

# VIEWPOINTS

## Don't call me an animal rights activist

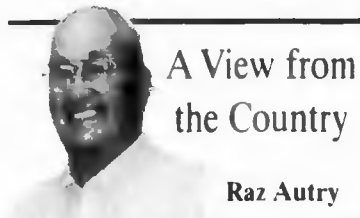
As one gets older, we should be more tolerant toward fellow humans and fixed-up cats or stubborn goats who eat anything.

Regardless of how many of their fellow goats are around, each one wants it all, especially feed. Goats will run from one place to the other trying to keep their brothers or sisters from getting anything to eat.

Now that is my take on goats. Humans are another matter; they will protest anything. Goats are not much into protesting, they are too busy eating.

The latest protests from humans are about fish. According to their spokesman, fish are intelligent and should be our buddies instead of our food. Unfortunately, it adds credibility to what a lot of folks believe, namely me, that if all the nuts in America were put in a sack, there is not a sack large enough to hold them. This is one flaw in a free society.

When people use to accuse me of being a dictator I felt like the two men who went bear hunting. While one stayed in the cabin, the other went out looking for bear. He soon found a huge one, shot at it, but only wounded it. The enraged bear charged toward him, and he started running for the cabin as fast as he could. He ran pretty fast, but the bear was just a little faster and gained on him with every step.



**A View from the Country**

**Raz Autry**

Just as he reached the open cabin door, he tripped and fell flat. Too close behind to stop, the bear tripped over him and went rolling into the cabin. The man jumped up, slammed shut the cabin door, and yelled to his friend inside, "You skin this one while I go and get another."

While I didn't exactly want to skin the accuser, I wasn't having any kind thoughts. But back to the fish being our buddies and their intelligence. I enjoy fly fishing. If a fish is so smart, why do they swallow a popper which is made of cork, false legs and feathers? Such a bait could only fool a fish.

Where do all these folks come from? Apparently there is a training school for them which specialize in protesting the killing of chickens, hogs and fish. They claim it is cruel and usual punishment for the poor animals to die by having their heads cut off as is done with chickens, hogs are killed in a variety of ways and the poor fish is unhooked and tossed in the box with ice or water.

It is a good thing these folks were

not around when I was a boy. Your Sunday dinner was a chicken which had been chased in the yard, his neck rung and the critter tossed in boiling water so the feathers could be picked off in a hurry. After all, the preacher would arrive shortly for Sunday lunch and one didn't want the preacher eating chickens with feathers.

The animal protestors for animal rights must have rich parents who support their efforts just to get them out of the house. For their meal they must have peanut butter sandwiches or salads. Sure hope they don't find a worm in it or they will have another good cause. Protesting the protection or intelligence of worms surely would be a good case for some of our legislators to take up.

Since I have been talking about animals and birds, I might as well end this tale with a story that is appropriate.

A young man went for an interview for potential guests on a TV talk show. "What do you do?" the show producer asked the young man.

"I imitate birds," the young man answered.

"What?" grunted the producer. "People who imitate birds are a dime a dozen. We can't use you."

"Okay," replied the disappointed young man. And he flapped his arms and flew out the window.



## A rogue history of North Carolina

Where should I go to learn about North Carolina history?

Folks ask me that question a lot. Sometimes they want me to recommend books. Sometimes they want to know teachers, or speakers, or just people they can visit face to face.

Around Chapel Hill, one of the best "people to visit" is my neighbor H.G. Jones. For many years Jones was director of the state department of archives and history. Later he became curator of the North Carolina collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, serving for 20 years until his retirement in 1993. His "retirement" is a joke. I see him almost every morning walking to the Wilson Library, where he has continued his work on North Carolina history projects as a "part time" research historian.

When I have a question about North Carolina history, I can almost always get H.G. Jones to point me in the right direction. I wish I could share his storehouse of information with you. Maybe I can.

Thanks to a new book, you can learn some interesting and entertaining North Carolina history directly from Jones.

