

# VIEWPOINTS

## Grandmothers in aprons are blessings

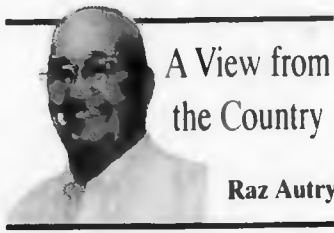
My grandmother Lee was a wonderful lady. She had 38 grandchildren; at least I counted 38. It is hard to remember all the children of 12 aunts and uncles.

Back in those days, if people didn't have children they didn't count.

Grandmother Lee made all of her grandchildren feel special. She was a large woman with a winning smile and a disposition to match. She would take a grandchild on her large lap and cuddle him or her.

Her famous cookies were the treats we enjoyed. They were as large as a plate; one was enough to last all day. She died while I was overseas during World War II. I don't recall how I received the news, but I do know it broke my heart. Grandmothers are special to all the grandchildren, but the grandsons have a special place in their heart for their grandmothers.

Like all women in her time Grandmother Lee wore a large apron over her dress. The aprons were used for everything. I really had forgotten how important those aprons were until the husband of



A View from the Country

Raz Autry

my favorite cousin sent the following to me. It is entitled "Do your children know the uses of Grandma's apron?"

The main use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven.

It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears.

From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.

And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms.

Those big aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove.

Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables, after peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls.

In the fall, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that old-time apron that served so many purposes.

My parting thought — Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool. Her granddaughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw.



## A momentum for raising minimum wage

The momentum is building to raise the minimum wage in North Carolina. That's obvious not only because of the attention that has been paid to State Treasurer Richard Moore's recent call for an increase, but because of the panic that's starting to set in among the opponents of the proposal.

The free market rhetoric they employ is familiar and so too are the gloom and doom predictions about the effects of raising the wage, primarily that jobs will be lost and businesses will suffer. The Jacksonville Daily News recently editorialized about the "misguided idea" and Raleigh's most well known anti-government think tank weighed in against the proposal in a feature called the "Free Market Minute."

The Daily News, sounding a lot like right-wing talk radio on the subject, says raising the wage is government interference in the marketplace and that people who earn \$5.15 an hour should simply work harder and get a better job. That's a variation on the "poverty is a choice" mantra that somehow

### N.C. POLICY WATCH

Chris Fitzsimon

has become part of the public policy debate.

The Free Market Minute writer tries to put things in historical context, discussing the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 that set the first minimum wage. It also set standards for overtime and child labor. Preventing 12-year-olds from working in factories is apparently just more meddlesome government intervention in the marketplace, as presumably are fire and safety laws.

One of the links provided leads to a column that calls for a repeal of the 1938 act. It is not clear if the author believes the market could benefit from a return to the exploitation of children in the workforce, but it makes you wonder.

The economic claims of the

minimum wage opponents ring hollow and the overheated rhetoric borders on the absurd. Evidence collected after the last increase in the federal minimum wage found no job loss.

An increase in the state wage in North Carolina that is now pending in the Senate would benefit more than 100,000 workers and three-fourths of them are over 20, half over 25. It would be an important step in helping families lift themselves out of poverty. And the public supports it.

A Gallup Poll conducted in November asked if people favored or opposed Congress passing legislation that raised the minimum wage. Eighty-three percent of those surveyed favored the increase. The public understands that the market needs regulation and they believe that people who work 40 hours a week deserve to make more than poverty level wages.

The good news is that state policymakers are beginning to believe it too, no matter how desperately the free-market worshippers try to convince them otherwise.

## N.C. writing a bedrock of Black literature

Is North Carolina something special in the realm of literature?

I have been asking myself that question these past few weeks. I think it is. Every Sunday on UNC-TV I interview North Carolina authors about their recent books. And you could never convince me that these folks are not something very special.

But proving it is something else.

If you have been reading my column recently, you know that I waved the flag a few weeks ago when four of six top-selling books on the New York Times list had strong North Carolina connections.

Then I reported to you that North Carolina's John Hope Franklin's autobiography had been named one of the New York Times 100 notable books of 2005.

The latest news is that North Carolina writer Hal Crowther's new book of essays, *Gather by the River* has just been selected as a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in the criticism category.

These positive news items support North Carolina's claim to a special place in the literary work. However, each of them has a downside that points in the other direction.

Of the four North Carolina writers at the top of the New York Times bestseller list a few weeks ago, Jan Karon, Patricia Cornwell, Nicholas Sparks, and Maya Angelou, only Angelou is recognized by the elite as a true "literary" writer.

Other than Franklin, no North Carolina author had a book on the Times' 2005 notable book list.

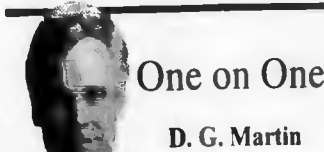
Finally, Crowther was the only North Carolina finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

So, although we have many exceptional and successful writers, I have a hard time proving that North Carolina is better, literary speaking, than all the other states.

But I have not given up, and a brand new book has given me some solid help.

The new book, *The North Carolina Roots of African American Literature: An Anthology*, edited by UNC-Chapel Hill Professor William L. Andrews, collects the works of eight important black North Carolina authors who lived and wrote before, during and shortly after the Civil War.

