

Weekly Perspective

Looking back

by VIRGINIA WHITE
TRANSEAU
December 1942

MERCHANTS TO MEET MONDAY TO DECIDE HOURS AND HOLIDAYS: The merchants of Hertford will hold a meeting at Simon's Store next Monday night, Dec. 7, for the purpose of deciding store hours and holidays to be observed during the coming season, L.C. Winslow, chairman of the Merchants Committee, said today.

The merchants will discuss and decide the date of opening stores for night shopping during Christmas. There has been some discussion regarding the stores remaining open a night during the week to accommodate defense workers seeking to buy merchandise, and this question will also, probably, be decided at the Monday night meeting. All merchants of Hertford are especially urged to attend.

REGISTRATION FOR TEEN-AGED YOUTHS BEGINS NEXT WEEK: Teen-aged Perquimans County youths, who reached their 18th birthday during last July and August will register for Selective Service at the local Draft

Board offices during the week of Dec. 11 to 17. Mrs. Ruth Sumner, Clerk of the local board, announced this week.

Youths who were eighteen in September and October will register a week later and those reaching 18 from November until Dec. 31, will register during the last week of the month.

HOME OF JOHN LANE DESTROYED BY FIRE: A fire of undetermined origin completely destroyed the home and household furnishings of John Lane, of Hertford, Route 2, late Saturday night. The fire was discovered sometime between 10 and 11 o'clock, but had gained such headway it was impossible for the family to save any of their personal effects.

ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Anderson White announce the engagement and approaching marriage of their daughter, Geneva, to Cadet Alfred S. Kenton, United States Army, son of Mr. and Mrs. S.S. Kenton, of New York. The wedding will take place Saturday afternoon, Dec. 5, 1942 at 4:30 o'clock in the chapel at Camp Lee, Virginia.

County has seen some unusual wedding ceremonies

One of the most interesting weddings held in Perquimans was the Pritlowe triple wedding on Aug. 16, 1716.

In his home near the present site of Don Juan Manufacturing Company, John Pritlowe married off three of his daughters at once: Leah to Joseph Smith, Judah to Abraham Sanders, and Elizabeth to William Elliott.

As the Pritlowes were Quakers, the marriages were solemnized according to Friends' custom. A couple stood before the assembled guests. The man took the woman's hand, declared that he took her for his wife, and promised to be a faithful and loving husband until parted by death. The woman then did likewise.

such social gatherings. High spirits tended to overflow, especially when bottled spirits were added, and celebration was often overdone.

Festivities often included dancing, although many churches frowned on it. Strict churches prohibited dancing altogether, while moderate ones sometimes allowed square dancing. Round dancing, particularly waltzing, was considered scandalous in some periods.

There were few ministers in the county before 1850, so most marriages were solemnized by justices of the peace. In the twentieth century many non-residents have married in Perquimans, taking advantage of North Carolina's easier marriage laws.

Until the automobile and the paved road increased travel possibilities, most people married within their own neighborhood even if that meant marrying a relative. It was not uncommon for a boy to marry a girl from the next farm.

People were not deprived of outside contacts, however. Courts, militia musters, and church meetings often provided matchmaking opportunities, while business and pleasure trips brought people together from great distances. In some periods parents played the leading role in finding spouses for their children.

Some unusual weddings have been held in Perquimans County, strictly for entertainment. The "Tom Thumb" wedding featured children enacting a marriage ceremony, while the "womanless" wedding treated the public to the sight of their male friends and neighbors gussied up as "brides" and "bridesmaids."

