

VIEWPOINTS

Paying for earlier sins

My father gave me a lot of good advice when I was growing up, but none better than when he said, "If someone asks you how you're feeling, always say fine." Most of the time, they are just making conversation.

Most of us growing up on a farm wanted to be grown men when we were just boys. It was considered grown if you could pick up a 200-pound bag of fertilizer and put it in the hopper. Little did we realize that stunt would cost us dearly later in life. We now have back trouble.

Often, when folks ask how I feel, I say fine and add that if I had a new back, I would feel like 30 again; however, I discovered Walmart doesn't sell new backs.

One of the great desires in our youth was to get a good tan, which would impress the girls. We would plow without a shirt or hat. Our bodies could have been in Playboy magazine because of those nice tans. We paid for that foolishness by having skin cancer in our adult years.

You don't have to be old to realize that there is always a payday when you put your life on the line.

Sooner or later all of us are going to have a Murphy Day. I had mine Wednesday when I hooked up the sprayer to spray grass. Most folks try to grow it; we try to kill it in the peach

A View from the Country

Raz Autry



orchard. I was using a gun sprayer to kill the grass under the trees. The gun leaked more water on me than it did on the grass under the trees. I put on one of my spraying suits so I could keep my pants dry. That chemical doesn't sit too well on your skin. I had purchased some expensive spraying suits. The company must have forgotten to send them to me. The gun was spilling more and more chemical on the suit, and suddenly I realized that not only was the seat of my pants getting wet, my underwear was getting soaked. For a minute I thought I had forgotten to go to the bathroom.

I left the tractor and returned home to wash off the chemical, which had no earthly reason to be on my pants and underwear. I headed to Tractor Supply to get a new gun. On the way to the orchard, a stray deer decided it was going to cross the road because something on the other side was better than what he had. I slowed down so I wouldn't hit the deer. That is not a nice thing to do on

a super highway. Brakes began to squeal behind me and I could hear the truck driver cussing. As for me, I was trying to stay alive. At that moment living to be 90 was my first priority. I am still puzzled about how that deer made it across the highway.

I was so thankful that I survived that I forgot to look where I was going and I ran in a ditch. It wasn't too deep and I drove out of it and glued my eyes to the road.

If any of you city slickers do not know what a Murphy Day is, ask a farmer and he will explain it to you.

My parting thought: If you have heard this story before, blame Mike Lucas—he told it to me.

It seems a couple of men were standing beside a large hole and decided to see how deep it was. They picked up a stone and cast it in the hole, but they never heard it hit the bottom. Not to be outdone, they saw an old car transmission and decided to cast it down the hole. Just as this deed was done a goat ran by, and a few minutes later a farmer came along and asked, "Have you men seen a goat come by?"

"Yes," they replied, "one ran by just a few minutes ago." The farmer said that couldn't have been his goat—he was tied to a transmission.

Get off the phone and pull your pants up

I have thought of adding a segment to my columns called "My Pet Peeves." Some of these irritations I have written about before, such as:

- People who use cell phones in public places to convey personal information that should embarrass them but only embarrasses those listening

- The cashier at the supermarket who keeps you waiting while she talks to a friend about something funny that her two-year-old did, while your ice cream is melting all over your other groceries.

There are many more that are not only upsetting but hold a measure of mystery. I am sure that when we were young the older folks thought we dressed outrageously. They probably thought we spent too much time in malls or shopping centers. But it does not seem that we were as weird as the young people of today.

Girls used to question their parents to ask if a sweater looked okay with a certain pair of pants. Today, it may be your son that will ask if he and his girlfriend should wear matching earrings.

I am aware that the "bare midriff" is the "trendy and sexy look," but when you see some of

Paul Burnley



these "chubby" young ladies with their midribs hanging over the belts holding up their hip-hugger jeans, I think it loses some of its sexiness.

When it comes to the young men in their "low rider" pants, it becomes more of a mystery than an annoyance. The mystery to me is what keeps the pants from falling, unless there is an undergarment that is unseen by the public. Walking behind them you see their pants dropping to a point of no return, and you wait for them to drop to the ground. But for some unseen reason they are held in suspended animation, and the young men walk on, undaunted.

Another irritant to me is to see men in eating establishments with their hats on. Some feel, although I do not, that it is acceptable for a man to wear his hat in a restaurant. I believe that anytime a man is dining, he should remove his hat. Many men are obsessed with wearing a hat.

I remember once I was visiting my doctor's office. While the nurse was escorting me to the examining room, we passed another examining room. The door was open, and as we passed, I glanced in and there was a man sitting on the examining table with his hat on, but not a stitch of clothing.