The book, "Scoundrels, Rogues and Heroes of the Old North State" is a compilation of articles from a series that Jones wrote for the Associated Press, which distributed them to North Carolina newspapers in the 1970's and 1980's. Editors Randell Jones and Caitlin Jones (no kin to H.G.) selected the articles. If the editors' intention was to share H.G. Jones' most entertaining work, rather than the most historically significant, they have succeeded.

Jones looked for unusual stories from North Carolina past that would



**One on One**

**D.G. Martin**

strike a chord with any reader, not just those of us focused on the politics and economics of North Carolina's progress.

Jones tells stories of unusual women. One of them, Francis Culppeper, married three governors. Another, Justina Davis, married two men who served as North Carolina's governor. First in 1762, at the age of 15, she married Governor Arthur Dobbs. After his death she married Abner Nash. After her death, Nash became governor in about 1780.

Some of Jones' women tried to pretend they were men. Anne Bonney and Mary Read were shipmates on a pirate ship. When captured by British authorities, they were sentenced to be hanged. But they avoided the gallows because they were pregnant.

Malinda Blalock put on a Civil War soldier's uniform to follow her husband, Keith, when he joined North Carolina troops in 1862. Keith was really a Unionist. When he fooled the army surgeons into granting him a medical discharge, Malinda was stuck in the army by herself until she "disclosed the fact" of her true sex to her commanding officer and was then immediately discharged.

In another Civil War related story, James H. Jones, a Raleigh "free man of color" became the valet to Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Apparently, Jones was devoted to President Davis even after the war ended.

Jones became active in politics and business. Many years later, when the body of his former employer passed through Raleigh on its way for burial in Richmond, Jones drove the funeral car from the station to the state capitol.

More recently, in 1914, in Fayetteville, George Herman Ruth hit his first home run as a professional baseball player. He also picked up his nickname, "Babe," in our state. One story, according to H.G. Jones, says that one of his teammates said that he was just a "babe in the woods."

No book about North Carolina's most interesting history ought to omit Chang and Eng Bunker, the Siamese twins who made their way to Surrey County, where they married and became established as successful farmers and fathers, with a total of 22 children between them. H.G. gives us a few more details.

If you want a serious look at North Carolina history, "Scoundrels, Rogues and Heroes" might not be your best bet. Get H.G. Jones to recommend another book. But if you love a good story, there are more than 50 of them in this book, most of them about scoundrels, rogues or heroes, just as the title promises.

D.G. Martin is the author of "Interstate Eateries" a handbook of home cooking places near North Carolina's interstate highways available through Our State Magazine (800-948-1409). He is the host of UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch, which airs on Sundays at 5 p.m. This week's (May 15) guest is John Shelton Reed, author of "Minding the South."

## Is there logic to going in debt?

My late mother was very frugal. Having been raised during the Depression of the 1930s, she was staunchly opposed to debt. She frequently told me that if you can't pay for something with cash, don't buy it. I never saw her use a credit card, and rarely did she write a check.

Many would agree with my mother, and perhaps if more followed her advice, households wouldn't be \$10 trillion in debt, and the federal government's national debt wouldn't be \$7 trillion. But would we be better off?

Here's what I mean. Although I certainly admired my mother, she was wrong about debt. Clearly debt can be over-used, and each year thousands of households file for bankruptcy because they can't meet their debt payments.

But at the same time, millions of households use debt logically and responsibly.

Consider this situation: A young family with children has been renting an apartment. They would really like to raise their children in a home they own, with more space and a yard. But the family doesn't have the \$200,000 in cash needed to purchase a home.

The solution: Borrow the money, buy the home and enjoy it, and repay the loan while living in the home. This is a very logical and natural use of debt. Effectively it allows the family to draw on income they will have in the future in order to purchase an asset — the home — they will use now and for years to come.

