

# VIEWPOINTS

## It's a big price to pay for a vice

A woman walked up to a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch. "I couldn't help noticing how happy you look," she said. "What's your secret for a long, happy life?"

"I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he replied. "I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat fatty foods, and never exercise."

"That's amazing," the woman said. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-six," he said.

I tell you those cigarettes will get to you.

This rain has everyone talking about the weather, especially me. Where I normally spray peach trees every 14 days, I now spray every six days and recently every three. Don't worry about getting pesticides on your peaches because every time I spray it rains. It is hard for anything to stay on a peach when two or more inches of rain comes every day. We pick okra in boots and most of the time it is so muddy that the boots remain stuck in the field. Recently I decided I would pick in socks. Now I don't have any socks left.

If I decided to pick in my shorts I would end up totally bare, in my birthday suit. Who would look at a 76-year-old man in his birthday suit? They probably would think they were looking at a tall dried up prune or an okra stalk which has grown out of reach. It is a great life. Now back to the weather. I got stuck twice in one day, once with my pickup and once with the tractor.

I was trying to get those dried up watermelons. When I entered the field with the tractor and trailer, the trailer disappeared first. It was so deep in the mud that I couldn't see the tires. The



**A View from the Country**

Raz Autry

tractor went next with its nose straight up. As I gazed into the heavens, I thought as much as I have been complaining about the rain this may be as close as I will get.

Unfortunately, I am in the same position as the old man who was a regular churchgoer. Now once again my pastor is going to say, "That is not you."

Give me time, Rev. I will return and if I don't there is a chance I have gone on. I told my wife, when I died I didn't want her to tell anyone for two weeks. When someone says, "Where is Raz?" she can say, "Why, he died two weeks ago." It is the only way to go.

I don't know how I got on that subject. Now back to the man who was in church. The preacher said, "I want someone in this congregation to stand up and say what the Lord has done for him and I can't think of anyone better than Mr. Ben Little, a solid church man who is the pillow of this church. Now, Ben, stand up and tell these people what the Lord has done for you."

Brother Ben was suffering from arthritis, he could barely stand. Slowly he rose, and looking the preacher squarely in the eye, he said, "He has might near ruin me."

Now you know why I was looking up toward Heaven when that tractor got stuck.

I am going to end this tale with this parting thought — A woman who was obviously in her fifties had just moved to town and was visiting the local clinic for the first time. "I just need a complete checkup," she told the doctor.

Before the doctor sent her through the routine of the clinic, he asked a number of questions for his permanent records. "What symptoms do you have?"

"I'm not too well," she said. "I have pains in my wrists, and I don't sleep well because of a headache. I seem to have a constant head cold, I see spots in front of my eyes, and I have periodic headaches."

The doctor made a lot of notations on his chart and then asked, "And how old are you?"

"Thirty-two."

The doctor filled in her age as she gave it to him, but right beside it, he added another symptom the woman hadn't mentioned.

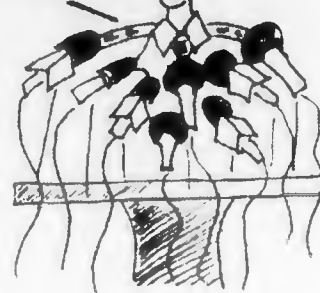
He wrote, "Slight loss of memory."

I realize that is a dull story, but it is time for me to go to bed. After all, the okra patch will be waiting at 6 a.m. and we will be singing, "Dancing in the Rain."

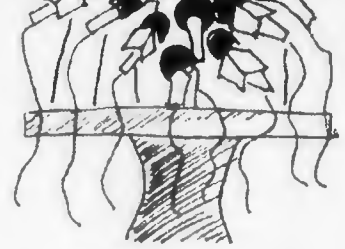
A fellow came by and looked at the four bushels of okra we had on the stand and said, "You must have a lot of Mexicans working for you," I replied.

Yes, and you are looking at the head one. I also have a brother and my grandson, plus my little buddy Henry." Enough said.

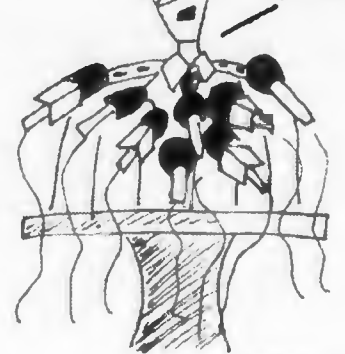
WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR QUESTIONS, SO LET'S GET STARTED.



WHY IS THE MILITARY PROTECTING A WOODPECKER AT FORT BRAGG, BUT BUILDING A LANDING FIELD NEAR A WILDLIFE REFUGE IN WASHINGTON COUNTY?



THAT'S ALL WE HAVE TIME FOR. THANKS FOR COMING.