I cannot understand the obsession that some men have with hats. I have read stories of the "old west," where cowboys worshipped their hats. Now it seems that this practice is being preserved far from the dusty horse trails.

Hats are being worn in upscale restaurants. Men have been seen entering dining establishments with female companions and eating with their hats on. If they did not respect the establishment, or the other patrons, you would think that they would respect the women accompanying them.

I was discussing this column with my wife. She informed me that she can understand my feelings about these issues. But she then reminded me that there are a number of things that I do that annoy and frustrate her.

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About to devastate higher education

BY CHRIS FITZSIMON
N.C. Policy Watch

UNC President Tom Ross is not an alarmist. He didn't raise his voice at all as he discussed the impact of the House budget on the university in his remarks Tuesday at a Crucial Conversation luncheon held by N.C. Policy Watch.

He didn't have to. He just provided the numbers about what the 15.5 percent cuts proposed by the House would do to the university system and the students who attend it.

Fifty-five hundred students who currently receive financial aid would no longer get it and every student who receives aid will receive less next year if the House gets its way.

And that's a lot of students. Sixty percent of enrollees in a UNC school rely on financial aid help to pay for their education and 40 percent of them have family income levels that qualify them for Pell grants.

The need for help keeps increasing as the cost of living rises and as tuition goes up. Tuition has increased 148 percent at UNC schools in the last ten years, 39 percent in the last three. That's a big increase for a state with

a constitution that says higher education must be provided to every state resident as "free as practicable."

The House proposal would mean the elimination of 11,000 class offerings across all the campuses, more than ten percent of the classes the system offers, making it virtually impossible for many students to take the classes they need to graduate on time.

It would result in more than 3,000 layoffs, including hundreds of faculty members.

The House budget will mark the fifth year in a row the university budget has been slashed. The cuts made in the last four years total 620 million dollars out of a \$2.7 billion budget.

Ross also talked about the economic impact of the UNC system, the research investments, the spinoff companies, and the role the campuses play in attracting businesses to the state.

Some numbers he didn't mention come from a report prepared in 2009 by Dr. Mike Walden, an economist at N.C. State and an adjunct scholar at the John Locke Foundation, a place where Republican leaders often look for policy guidance.

Walden found that the direct annual economic impact on the

state of the university system is \$8.4 billion, \$10.4 billion when you take into account the multiplier effect.

And he found that every dollar the state spends on the universities is responsible for between \$12 and \$15 of income and as much as \$2.10 in increased state and local public revenues.

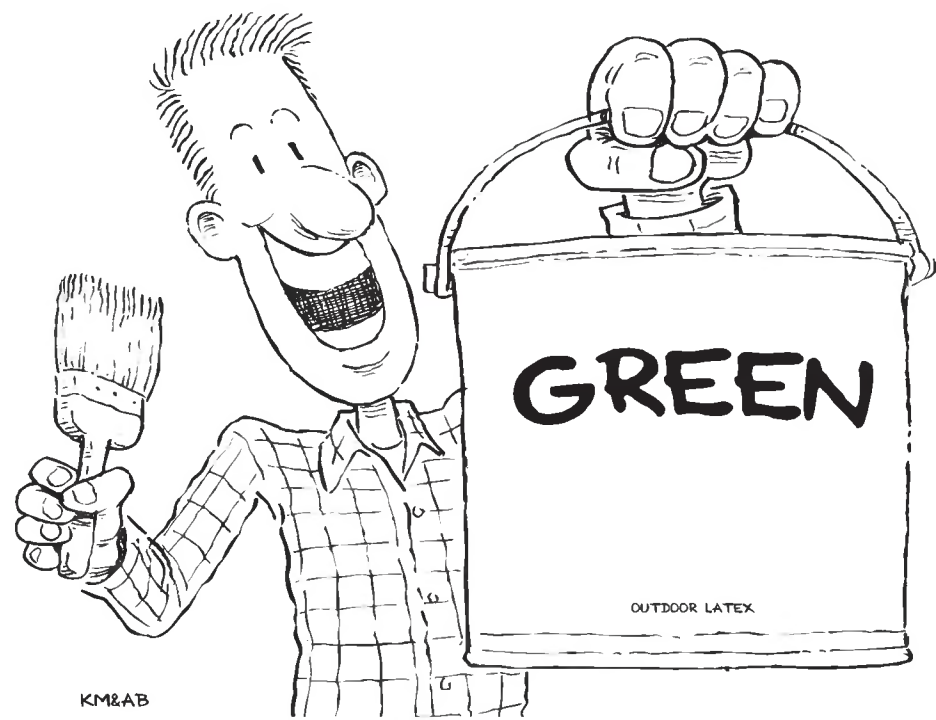
The university system is clearly one of the state's most important economic engines. You would think that lawmakers who claim that jobs are their top priority would be far less willing to damage it.