In a thoughtful, comprehensive, and very readable introduction, Andrews asserts confidently, "No other state in the American South has left a more indelible impression on African American literature before the 20th century than has North Carolina. While white writers from the state produced little of lasting literary value before the 20th century, 19th-century black North Carolina engendered poetry, autobiography, fiction, essays, and polemical writing that are still widely read and studied today. These classics by black North Carolina writers helped to form the bedrock of



One on One

D. G. Martin

African American literature."

The collection includes works by several black writers who will be recognized by many North Carolinians.

George Moses Horton was a Chatham County slave who sold poems for 25 cents apiece to UNC students. His first book of his poetry was published in 1829.

Harriet Jacobs, a slave who grew up in Edenton, escaped to the North, where she wrote *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, which was published shortly before the Civil War. Of this book, Andrews writes, "Today almost certainly no book by a North Carolinian is read, studied, and discussed more."

Charles Waddell Chesnut is celebrated as a founder of Fayetteville State University. Born in 1858 to free parents in Ohio, Chesnut and his family returned to Fayetteville after the Civil War. In 1883 or 1884, at the age of 25,

Chesnut, reluctant to raise his family in the South, moved back to Ohio. The influence of his North Carolina boyhood runs through most of his work. According to Andrews, "Chesnut was one of only a handful of African Americans who could claim the ear of a national reading audience."

The stories of Wilmington's David Bryant Fulton and David Walker, Raleigh's Lunsford Lane and Anna Julia Cooper, and Caswell County's Moses Roper are also well told by Andrews and his co-editors.

Andrews' persuasive explanation of the importance of these North Carolina authors and his collection of their important works into this accessible volume is a gift — especially for me, the next time I set out to prove that North Carolina is a special place for writers.

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 29) guest is Quinn Dalton, author of *Bulletproof Girl*, a collection of stories in the rich voices of today's young women.

## 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

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## Buys block

(Continued from page 1A)

later build a courthouse out of town."

In the block sold to the county is Smitty's Cleaners, the old McLauchlin Hardware building, which is currently used as an auction site and Glenda's WIC store, plus a parking lot currently utilized by the city.

Smitty's is located across the street from the county-owned administrative Pratt Building, Hoke's district attorney's office, and the Hoke courthouse annex. The southwest corner parking lot of the acquired block faces RBC Centura Bank on Main. McLauchlin Hardware's structure lines Racket Alley between East Edinborough and East Elwood. However, the rear of the McLauchlin building flanks the empty sliver of the block where the future Hoke County Detention Center will be constructed. The jail addition will stretch from the north to south quadrants to accommodate 152 more inmates. The county already owns a parking area at the corner of East Edinborough and North Main, which is used as spillover for the courthouse and downtown, and one at the corner of East Edinborough and N. Stewart reserved for the Sheriff's Office.

The law office of McFadyen, Fields and Sutherland remains as the only privately owned building on the block; it faces north toward the courthouse and the Hoke Sheriff's Office. A non-profit organization, the Sandhills Mental Health center, fronting East Elwood, will also remain in the block.

### Plans

With a sales banner displayed

indicating only two weeks left, the McPhaul-operated B's Auction enterprise in the old McLauchlin building will close at its present location. WIC personnel will continue leasing their office space temporarily since county commissioners approved an extension.

Mrs. Johnnie McPhaul, owner of the vacant lot on the southwest corner of the block and McLauchlin Hardware, said there is "no sentimentality" involved in the sale.

"We bought the business from a friend in the eighties," she said. "The hardware store opened in 1972, but the main building burned in 1986.

"We remodeled and opened it in 1988. It has recently been used as a warehouse for my son Jimmy's auctions."

Operating for 15 years, Smitty's will be relocated by February 6 to the former Western Auto store at 128 North Main, according to co-owners Craven Smith Jr. and wife Joyce Smith. They also own two Smitty's stores in Fayetteville located in Haymount and on Owen Drive.

"We are already renovating the building in the next block," an enthused Mrs. Smith said. "We would like to have closed, but business is just too good in Raeford for us not to stay open.

"Our business has really improved here. We are also very excited about the new look of downtown with the streetscape project."

along N. Stewart, the historic Atrium home has already been moved by its new owner to west of Raeford. Now, the narrow strip on N. Stewart is unobstructed for construction of the jail expansion.

At the existing jail annex on the north side corner of Edinborough and North Stewart, 40 inmate beds will remain. The \$1 million jail project will be completed by August 2007.

"The jail addition is on schedule," Wood said. "The project is still in the architectural design phase right now with Mosely Architects.

"We do not have any plans at this moment to tear down the McLauchlin building to make more room for the jail facility. That decision would be up to the board of commissioners."

Wood predicted it was likely that Smitty's building would eventually be demolished, providing more space for courthouse offices. He said tentative plans could provide more space for a Hoke public defender's office for Hoke-Scotland Chief Public Defender Regina Joe and Hoke District Attorney Kristy M. Newton and her staff.

"We have not specifically discussed building another county office building across the street," Wood said. "That would be one of our options, but it does not appear to be imminent."

Hoke commissioners approved the budget amendment for the block last week because it was not included as an allocation in the 2005-06 county budget. Money was used from the available fund balance for the real estate transfer. As of June 30, 2005, Hoke's undesignated fund balance totaled \$4.9 million.