In fact, the vast majority — almost 94 percent — of household debt is used this way to buy homes, other property, vehicles and an education. All these are assets with multi-year lives. One rule to use in financing these assets is never to have a loan repayment period that exceeds the life of the asset. For example, you wouldn't want to borrow money for

### YOU DECIDE

BY DR. MIKE WALDEN  
NORTH CAROLINA  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

30 years to purchase a vehicle lasting only 10.

Hold on a minute. Did I slip in education as an asset for which debt financing makes sense? Yes I did, and education sure is a long-lasting asset because people use it to earn more income in the future. In today's economy, paying for more education is perhaps the best expenditure a person can make. So using borrowing for education is not foolish, but instead is really very smart.

OK, so maybe you buy my arguments that some kinds of household debt can be justified. But what about borrowing by the government? How in the world can it be justified as responsible?

Government borrowing can be justified as long as it follows the same rule as for household borrowing: Borrow for a long-lasting asset and repay the debt while the asset is being used. In this way, both today's and tomorrow's citizens who benefit from the assets will pay for them. There are many government projects that meet this definition, like military equip-

ment, roads, schools and other public buildings.

Local and state governments generally follow this rule, borrowing only for "capital" projects. In fact, separate operating and capital budgets are usually kept in city halls and state capitols. But the federal government doesn't follow this rule. All federal spending is lumped into one budget, so federal borrowing could be used to fund salaries and printer ink as well as roads and tanks. A big step forward would be taken by the feds if they kept one budget book for day-to-day operations and another for roads, buildings and equipment.

Anyone can over-use debt or use it for illogical purposes. But this shouldn't take away from the fact that there are sensible reasons for borrowing that I bet even my mother would have approved.

You decide if there are ways to spread the rules of logical debt management.

Dr. Mike Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Professor and extension economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics of N.C. State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook and public policy.

## A free press

"An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself."

— Joseph Pulitzer, 1904

## We Get Letters

### Against gambling

To The Editor:

Three cheers for D. G. Martin who has the guts to editorially oppose a state lottery! His last editorial was his best yet! His scenario of projected lottery impact over the next couple decades was dead right! Senate Bill 9, Senator Weinstein's pari-mutuel betting bill for Hoke County, needs to die in committee and the state lottery needs to be defeated.

Democratic senators, slipping the lottery into the State Budget, have done so for three reasons: A — to avoid a public lottery-only vote; B — to force anti-lottery legislators to vote pro-lottery by threatening them (and the people of their counties) with the loss of good, beneficial program funding (No budget vote, no funding!) and C — to allow pro-gambling legislators to say at election time — "Oh, you can't hold me accountable for voting for

the lottery — I had to vote for the Budget! I'm personally against a lottery...." Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! We hear you! Betray the people again!

Don't fall for that, voters! If they won't stand against it, they're for it and against your views! Go to the polls and say "We hold you accountable for your pro-lottery in-the-budget vote; we're voting against you. We just have to — to protect our community and our families from your poor judgment."

I read with interest the remarks of Della Maynor-Bowen, the new head of the Hoke Democratic party (Congrats!). She said (NJ-5/4/05): "On the agenda for the executive officers' meeting are issues related to the county: the lottery vote and steeplechase betting at the Carolina Horse Park." Question: Are the leaders of the Hoke Democratic Party pro-gambling, anti-poor, anti-Democratic constituency? Are they willing to move against their own sup-

porters who are anti-gambling? I certainly hope not. I hope the local party will stand against S9, a state lottery, and pro-gambling interests! If not, we can all re-register Republican or unaffiliated, and the leftover Democrats can run anti-gambling Democrats and against-pro-gambling Democrats. And yellow-dog Democrats can sleep late on Election Day, end their party contributions and be too busy to campaign for pro-gambling Democrats this fall!

I hope the Democratic party, who says it represents the best interests of Hoke Countians, will think twice before it enters the pro-gambling fray against the people of the county! We don't want "present" racetrack gambling in Hoke with future strip joints, bars, casinos, increased community poverty, and more social problems. And we "will" hold you responsible if you try to shove it down our throats.

Barbara Richie Pond

### Letters to the editor 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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