The Senate budget would cut the university system by 12 percent, not 15. That would still do serious damage to the system and the Senate found the money by cutting more from public schools and community colleges than the House.

Firing more public school teachers to fire a few less college professors is nothing to celebrate and that is not the real choice that lawmakers face anyway. They could instead listen to the majority of voters who would rather leave the sales tax at the current rate than devastate public schools or the university system.

And they could look at the numbers.

HOKE SCHOOLS' BACKUP PLAN TO GET ENERGY CREDITS FOR THE NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL



We Get Letters

Repair schools we have, too

I would gladly pay more taxes if Hoke County gets a "green" school, because I feel that those kinds of schools are the schools of the future. I have heard a lot of talk about those kinds of schools and that they are a real draw for people to come to where those schools are.

However, I also would like it if that tax increase and the proceeds from the so-called education lottery would go to improving current schools. I have heard students talking about rats in the classrooms at Hoke High, holes and stains in the ceilings, and, like I said before, I wonder if there could be mold and asbestos issues at that school as well. I am sure that some parents are just as concerned as I am about the state of some schools.

It does not look good if you have one "green" middle school but no adequate high school to go with it. I even have heard about parents who wish their kids could go to the newer Jack Britt High School in Cumberland County.

So let's make sure that a tax increase would be for all the right reasons: our children, their future

and their well being.
Claudia Jones
Raeford

What nice people do

I have lived in Montreal, Quebec since 1971. I love my city and the country I live in. My parents divorced when I was three or four years old. My mother is French-Canadian from Montreal. My father lives in Raeford.

Montreal is an international city. If you like to travel, I highly suggest visiting this beautiful city. Winter months are cold and severe. If you like winter sports, our province is a winter wonderland! I have traveled; I've been to Europe, South America, the Yukon...blah blah blah. The only place that I truly love and where I feel "at peace" is your town. When I visit my dad and family, I sit outside often, and folks wave and say hello. Not because they know me. They smile because that's what nice people do. When I stop working and my daughter graduates and starts her own family, I will be in Raeford sitting outside and waving and smiling at people that I've never met.

God Bless you all.
I miss my father (O'dell Ash-

burn). If you see him around town, please give him a hug from me and Savannah!

Natalie Ashburn
Montreal

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 are not able to publish letters that are essentially thank-you cards.

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.

Final budget is coming into view

BY SCOTT MOONEYHAM
Capitol Press Association

One of the stranger aspects of the messy state budget-making process is that state leaders, as much as they might like to, can't really cut to the chase.

At some point in that process, the general shape of the end product becomes fairly apparent to astute observers.

This year, that end product will likely include \$400 million to \$600 million more than the \$19 billion budget plan crafted by House Republicans. Most of the additional money will go to public schools and universities.

The money probably won't come from extending a penny sales tax hike scheduled to expire on July 1. It probably will come from holding off on state building repairs, tapping the state's reserve savings account, and grabbing money that House Republicans had designated for the state's

pension fund.

How can I be so sure that's what a final product will look like? Well, I could be wrong. Unforeseen factors can and will enter into the picture.

The known factors suggest that I'm right.

They include Perdue's growing willingness to block legislative Republicans by using the veto, and poll numbers suggesting that her use of the veto has improved her popularity among Democrats and independents. She's also made clear that she won't go along with the proposed House cuts to public education.

As for legislative Republicans, they staked themselves out last fall on the expiration of "temporary" tax hikes adopted two years ago. Agreeing to extend the tax increases for another year or two would be a reversal of a fundamental campaign promise.

So a middle ground that involves freeing up money from the

places where legislators traditionally look in tough times becomes the most obvious outcome.

Another ingredient in the budget mix is the five Democrats who voted with House Republicans on a budget.

After that vote, a few Republicans could barely contain themselves with giddiness, believing that they enjoyed a veto-proof majority (it takes a three-fifths majority to override a veto; Republicans are four votes short in the House) on the budget.

The likelihood that the five will stick with Republicans is slim. What they've done is shrewdly maneuver themselves into a prime position to figure into a final budget deal.

But that deal may be a couple of months away and will probably involve Perdue using her veto stamp before the sides get down to real bargaining.

Senate Republicans, of late, (See MOONEYHAM, page 3A)

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