

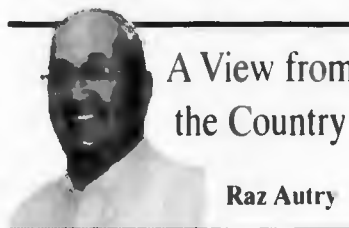
VIEWPOINTS

Sympathy from one old goat to another

When there is not much to write about, one turns to writing about his goats.

Unfortunately, my oldest goat is just about to leave this world. In years past, he was the meanest one I have. I named him Jack when he was a little fellow; that was 17 years ago. I don't know how long goats are supposed to live — not long if they are meat goats, because they become bar-b-que when they are of age. Even though resuscitating a goat would be a difficult job, if it would help I probably would try it on Jack. (That is, if no one was looking). Regardless he has been a pleasure and a warrior. Many children have rubbed his head; for some reason he always liked children, when he didn't have a lot of use for adults. His horns have been his meanest weapon and he knew how to use them. I am going to miss Jack. He in goat years is about my age which makes us both far from being spring chickens.

Right after the new year begins, all of the freeloaders come forth. Such was the case with me in Fayetteville last week. A fellow who claimed to be down on his luck strolled up to where I was talking to a man. They all just got out of the hospital, to hear them give their spiel. This one came up with a new twist. Before he even spoke he opened his mouth and



A View from the Country

Raz Autry

showed me his teeth, which were not very pretty. He moved them up and out, wiggling them like a worm on a fishhook. They were real as far as I could tell. Here I am standing in the middle of a sidewalk looking at a man's wide open mouth showing me his teeth. I am sure glad the traffic was light. He claimed his teeth put him in the hospital and he hadn't eaten in four days. I must confess he looked the part. He wanted two dollars to get some food.

The only food I know you can get for two dollars comes at the fast food places, then you won't get anything to drink but water. I started to say, "Two dollars won't get you much food," then I thought of an experience I had when I made that statement to another who wanted two dollars. When I mentioned two dollars won't buy much food, he then asked for ten.

When the drifter got the words out of his mouth, the man next to me said, "You want some food? Two

blocks up is a church which feeds everybody. They will feed you."

The beggar didn't want any of that church food. He turned to me and said, "You aren't going to give me the two dollars, are you?"

"No, if you are too sorry to go to the church you don't need anything from me."

A few years ago a guy gave me the sad story that he needed some money to buy some milk for his children. I asked him how much and he replied forty dollars. Forty dollars will buy a lot of milk. Fearing the children were hungry I forked over forty dollars. A couple hours later I stopped at the local store and he was shooting pool for money, he was using my forty dollars to back his play.

I found out later he wasn't married and didn't have any children, at least none he claimed. If you get hit in the head with a two by four often enough, you will cover it up.

My parting thought: Before preaching his First Sunday of Lent sermon the preacher called the children up to the front and engaged them in dialogue. He asked if anyone could tell him what Lent is.

An eight-year-old boy raised his hand and said, "Yes, it's what we get out of our pockets."



We Get Letters

Beware of scam artists, self mortgages

To The Editor:

Thank you for talking with me in regards to the many scams that are happening to the elderly and disabled people in our neighborhoods.

Self-mortgages sound good but be aware when they can't come up with the money. Even with a signed contract by both parties, it takes many legal steps to undo the damages or to regain your money. Keep in mind if these people had good credit they would be going to a bank for the

financing.

These people play on the vulnerability of the elderly and disabled. Eventually these events end up in a foreclosure and are costly and a waste of time because legally these people own the house. Due to these people owning the house they can destroy it and it can cost thousands of dollars to repair. Not only do you have this expense you have the expense of an attorney and the cost of foreclosure. Both of which can take months.

If you are lucky they have paid the insurance on the house; if not, hope that nothing catastrophic happens because you could end up with

nothing.

When a court date is set these people can file for an appeal, and it is usually granted due to their legal rights.