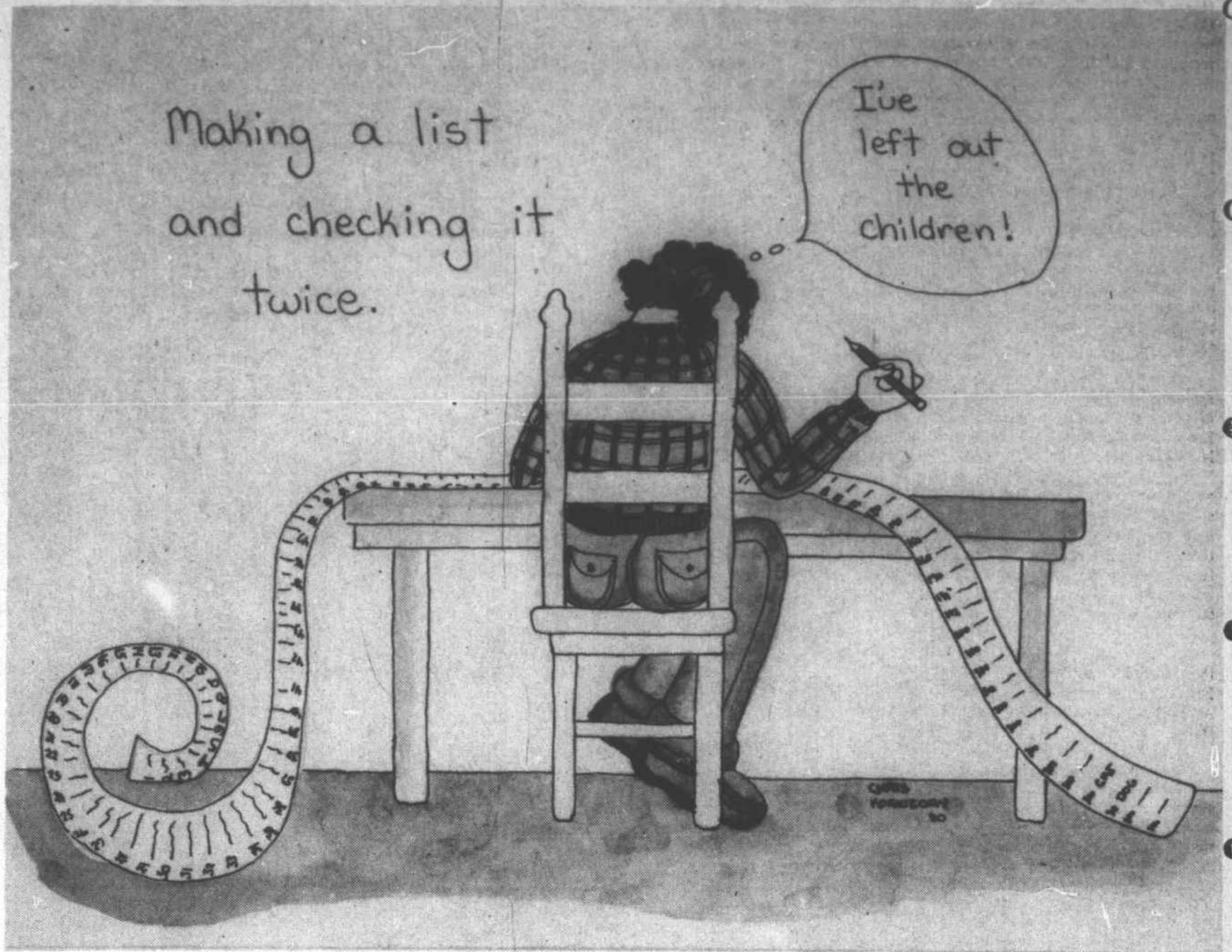


Ray Winslow

After their mutual promises were spoken, the new groom and bride signed a marriage certificate, to which many of the witnesses present added their own names.

It was also the custom of Friends to insure weddings were conducted in good order. In the case of the Pritlowe wedding, Friends appointed Timothy Cleare and Samuel Nicholson to stay at John Pritlowe's the night after the wedding to see there be no disorders.

Friends' concern over disorders at marriage feasts was necessary at a time when most weddings were held in private homes and hard-working people prized



Too small to argue with a car

A true cat lover can never go too long without some feline company, so when a girl I know in Elizabeth City confronted me with a tiny ball of purring fuzz, I gave in, and a cat came to live with us on Grubb Street.

Visions of the old Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young tune entered my head — our house would indeed be very very very fine with a cat in the yard.

