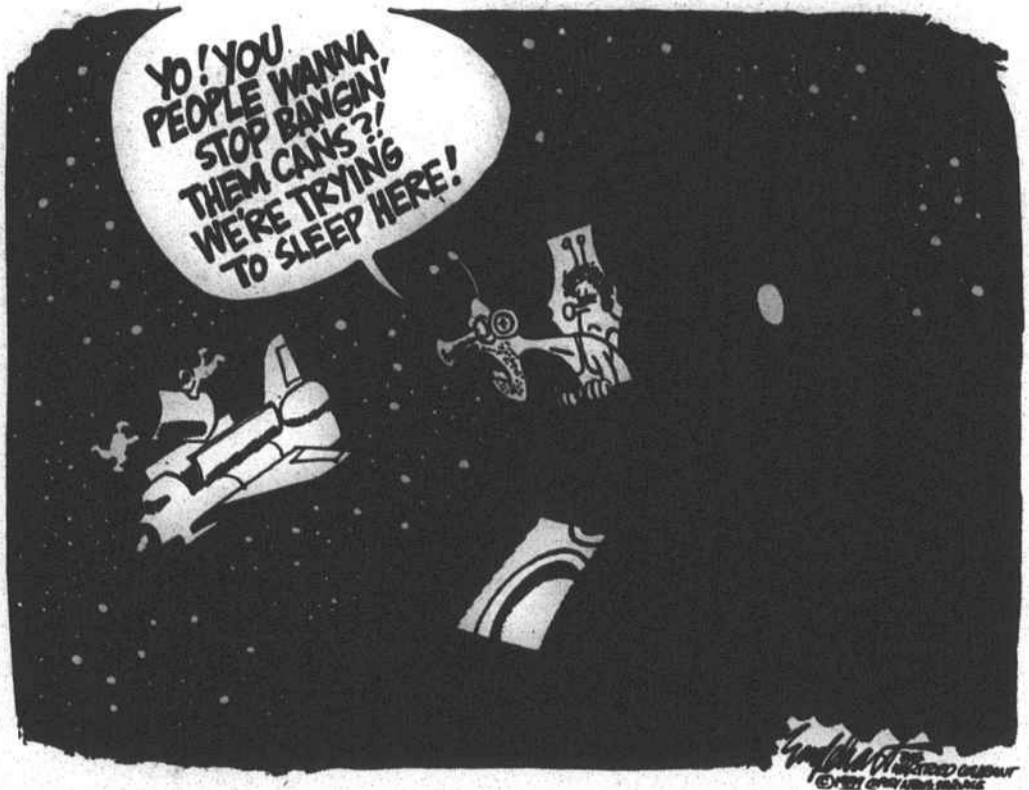
The recent successes would not have been possible without the new spirit of pride in Hoke County which has emerged in recent years. Although the spirit has a long history, it has recently been rekindled by a small group of residents, who are working to improve the quality of life here.

The spirit is growing now, and others are beginning to lend a hand to help. At the first annual Hoke County Mullet Roast last week, county leaders used the forum to let residents know that the door is open to all who want to be a part of this county's future.

The message of the mullet roast was clear. If this county is going to survive, all ages, races, sexes and political factions must join together to work for the success of the common goal of making Hoke County a better place to live.

Good things are happening in Hoke County, and they will continue as long as a community spirit among all residents is kept alive.

Merry Christmas.



Letters To The Editor

Police were pros handling robbery

To the Editor:

I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the alert and professional manner by which the City of Raeford Police Department carried out their duty in the apprehension of the suspect involved in our December 5th robbery. The immediate response enabled the officers to capture the suspect within a few yards of the bank property as he fled on foot.

The Sheriff's deputies, highway patrol, and FBI arrived on the scene and were available for assistance, and we thank them for responding.

The Raeford Police Department, officers and dispatcher did an outstanding job and we at United Carolina Bank wish to express our appreciation for a job well done.

Sincerely,
R.L. Conoly
City Executive

Special Yule moment recalled

What I try to write in this column is, for better or for worse, my own stuff. But I ran across something recently, an excerpt from Moss Hart's *Act One*, that I would like to share with you. It's a poignant reminder that personal values can easily be misplaced at Christmas-time:

"We hurried on, our heads bent against the wind ... Tugging at my father's coat, I started down the line of pushcarts ... I would merely pause before a pushcart to say, with as much control as I could muster, 'Look at that chemistry set!' or, 'There's a stamp album!' or 'Look at the printing press!'"

"Each time my father would pause and ask the pushcart man the price. Then without a word we would on to the next pushcart."



Things That Matter

two or three more pushcarts remained.

"My father looked up, too, and I heard him jingle some coins in his pocket. In a flash I knew it all. He'd gotten together about 75 cents to buy me a Christmas present, and he hadn't dared say so in case there was nothing to be had for so small a sum."

"As I looked up at him I saw a look of despair and disappointment in his eyes that brought me

closer to him than I had ever been in my life. I wanted to throw my arms around him and say, 'It doesn't matter ... I understand ... This is better than a chemistry set or a printing press ... I love you.'