This total process could take up to a year. Not only is this expensive it is emotionally draining and heartbreaking to see your house destroyed by someone who couldn't care less.

Keep in mind that you cannot gain any money on back payments for the damages and/or the months waiting the foreclosure.

Sincerely,
Ulrike McCollum
Fayetteville

Cuts affect those who can least afford them

State lawmakers planning on cutting taxes in next summer's legislative session ought to read the details of the federal budget agreement that is now just a House vote away from heading to President Bush to sign.

The plan cuts \$40 billion from programs that serve the poor and the middle class. The cuts affect student loans, child support enforcement, Medicare and Medicaid, and childcare.

The legislation makes major changes to the major program public assistance program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), forcing states to impose new work requirements on recipients or lose federal funding. The Congressional Budget office says the states will have to spend more than \$8 billion to meet the new mandates.

The plan also includes an \$11 billion shortfall in childcare costs. Budget officials say states need \$12 billion in childcare money to meet the new work requirements, but only one billion was allocated. North Carolina currently has 35,000 kids on the waiting list for a childcare subsidy and several counties are struggling to keep providing the subsidy to children cur-

N.C. POLICY WATCH

Chris Fitzsimon

rently receiving it.

The legislation increases the copayments the state may charge for Medicaid services up to as much as ten percent of the cost of the medical service, putting some services out of the reach of poor families. States would also be allowed to scale back coverage for some current recipients.

North Carolina lawmakers could choose not to enact these Medicaid changes and they should, but that will mean spending more state dollars to make up the difference.

You would think that child support enforcement would be immune from budget cuts. You'd be wrong. The budget cuts funding for state child support enforcements efforts by almost \$5 billion over the next ten years. That means less money for North Carolina to track down parents who are not paying and less

money to collect and distribute child support owed to families.

State lawmakers can continue these services at current levels too, but again only if state dollars are used to replace the cut in federal funding.

It is a blizzard of numbers and there are plenty more, but Congress has chosen to cut human services to help pay for more tax cuts that go primarily to the wealthy. State lawmakers need to do three things in response.

Find the state resources to make up for the cuts in North Carolina, as human service programs are still reeling from cuts made by the General Assembly in recent years.

Avoid the politically tempting tax cuts on the state level that will make it virtually impossible to protect programs that serve the poor and would result in thousands of people in the state going without health care, affordable housing, and help taking care of their children.

Finally, ask the members of the state's congressional delegation who supported this budget to come to Raleigh and explain why tax cuts are more important than student loans and helping a single mother who is not receiving her child support check.

Needed: A workable plan for economic growth

As I travel around North Carolina and talk to both elected officials and citizen groups, the number one economic issue I hear discussed is economic growth.

Communities are interested in making sure folks have good jobs that pay a decent salary. To achieve this goal, localities must make themselves attractive for new businesses or the expansion of existing ones.

Then the question becomes how to do this, or more specifically, what features and characteristics of communities are related to successful economic growth? Clearly there are many candidates: workers, availability and cost, cost of living, tax levels, education quality and infrastructure such as roads and public utilities.

As might be expected, economists have devoted considerable time to understanding the determinants of economic growth. I dare say this might be one of the most studied of all topics

YOU DECIDE

Dr. Mike Walden
N.C. Cooperative Extension

in the profession.

What can we learn from this research, and what practical advice can be provided to policy makers?

It shouldn't be surprising that at the top of the list of factors important to economic growth is labor. Even in today's technological world, most businesses need to hire workers, so most studies find worker availability and cost crucial in attracting new firms. Studies find that, all else being equal, companies prefer to locate where wages are lower.

Yet this doesn't mean businesses want only to hire the cheapest workers, because "all else" isn't always

equal. Specifically, worker productivity, or how much a worker can produce in a given period of time, varies. And more productive workers are also associated with faster economic growth. So what firms really want are workers who produce the most per dollar of salary. Indeed, these are the most valuable workers.