But visions have a way of giving way to reality. Curtis, our newest family member, would prove to be much more than just a tiny ball of purring fuzz. He would prove to be a monster.

Aside from climbing our sheer drapes and sharpening his claws on our velvet couch, he managed to kill the few house plants that had managed to survive my black thumb; he thought that dirt meant

"dig" — and you know what cats do after they dig.

But as time went on and Curtis gradually learned to comply with house rules, a lovely thing happened. We all began to love each other.

Noel Todd McLaughlin

I remember coming home one afternoon from work to find Curtis and Bear, our dog, curled up in a ball, asleep on the porch.

I remember working out in the yard, and Curtis following me around like a puppy.

I remember my husband, Mike, who is usually aloof to pets, down on the floor playing hide and seek with the cat.

I remember waking up one cold morning with a puff of warm cat snoozing on my pillow, and then greeting me, as if to say good morning, with one tiny meow.

Shortly after our neighbor's call, I stood in the doorway and watched Mike slowly cross the street, heading home with the kitten gently held against his stomach.

I went outside and we walked silently through the yard and began to make a grave. The cat had been about 12 weeks old when it was struck by a car.

When the tears stopped, I realized I had wept not only for Curtis, but for all the animals I had ever known and lost. Not only for the soft motor purr we had come to care for, but for all the purrs and barks I had known that were now silent.

A common theory holds that one of the traits that separates humans from other animals is the ability to love.

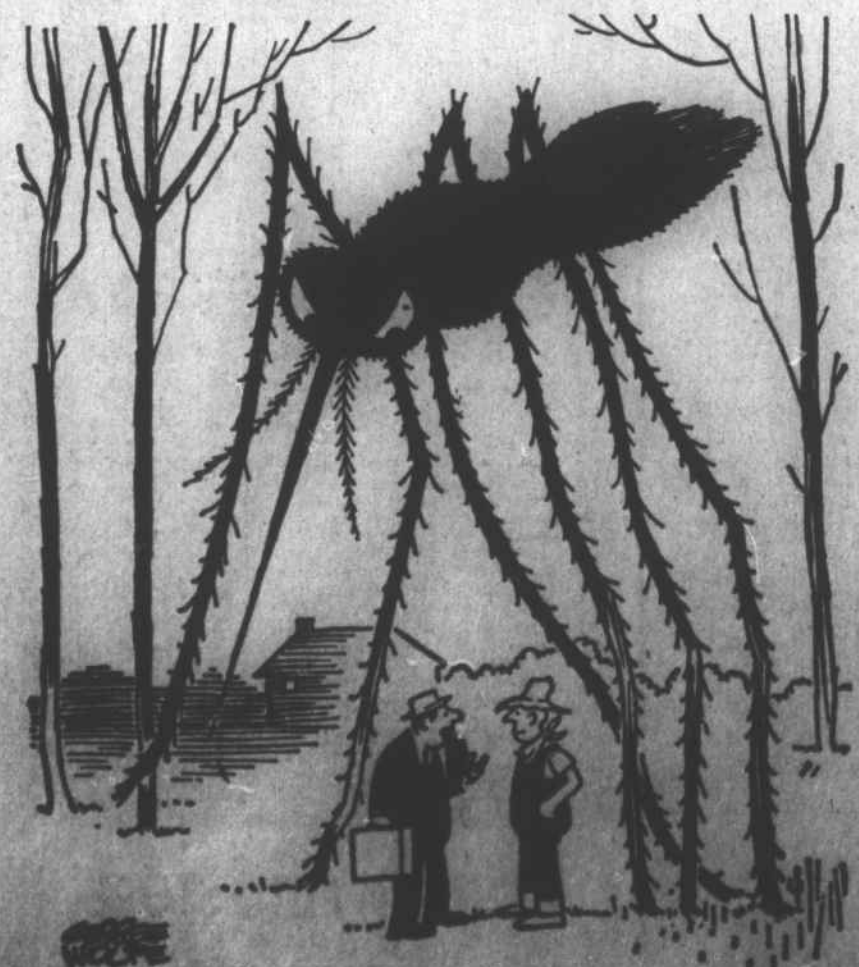
I have never agreed with that theory, for any animal I have ever loved has had the heart to give me some of my love back.