"But instead we stood shivering beside each other for a moment --then turned away from the last two pushcarts and started silently back home ..."

"I didn't even take his hand on the way home nor did he take mine. We were not on that basis. Nor did I ever tell him how close to him I felt that night -- that for a little while the concrete wall between father and son had crumbled away, and I knew that we were too lonely people struggling to reach each other."

Editorial wrong

To the Editor:

As a member of the Hoke High Marching Band, I fully disagree with the editorial in the December 12 *News Journal*.

This year the band has 190 people and it costs very much to go places. We fully regret that we did not attend the Red Springs parade, but I do not feel that it is necessary to print such slander.

That article not only puts down the band members, it puts down the directors, also.

When the paper speaks of such slander it puts down the school.

I am proud that I go to the Hoke High School, but when you print such information it could very easily change the mind of someone who was planning to move here if they have children who will be going to school.

It just might change their minds because more than likely the people don't want their children to go to a school that is always having stuff printed in the paper that isn't true.

Proud Band Members
Leah Hendrix
Chrissy Williams

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor are encouraged and welcomed. Writers should keep letters as short as possible. Names, addresses and telephone numbers should be included and all letters must be signed. Names will be printed, however, other information will be kept confidential. We reserve the right to edit letters for good taste and brevity. Letters should be received by *The News-Journal* by noon on the Monday of the publication week.

Note from Santa maintains mysteries

The other evening as my wife and I were sitting around the fire, she began complaining how the great mysteries of Christmas seem to fade the older one gets.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we could retain the Christmas spirit that we had when we were little?" she said.

"Christmas is exciting today, but it's just not what it used to be. The suspense has gone."

This Yule musing started me thinking about Christmases when I was a youth, and about the time Santa Claus wrote me a letter.

The message arrived shortly before Christmas when I was six and had begun to hear rumors that Santa might not be exactly what I always had believed him to be.

It was one of those chilly December 23 nights.

My family was sitting around the supper table. A bitter draft wafted down the stairs of our two-story Atlanta house, flooding the normally cozy kitchen with a sock-hiking cold.

My father instructed me to go upstairs and close the window, that I had obviously left open.

I protested, noting that I had not opened a window since June, and that I was far too young to be trusted with such an important task. I recommended that one of my three older brothers tackle the job.

"Beside, it's dark up there," I argued.

"Come on. Make it snappy," my father said impatiently.

Reluctantly I mounted the dark stairs, groping for the light switch. As usual, the hall lights did not work when I really needed them.

I complained, but received no sympathy from below.

"Don't be a baby," everyone from the lighted warm kitchen shouted in unison. "Close the window. It's cold," they said.

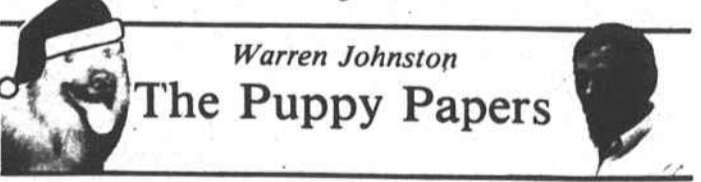
The draft was coming from an opened window in my bedroom. I knew I had not left it open, and suspected that a burglar could be lurking in the closet or under my bed.

A dim glow was coming from an overturned lamp near the window. The curtains were flapping in the wind.

It was obvious someone had entered through the window. I rushed back down the stairs for reinforcements.

"Someone has broken into the house and at this very moment is hiding under my bed," I told my family, who seemed abnormally amused.

"Can't you do anything right,?" my complaining brothers said, as they escorted me up the stairs.



"We thought you were a lot tougher."

My brothers played football. Being "tough" was an important part of life around our house.

"Hey. I'm tough. This just happens to be a job which requires more than one person," I told my escorts in a high-pitched six-year-old voice.

While my brothers checked the closet and under the bed, I discovered a white powder on the window sill.

A tiny set of footprints led from the window across the rug to my bed. Pinned to my pillow was a note on brownish pink paper. The edges were burned.

"Obviously, elves have been in here," my oldest brother.

Whatever my oldest brother said was considered to be the truth. I was confident he knew about elves.

"I thought it must be elves all along," I said, buoyantly noting that I had just brought the three of them along to confirm my suspicions.

"This is just a quick note to remind you that Christmas is just two days away," the scrawlings on the parchment said.

"On occasion I'm forced to tell children I'm keeping a watchful eye on them. You are no exception," the note said.

"I must remind you that failure to meet all of the good behavior guidelines could result in a Christmas morning filled with switches and lumps of coal," it went on.

"With fondest regards to your family, Santa," the note was signed.

Well, if Santa cared enough to write me from the North Pole and have an elf deliver it, I certainly was not going to let him down by being bad.

Since then, I have always had a soft spot in my heart for Santa. I have never wavered in my belief that the Jolly Ole Elf exists, and that he is keeping a watchful eye on all of us, particularly at this time of year.

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