

# Weekly Perspective

## Our view

### Festival sparks community spirit

The success of the Indian Summer Festival is just as heartening to us as it is to the county Chamber of Commerce, which has sweated for the last several months organizing the affair.

Behind all that fun that people had last week was a great deal of work, and the county owes a tip of the hat to the Chamber members involved — as well as to all of the craftsmen, cooks, musicians, folks dressed up in colonial garb, and whomever else we may have neglected to mention.

Not everything about the three-day festival was perfect, but for the first time out it seemed very well done. We have a few suggestions for improvement, but everyone seemed to be working so hard and having such a good time that we don't have the heart to mention them.

We emphasize the work of those behind it, and the spirit of everyone involved, because to us that is even more encouraging than the festival's success.

Over the last several years, and particularly so in more recent times, residents and community leaders have been concerned about the county's future.

With county expenses growing higher than many taxpayers believe they can support, and local businesses failing or just holding their own, and good jobs becoming scarcer and scarcer, many fear that without an infusion of new growth — both economically and in community spirit — this county may be in for a slow fadeout.

So it is indeed heartening to see signs that people no are longer satisfied to sit back and bemoan their fate. The Indian Summer Festival — recall that the Chamber's original purpose was to attract people and business from outside the area to Perquimans County — along with the school system's accreditation drive and this week's Committee of 100 banquet are the three of the most recent examples of local people attempting to lead the county into a brighter future.

Their determined effort alone, regardless of its success, counts for a great deal. People here can't depend on someone else to improve their lot; they must make the effort themselves. With the community's support behind them, we can hope for more such efforts in the future.

### Public buildings in Perquimans Co.

The conduct of public business in early North Carolina generally required that a county erect and maintain four sorts of public buildings, namely a courthouse, a jail, a public warehouse, and a poorhouse.

The courthouse was of primary significance and was usually the first building to be financed by local taxation, because it provided a repository for county records, offices for major officials, and a home for local government.

Besides court sessions, the courthouse was often used for church services, lodge meetings, and public gatherings in an age which attached little importance to distinctions between public and private affairs.

Further, the courthouse attracted people to its location and commonly formed the nucleus of a settlement.

Local government evinced a special interest in its meeting place and its concern might range from securing John Gatling to build a new courthouse in the 1820s, on to seeing it painted and renovated on numerous occasions, and even down to things so minute as purchasing flag-bottom chairs for it and ordering sawdust



Ray Winslow

put on its floor during court week. In close proximity to the courthouse was the jail and it, too, received much attention from the government of Perquimans County. Whether its inmates were felons or debtors, the jail was not expected to hold people long. It was not a penitentiary, and the authorities were seldom disposed to expend large sums of money for the feeding and care of prisoners.

Despite numerous orders for its strengthening and repair, the jail was hardly adequate for its purpose. In some counties (such as Chowan) it was a regular custom for an incoming sheriff to protest before the county magistrates that the jail was insufficient to hold prisoners. One can well imagine a sheriff saying after a jail break, "I told you so."

### Indian Summer Festival — a good time was had by all



### By the way, I'm awfully sorry about this

Odds and ends and various apologies.

For starters, I'd like to apologize for messing up last week's cartoon.

In case you didn't notice, the caption was inadvertently left out. That was my fault, I forgot it. That's what happens when you get in too big a hurry.

We had a few enquiries about what the caption was supposed to be, and I've heard of a few wild guesses that people made, some of them wild enough that I've begun to worry about what's going on in some people's minds.

The cartoon, with caption, is reprinted below left. That is, if I didn't forget it again.

Next week, I think I'll forget to put my column in. I don't expect too many inquiries about it.

I don't know about you, but I had myself a good time last week at the Indian Summer Festival.

I was pooped by the time it was over though. I figure I took something around 150 pictures in those three days, though I don't believe more than 20 of them were printed in the paper this week.

For those of you who didn't get your picture taken and thought you should have (and there are a lot of you out there), and those who got your picture taken, but didn't see it in the paper (I figure there are roughly 130 of you out there), I apologize. I'd just as soon get you all in there, but there's only so much I can do.

And speaking about the Indian Summer Festival, Festival Chairman Mary Harrell said that the attractions of the event were enough to keep some people here all day, when they only meant to stay an hour or so. Others even decided not to go to work, a great idea if I ever heard one.

For example, Mary said that Emmett Landing apparently came



Tom Ostrosky

downtown on his lunch hour to pick up a prescription, and seeing all the fun folks were having, decided not to return to work.

