

VIEWPOINTS

On cotton bales, billy goats and overeating

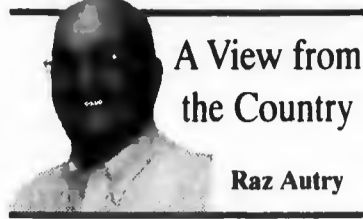
My minister has a children's sermon every Sunday. He has a child to bring an object and he develops a sermon from that object. This past Sunday a child brought an object that completely baffled him.

Now if you challenge him on his lack of knowledge on the object he will deny it. As I have told him in the past, the truth will stand alone. Since I always tell the truth about him, take my next few sentences as the gospel.

The object the child sprang on him was a miniature bale of cotton, the kind that can be purchased in a craft store. Now I realize that Ohio is not a cotton state; in fact, it is a Buckeye state. I have no idea what a buckeye is, but I know it is not a bale of cotton.

Therefore I can excuse him for his lack of knowledge about agriculture. It was plumb shameful. Some of the farmers had tears in their eyes. After all, Hoke County is cotton country.

In all fairness I can forgive him



A View from the Country
Raz Autry

because he has many fine qualities, although he thinks milk is produced by the grocery store. His lack of knowledge about agriculture reminds me of the inexperienced preacher who was conducting his first funeral. He solemnly pointed to the body in the coffin and declared, "What we have here is only a shell. The nut is already gone."

I get some odd requests at my peach orchard. A lady stopped in last week and wanted me to go with her daughter to the tax office and demand that they reduce her taxes on a new house she had just built. I tried

to explain that I didn't think the tax office would listen to me. She is still insisting, but if those in the tax office see me coming it will be to get my own taxes reduced, which I think is impossible.

We have a lot of fun at the orchard. A lady wanted to look at my goats. First she wanted to know why I had goats. I explained that the children enjoyed looking at them. As we approached the pen she exclaimed as one did before, "Oh, are you going to have a lot of baby goats?"

I replied, "If I do you will witness one of the greatest miracles in your lifetime. All of those goats are males. I have one plug horse, a fixed-up cat and five fixed-up goats. They all are only good for one thing and this is to eat."

I can see why folks think the goats are pregnant. They are a fine example of what is happening to a great majority of the American people. They eat too much. Enough said.



Top 10 list can make one run for the hills

I will have a place in the mountains for you to hide, my friend Ben Jones told me the other day. You are going to need it!

Jones had learned that I have written an article about North Carolina's top 10 literary figures for the November issue of Our State Magazine.

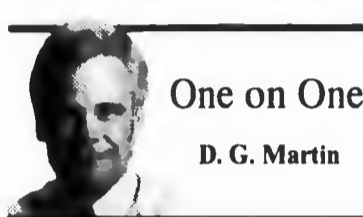
Jones believes that when the magazine hits the newsstands in a couple of weeks, lots of people are going to attack me for leaving their favorite author off the top 10 list.

Making a list of the best or greatest anything often causes controversy. Indeed, many people question the value of such lists. They are products of particular times. They are subjective and personal, reflecting only the ideas of a single person or of a selected group. At best they are imperfect. At worst, they can be misleading and harmful.

Here in North Carolina such lists run counter to a strong tradition in the literary community of mutual support and non-competitiveness. Most North Carolina authors will decline invitations to identify the best of their colleagues.

So why, you might ask, did I get involved in such a project?

There are lots of reasons. I think the development and publication of such lists forces us to think about our own preferences. It makes us define what we mean by good writing and good writers. It gives us a chance to hold up examples of North Carolinians whose writing commands our



One on One
D. G. Martin

respect and invites pleasurable or provocative reading.

I will not "scoop" my article in the upcoming literary issue of Our State Magazine by listing all of the selections. (If I did, I might have to take Ben Jones' offer of sanctuary even earlier than we had planned.)

But I will share one interesting conclusion.

Although there have been many fine North Carolina writers in the past, the work of only one of them remains universally accepted as a part of the body of American literature that is widely read and appreciated today.

That writer is Thomas Wolfe.

Although Wolfe stands out among all the rest, there are so many other important North Carolina writers, that the selection of the remainder of the list from these great writers really is an impossible task.

If you share my interest in North Carolina writers, you ought to consider a visit to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame at Weymouth in Southern Pines.

In the former study room of James Boyd, you can find information about many of our great authors — and displays of personal memorabilia and

photos.

