

Viewpoints

Everyone pitched in, except Hoke officials

Many civic-spirited Hoke County residents were suffering from sore muscles and tired feet on Monday after having pitched in for two community building events last weekend.

The brightness of the weekend citizen effort was only clouded by the failure of most local elected officials to support the ventures.

On Saturday a group of about 25 residents helped raise inside walls on the old Aberdeen-Rockfish Railroad Depot which is being restored for the offices of the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development. The day could be compared to an old fashioned barn or church raising. It was reminiscent of the days when people did for themselves.

Not only did their efforts improve the building and save the community the costs of the restorations, but it also gave those working a sense of making Hoke County a better place to live.

Eight and a half hours of a Saturday, along with several hammered thumbs, were sacrificed by carpenters and concerned helpers. A squad of excellent cooks prepared and served lunch to the workers. All performed their tasks without thought of recognition.

It was the spirit of those working on Saturday, which makes one appreciate that at least on a grass roots level, many Hoke Countians care about the future of the community.

However, it was also disheartening that City Councilman Benny McLeod was the only elected official who bothered to lend a hand or to encourage tired workers. There were no county commissioners who stopped by to check the progress. No other city officials took time for an appearance.

For those who want to help, but missed the community work day last Saturday, and for those elected officials who want to express their interest in the project, another depot remodeling party is being scheduled.

On Sunday, members of the Turkey Festival Committee, local performing artists and area craftsmen provided Hoke County with a free afternoon of entertainment and family fun during Art in the Park.

The event was well attended. Those who took part seemed to appreciate the efforts of organizers Teresa Marion, Eloise Carter,

Beverly Pasternak and Mary Archie McNeill, who celebrated her 39th birthday during the festivities.

Art in the Park was provided as a gift to the community at a cost of about \$300, none of which was tax money. Hard work and volunteer time went into its production.

From the ranks of the elected officials, only Hoke County School Board member Eddie McNeill and state Rep. Danny DeVane attended.

Good things are happening in Hoke County.

There is a movement afoot by concerned citizens to attract new residents, create more jobs, improve educational opportunities and increase the tax base. The effort is not only one of just survival, but it is also concerned with building on the heritage which has already made Hoke County a good place to live.

The events of this past weekend were part of this upbeat grass roots movement, and it is unfortunate that most elected officials in Hoke County missed them.

Actions of arsonists problem of community

There are juvenile arsonists around Raeford who are jeopardizing the well being of residents, endangering fire fighters, destroying property and costing taxpayers money.

During the last few weeks, members of the Raeford Fire Department have made more than 15 trips to the Robins Heights area of the city to battle what appears to be intentionally set woods fires.

All of the fires have started after school hours and speculation is that children are setting the blazes in order to watch the excitement of the converging firemen.

Last week, one of the fires was whipped by the wind and spread rapidly. Fortunately, the blaze moved away from the city into a wooded area. The inferno could have turned just as easily toward Raeford with disastrous results.

An arsonists prank could have turned to tragedy. The fire bugs are being protected by friends and by parents, and each afternoon the blazes continue to erupt. Lives and property are placed in jeopardy.

City taxpayers have forked out about \$15,000 thus far to fight the

harassing fires. Firemen have been injured and equipment has been damaged.

Law enforcement efforts to apprehend the culprits have been frustrated by a lack of cooperation from residents of the area.

One solution to the problem would be long drenching rains, but until the dry weather ends, those who live in Robins Heights need to help authorities to quinch the danger by stopping the young arsonists.

If the fires are allowed to continue to burn, the lives of all who live in the community could go up in smoke.

It is a community event to watch the firemen battle the intentionally set fires. If arsonists do not stop, it could become the community's task to find a new place to live.

Budget shows work

In recent weeks, members of the Hoke County School Board have been acting like leaders in the community and are tackling the task of improving the county's educational system.

The board's new concern showed up last week during a marathon budget session.

Unlike previous years, the board of education is presenting to the county commission a whittled down version of the school's operating budget for the upcoming fiscal period. The proposed spending bill is not bare bones, but it is an emaciated "no frills" version of what the commissioners have received in the past.

After hours of private study and a six-hour cutting session, the board members have come up with a local budget which is 9.9% higher than the 1984-85 bill.

This year the board is going to the commissioners and to the taxpayers of Hoke County asking for increases they can defend as justifiable and needed to improve the quality of education in schools.

School administrators have been questioned about budget proposals, and appropriate cuts have been made. The board members did their jobs.

Hoke County property owners can probably look for higher tax bills this August. However, taxpayers can be confident school officials have made an effort to cut expenses, while at the same time have maintained a quality educational system.

Community days built pride

On Sunday afternoon my friend said she was "all civiced out." I understood. We were exhausted. It had been a busy weekend in Raeford.