SILVERA

## Three columns in one

Sometimes there are too many ideas running around in my head for my own good.

When this happens, I try to crowd them all into the one column my editors allow me to write every week. So here goes:

1. John Edwards' late property tax payments — a non-story.

There may be plenty to criticize about Senator Edwards and his presidential campaign. But the headline stories about his late payment of property taxes should not be at the top of the list. If you have ever paid your taxes late, you know that there is a hefty penalty and an accrual of interest that actually makes money for our cities and counties.

The property-tax late fees are like the penalties when we are a few days late bringing back a rented videotape, paying a credit card bill, or returning a library book. Most of us slip up from time to time. We pay the penalty. The video stores, credit-card companies, and libraries — and the property tax collectors — smile because our extra payments are welcome additions to their bottom-line.

Paying those penalties should be enough. But watch out. The same editors and reporters who were too lazy to go after a real political story may be trying to get hold of Edwards' video return records, library fines, and credit card late payments. And, if you ever run for office, they may be after yours as well.

2. Howard Dean — the Democrats' Goldwater?

Democratic Party leaders are frightened that Howard Dean's surging campaign might grab the nomination and lead the party too far to the left, driving away moderate voters, losing most states, and taking down other Democratic candidates in congressional, gubernatorial, and local elections. They remember George McGovern in 1972 and also what Barry Goldwater did to the Republicans in 1964.

Some Republican leaders are saying the same thing — except they are smiling when they say it.

But I remember that the Goldwater "disaster" ignited waves of enthusiasm and brought a committed young leadership into the Republican Party. Those recruits helped lead the party to victory in the next election and are still at it



**One on One**

D. G. Martin

today.

The losing efforts of George McGovern and Gene McCarthy in 1972 and 1968 did something similar for the Democrats.

All this may explain why some Democrats say they need an inspirational presidential candidate like Dean to build their party for their future, even more than they need another "safe" moderate to lead the party next year.

3. Pillowtex — it is more than the loss of 5000 jobs.

When historians write about North Carolina's 21st Century, there will be an entire chapter titled "July 30, 2003." On that date Pillowtex (successor to Cannon Mills) threw in its towel and brought an end to a hundred years of a large community's proud dependence on Cannon's towels and the jobs they created in Cabarrus and Rowan Counties.

The date will be remembered not only for the disaster it brought to more than 5000 workers — probably the greatest job loss in our state's history. July 30 will be symbolic of tens of thousands of other lives that have been and will soon be disrupted by closures and reductions in work forces in textiles, furniture, tobacco and other manufacturing businesses. It is easy to pin the blame on the trade policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations. But the root causes are more complex. Of course, our immediate responses must focus on the immediate problems of those who lives have been shattered. But the historians will rate our state's leaders on how they responded to the long-term challenge of preparing North Carolina and its people to prosper in a fast changing world.

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D. G. Martin hosts UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch, which airs Sundays at 5 p.m. This week's (August 17) the guest is Hlaven Kimmel, author of the new novel, The Solace of Leaving Early.

## We Get Letters

### Prayers needed

*Editor's note: This letter was dropped off at The News-Journal office without a signature. We do not ordinarily publish anonymous letters, but are making an exception for this one.*

To the Editor:

Tory Cook, a 1996 graduate of Hoke County High School, and an academic excellence honoree of the Hoke County Civic League, is now an English teacher in Seoul, South Korea.

Recently Tory was diagnosed with cancer in his lymph nodes. Tory and his family need the prayers and support of classmates — and everyone who knows the power of prayer! Pray that Tory and his family will continue to be strong, keep the faith and have a good outlook about his situation. Pray for the family that they will keep a positive attitude knowing that God will truly take of them.

Any teachers, classmates and



Tory Cook

friends, please tell other classmates who may contact Tory's grandmother, Mrs. Dorothy Cook at (910) 848-1039 or 516 East Prospect Avenue, Raeford, NC 28376, with any concerns as we hope others will join us in prayer.

## Worth Repeating

"We would expect minimum changes to occur at our plant as a result of WL Ross acquiring Burlington.

That is what I am being told. As a whole, we feel better because with

this venture we know the doors should remain open."

— Calvin House, Raeford plant manager, on the sale of bankrupt Burlington Industries to WL Ross and Company

## Writing lawmakers in Raleigh ...

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## Letters policy

The News Journal welcomes letters to the editor and encourages readers to express their opinions.

Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. The street address and phone number will not be published, but are required so we may verify authenticity. The name of the writer and, in some cases, the town the writer is from will be published at the end of the letter.

We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, as well as those that exceed 300 words. We will not publish letters that we consider to be in poor taste or libelous.

In some cases we may add an editor's note as a postscript when we believe a correction, explanation or amplification is warranted. We may also, at our discretion, limit the number of times an individual writer may submit a letter for publication.

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