Beginning in 1996, the first inductees were James Boyd, Charles W. Chesnut, Jonathan Daniels, Inglis Fletcher, Paul Green, Bernice Kelly Harris, O. Henry, George Moses Horton, Randall Jarrell, Gerald Johnson, Guy Owen, Thad Stem, Jr., Richard Walser, Manly Wade Wellman and Thomas Wolfe.

Subsequently the following writers were inducted: Harriet Jacobs, Joseph Mitchell, Sam Ragan, John Ehle, Frances Gray Patton, Louis Rubin, John Charles McNeill, Pauli Murray, Wilma Dykeman, John Hope Franklin, Jonathan Williams, A.R. Ammons, Helen Bevington, Olive Tilford Dargan, Burke Davis, and Robert Ruark.

The best time for you to visit the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame will be Sunday, October 20, at 2 p.m. Here is why: At that time the Hall of Fame will conduct a ceremony to induct five more great North Carolina writers: Elizabeth Spencer, Reynolds Price, Glen Rounds, Legette Blythe, and Christian Reid.

The ceremony is open to the public without charge, and there will be a reception after the ceremony in the gardens at Weymouth, where you can meet some of these important writers, their families, and others, like you and me, who are proud of our states writing tradition.

Weymouth is located at 555 East Connecticut Avenue, on the east side of Southern Pines. The Hall of Fame induction ceremony is sponsored by the North Carolina Writers Network (919-967-9540) and the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities (910-692-6261). For extensive information and photos of the writers in the Hall of Fame, visit the web site of the Writers Network. <http://ncwriters.org/lhof.htm>.

D.G. Martin is Carolinas Director of the Trust for Public Land, a national conservation organization that preserves land for people. UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch, hosted by Martin, will return to the air soon.

Democrats schedule unity banquet Saturday

This column is dedicated to matters involving Hoke's political race of 2002. Candidates and campaign staff who wish to announce fund-raisers, rallies and other events, should contact The News-Journal editor, Pat Allen Wilson. Those announcements will be included in this space only.

The Democrat Party is having a Hoke County Unity Banquet Saturday, October 12 at West Hoke Middle School.

Democrat candidates will be showcased, according to Democratic Party Chairman Doobie Leach. Those include local office seekers: commissioner candidates Charles Daniels, Bill Cameron and Jean Powell and sheriff's candidate Hubert Peterkin; also, Vera Hollingsworth, clerk of court nominee who has no opposition in the November 5 general election.

The Democratic nominee for the 8th Congressional District, Chris Kouri, will also attend and be honored.

Leach said there will be "a very patriotic theme" with the intent to rebuild unity in the community. "We'll have a patriotic theme, sing the Star Spangled Banner, say the Pledge of Allegiance; it's going to be a real feel good night."

Government meetings listed

Listed here are the regularly scheduled Hoke and Raeford meetings. Meeting dates and times may be changed due to holidays and other conflicts.

County

The board of commissioners meets the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:30 p.m. Public input sessions are held immediately after business is conducted during the first-of-the-month meetings.

The planning commission meets the second Thursday at 7 p.m. The board of adjustment meets the first Wednesday at 7 p.m.

County meetings are conducted in the commissioners' meeting room of the Pratt Building at 227 North Main Street.

The board of elections meets the second Tuesday of the month at 5 p.m. in the board of elections office in the Pratt Building.

The Raeford/Hoke Economic Development Board meets the second Tuesday of each month at 8 a.m. in the Depot (Chamber of Commerce Building).

The Hoke County board of education meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m.

The phone number for county offices is 875-8751.

City

Listed here are the regularly scheduled City of Raeford governmental meetings.

Meeting dates and times may be changed due to holidays and other conflicts. (September's meeting has been rescheduled to September 10 due to the Labor Day holiday.)

City of Raeford council meetings are held the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. However, this month's meeting will be held the second Monday, September 12, at the usual time.

Board of adjustment and planning board meetings are held when there are matters before the boards to be addressed.

The planning board meets the third Tuesday at 6 p.m., and the board of adjustment meets the second Monday at 6 p.m.

Political Lines

The event is not just for Democrats but is open to the public. A \$10 donation is asked to cover the costs of the

event, Leach said. There will be entertainment and the meal will be an old-fashioned pig pickin', he said.

No tickets are being sold but for more information, Leach may be called at 875-4277 or you may contact any of the Democratic candidates.

The event is scheduled for 6:30-9:30 p.m.

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