Curtis stayed just long enough to tear up the curtains and to give us some love.

I swore I'd never have another cat, but now we have a new kitten, named Otis, who has yet to learn house rules...

Facing South

a syndicated column:
voices of tradition
in a changing region



"HOW'D THAT NEW INSECTICIDE WORK-OUT?"

PILOT MOUNTAIN, N.C. — Recently I went back to Pilot Mountain, under whose east shadow, during the first two decades of this century, I spent a casual and seemingly aimless boyhood.

I went back with a couple of hiking-minded fellows, to walk the new trail that the North Carolina Department of Parks has laid out across the mountain's south shoulder and on the the Yadkin River five miles farther west.

I enjoyed the gray-granite outcroppings that marked the ancient roads — dark now under the second growth trees and leading invitingly into mysterious coves and up to timbered ridges — roads that some forgotten farmer had driven his wheel-chucking wagon over long ago, but abandoned in favor of more level fields or whistle-tooting factories.

At every turn, the darkly wooded slopes and the rock-studded crest changed: bold and starkly forbidding immediately above me, but invitingly soft in a blue haze from a distance.

As I plodded on, feeling the muscles in my old legs begin to tighten up, I recalled and told the others about my first memories of the mountain:

The Easter Holiday crowds that swarmed up the steep trails and climbed the "Big Pinnacle" ladders. The graffiti that called from every smoothed-faced boulder: "Jesus Saves!" "Where will they spend eternity?" "Bobby Lewis Allen." Holiday drunks teetering along

the edges of precipices but never falling. The cold, sweet water from the Pinnacle Spring.

But memory held most vividly the fires — fires started by vandals at the crest that made the mountain a smoking mound by day and a presented a cricling, zigzagging chain of flickering flames by night. People from miles around gathered on hilltops to visit one another and watch the burning spectacle as it moved slowly downward. Lovers stopped their buggies or T-Models at vantage points to look and "pitch a little woo."

As long as the fires remained on the steep upper slopes, they did only minor damage. The timber there was scrubby, and the squirrels, rabbits, and opossums could escape ahead of the slow-moving flames. (The wild turkeys, bears, and deer had long before been killed off).

Rattlesnakes evidently found safety in deep crevices of the rocks. Positively, the wild huckleberries flourished after the burn-overs.

If the rains did not come, however, the fires eventually reached the "flatwoods" at the base, jeopardizing the farms and homes at the foot of the mountain. Or if winds arose, sparks were blown far beyond the mountain, turning the prankster's deed into a grave danger.

When the rain fell or the wind whipped up the flames on the mountainside, the fire lost its beauty to me and became a thing of terror. On those occasions, the men of the surrounding

communities organized themselves into loosely knit firefighting units.

Then each unit, like the builders of Jerusalem's wall under Nehemiah, moved up through the flatwoods to rake a "fire lane" to "backfire" against the downward creeping flames. This lane they patrolled day and night to guard against falling trees and rolling logs that might cross it and spread the fire below.

After the lane — circling the mountain and covering a distance of six or seven miles — was established, the men set up stations and built up big campfires, where they kept pots of coffee steaming.

With food brought from the cupboards at home, and with a jug of apple brandy to whet their appetites, they swapped news of families and crops, told wild tales of wine and women and tragedy, and lifted their voices in stentorian yells to let their fellow firefighters know they were still there. And they listened in turn to the calls from others.

"That's Tom Culler over on the Pinnacle Spring trail," one listener would remark. "That's Ed and Bob Gordon hallooing from the Grinstead Ridge," another announced.

With the purchase of the mountain by a commercial enterprise in 1929, the fires with their poignant blend of destruction and beauty, became a memory.

ZEB DENNY
free lance
Roanoke Rapids, N.C.



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