In today's economy, the most productive workers are generally those with training beyond high school. Virtually every study of the last 25 years has found a positive link between economic growth and the workforce's educational level. A big reason that Southern states like North Carolina outpaced other states in growth is relatively low public college tuitions and big jumps in the number of college-educated workers.

Today's businesses need to move people and products fast and require

(See WALDEN, page 3A)

William Dees and other veteran heroes

Last week many of the state's insiders were focused on the University of North Carolina. On Friday, Erskine Bowles, the new president of the university, made his first report to the university's governing board. His outline of the challenges facing the university and the state showed the high level of his understanding of the state and the difficult tasks facing North Carolina.

During the same week there were smaller groups across the state talking about another important figure in the history of the University of North Carolina: William Dees, the first elected chair of the university's board of governors, who died in Goldsboro.

William Friday, the first president of the unified 16-campus university, is due the largest share of credit for the successful launch of the new system of higher education in North Carolina beginning in 1971. But Friday would be the first to say that the leadership of Dees on the board and Dees's friendship and support for President Friday were critical.

Early on, the new university system faced divisive challenges, including the establishment and governance of the new medical school at East Carolina and a dispute with the Federal government over the method of desegregating North Carolina higher education.

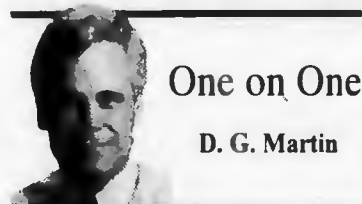
Looking back at the complicated circumstances and the passionately held positions of the adversaries, it is hard to believe that the university system survived. In times of great challenge, university governing boards often lose confidence in their university presidents, causing leadership crises that bring down presidents, good and bad.

The trust and friendship between Friday and Dees, and their close connections with other members of the university governing board, made it certain that Friday would always have the backing of important leaders in times of trouble. Although Friday had to face a set of challenges that would have been brought down most university administrators, he always survived and found a path.

Where did this close connection come from?

At lunch last week, John Sanders, retired director of the Institute of Government in Chapel Hill, reminded me of the core of friendships that developed among several World War II veterans at UNC Law School.

William Friday talked about the group on UNC-TV in response to a question from Don Curtis, who asked Friday why he decided to go to law school after the war. "Well, you get into an experience like that war put us all in, you were thrown with so many different people from all over everywhere, not only [the] United States, but foreign countries. And you realize how much you need all the education you can get. And I had always had an inkling to want to study law. And my wife, Ida, wanted to get more education herself, so we agreed we'd come back. I had a great experience. I came



One on One

D. G. Martin

back here with Terry Sanford and Bill Aycock and John Jordan and William Dees and Dickson Phillips, a legendary group of people. We all went straight through and stuck together ever since, worked on things in this state."

Now that William Dees and Terry Sanford are gone from that group, we ought to remember and thank the others: William Friday; Bill Aycock, beloved former chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill; John Jordan, former state senator and chair of the university's governing board; and Dickson Phillips, former dean of UNC Law School and retired Federal Court of Appeals judge. (Last week, my cousin Boyce Martin, also a Federal judge in Louisville, Kentucky, told me that Phillips is a hero to many colleagues on the bench.)

As we remember and thank Will-

iam Dees and his close friends, we can thank all those who served in World War II and came back to serve and build back home.

About them I wrote a few years ago: They came back from the war with more maturity, energy, confidence, practicality, open-mindedness, discipline, love of country, and competitiveness than any generation our country has ever seen.

Then the country gave them advanced educational opportunities never available to so many Americans before.

With that mixture of healthy traits and education, they caused an explosion of economic growth that underpins our country's continuing prosperity and success.

The veterans of World War II are a generation to cherish, to thank, and to learn from.

D.G. Martin is the host of UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch, which airs on Sundays at 5 p.m. This week's (January 22) guest is Moreton Neal, author of Remembering Bill Neal.

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

The News-Journal

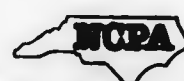
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