Kay Thomas
Looking On

On Saturday morning - early - pickups began unloading saws at the depot. Men in work clothes began to arrive, hammers in their hands. The wonderful, idealistic concept of "Community Restores Depot" was to be put into action.

The lumber and nails had been ordered. The plan had been carefully thought out and meticulously drawn. Experienced construction workers and willing laymen had been asked to come. The volunteer project Construction Head had done her homework.

A fretful, sleepless night insured the day's success. What had been forgotten? Would anyone show up?

For the planners, those dreamers, it was thrilling. All those saws, all those men with hammers, coming with enthusiasm.

It took a little scurrying to get teams and responsibilities sorted. Some men were to measure and saw, some to give instructions, some to strip off the rotten fascia board, another to get the rotten window seals replaced. The spirit of cooperation was really fine. "Sure, I'll get it," "Yeah, that sounds good."

And then they lifted the first

wall. When you walk into the reception area, it is on your left. It was measured, cut, marked, nailed and then raised into place by eight or 10 men.

It was a hot morning and the physical labor was not the norm for many of the workers. They were ready for an early lunch break. Lunch was hot dogs, chips, and baked beans topped by chocolate and hot pound cakes. It was prepared and served by volunteers.

As the day wore on and the workers wore out, the number dwindled. But the enthusiasm for the work seemed to stay high. "Charlie, can you give us one more hour?" came at the point when everyone wanted to stop, but the completion of the last walls was in sight.

They did it! The depot is on its way. Rooms are there, where big empty space was. Rotten boards have been replaced by healthy ones.

When there is another work day, you won't want to miss it! The nicest folks in the county come.

The feelings you can carry with you are the very finest, bone-tired pride.

If the depot had been the only game in town this weekend, folks might have gotten a little rest on Sunday.

It was not a day for rest. It was the day for Arts in McLaughlin Park.

There was so much to see and do! There were dancers, singers, musicians of many persuasions. There were clowns with balloons. There were craftsmen showing and selling. There were painted faces and thumbprint art and an art contest. There were T-shirts and aprons for sale with the Turkey Festival logo that says "Strutt Your Stuffin'".

The organizers did a very fine job. People had a great time. I don't think I've been anywhere in years where there were so many babies and little ones to be strolled and admired. There were many kids and teenagers. Some were still swinging in the kiddie swings when the last volunteers had cleaned up and left.

To me, the weekend demonstrates our community's best attributes. We live in a small county, a small town. We do need size to accomplish anything. We have citizens with talents - with hammers and guitars - all we need are more opportunities to build our pride.



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Coke change stemmed from 'Real' good time

The world was shocked last week. After 99 years, Coca-Cola changed its formula.

Although the company executives were pretty cagey about it, there was little question that Coke did not change the formula by itself. A quick investigative probe showed: there was help from a bunch of the fellows down at the Atlanta plant. In fact, it started as sort of a joke.

There had been this big to-do to celebrate the firm's 99th birthday, and frankly, it got out of hand. Some of the boys had been guzzling the new big "Thirst Busters" and had had several too many. The next thing everyone knew, they had started snorting the plant's carbon dioxide straight from the tank. It was downhill from there on, and before long, they were dumping lots of sugar and other stuff into the big vat of Coke.

The wary executives say the new formula is sweeter.

The next day, after the party, some blind folks wandered into the plant and were given samples of the new formula. They preferred it 35% to 45% over the old product, the shrewd executives said in a press conference last week.

"The blind taste test has shown us the new formula will improve



Warren Johnston

The Puppy Papers

our sales," the executives said.

After they sobered up, all the boys from the party were given big raises and have spent the last several days trying to figure out how to duplicate the new formula.

Andy Respass's grandfather is probably hopping mad, wherever he is. He probably got mad when they took the cocaine out in the early 1900's.

Andy used to live down the street from me when I was growing up in Atlanta. His grandfather had been a druggist. He invented the original formula for Coke. He was dead by the time I knew Andy in kindergarten.

Andy wasn't very rich back then. His grandfather sold the formula to Asa Chandler for \$500. Asa and his family were rich after that.

Those Chandlers had big houses, fancy cars and a zoo in their back yard. They even had a museum filled with the stuffed trophies Asa had bagged during several hundred safaris to Africa. The museum was located at a cemetery where my grandfather was buried. I never minded going to visit his grave, as long as I got to see the animals in Asa's museum.

All that Coke money those Chandlers made from Andy's grandfather's formula seemed to make them a little crazy. Back in the 1920's they were always doing things like getting shot, falling out of speeding cars and holding drunken wrestling matches against the lions in the backyard zoo.

All that is over. Coke has changed its formula and most of the Chandlers are gone.

Now that Coke has washed its hands of the old formula, I was thinking of calling Andy and see if we couldn't go in together and buy back the old recipe.

After all, Coke isn't using it anymore, and it is just sitting around in some old safe going flat. I think perhaps \$500 would be a fair price.