By the way, if that story embarrasses Mr. Landing, or causes him to lose his job, I apologize for repeating it.

There's another story I heard that night, only this time I won't risk any jobs or reputations (or a punch in the nose, for that matter) by repeating the name.

Saturday night during the dance, I

asked a fellow I knew where his sons were that night. The fellow in question has one teenage son, Ted, I'll call him, and another still in grade school, Pete.

"Oh, Ted's out here somewhere," the father said.

"And where's Pete?" I asked.

"He's at home with his mother."

"Why did you leave him at home?" I asked.

"Well," the fellow said, "I thought maybe Ted might score tonight, and he wouldn't want some kid tailing around behind him."

Now that's what I call a father looking after his boys.

By the way, if people reading this recognize who I'm talking about, I apologize to the fellow and his sons for repeating it.

And for all those other people who feel as if I did something against them, I'm sorry about that. I just seem to be stepping on a lot of toes lately.

## Facing South

a syndicated column: voices of tradition in a changing region

### Keep it on the islands

BUCK ISLAND, Fla.—The islands on that crooked coast are indefinite places owned mostly by the government. They lie in shallow water; at low tide, what had seemed to be a reef will announce it as an island. At high tide, what had appeared to be part of the mainland will decide it is an island, entire of itself.

The islands make up an indecisive archipelago between the marshes and the thespitbanks. No one much calls them home—except Curtis

McCain.

Curtis McCain lives in a shelter he built himself on high ground, somewhere between Shell Mound, where he grew up, and Buck Island, where his great-grandfather homesteaded before 1860. The surrounding islands—Spanish Bayonet, Derrick Lone Cabbage and a dozen other nameless ones—are all unpopulated.

McCain is not unsociable, but he likes to meet society on his own terms. He does not encourage unannounced visits. If you want to see him, you must drive down the shell road to the point and honk your horn. If he wants to see you, he will emerge from a clump of trees, and soon you will see his boat floating

toward you across the salt flats and the glinting sun.

If not, the island will lie silent. An unwanted visitor who persists toward the island may find his leg seized in the iron jaws of the bullhog Bandit—and McCain says that once Bandit's jaws are locked around you even and order from the master will not serve to loosen them.

Curtis McCain himself is not averse to violence when he thinks it necessary—though he does not like to talk about it. He sometimes admits to a history of violence that includes cutting a man's head off with a knife 20 years ago to blowing a man's arm off with a shotgun just recently. Because there was always a margin of self-defense in these actions, and because he was lucky, McCain always managed to avoid prison.

Instinctive violence is repugnant to him, though. After dropping out of school in the sixth grade to fish and build boats the way five generations of McCains had done since they immigrated to the islands from Dublin, Ireland, Curtis McCain enlisted in his teens as a navigator in World War II.

"It was a hard life on these island, and people wasn't always good," says McCain. "But when I went off to war I learned what hell was all about. The s.o.b.'s wanted you just to kill people without no good reason, to kill little children or women and that can't help themselves, just ignorant killing."

"When I got shot down at Okinawa and they sent me home I said I don't want no more of nobody else's islands and nobody else's fighting, huh?"

After the war, McCain married and settled down to a life of fishing on his islands. Life was good, for a handful of years, until his wife suddenly died of cancer. Then he took his three young children to stay with his mother, and left the islands for

several years—nobody knows how long. His wanderings included some brushes with the law, and took him as far as Canada.

But eventually he came back to the islands—though not to family life. He built several shelters, and now moves back and forth between Shell Point and the islands.

He sets crab pots in the empty shallow waters. He harvests oysters from undiscovered oyster beds and pulls nets of mullet from bays unfished by any others.

But Curtis McCain's solitary life is no idyll. At 55, he carried deep secret troubles within him—troubles that go beyond his missing teeth, his lopped off toe, the persistent cough that has sapped 50 pounds from his frame. They even go beyond the hurt remaining from his wife's untimely death.

"I ain't complaining," he says. "I was raised hard just like all the McCains was raised hard, but I've been a lot of good things that has happened to me. I don't have no right to be complaining over them little miseries that happens to everybody sometime, huh?"

## Looking back

September 1944  
By VIRGINIA WHITE TRANSEAU  
DRIVERS INJURED IN HORSE RACES SATURDAY: Two mishaps in the horse race held at the S.P. Jessup track here last Saturday afternoon resulted in injuries to three of the drivers in the races. Ed Benton suffered slight shock and bruises in one race when his sulky turned over, and Mr. Bartlett, of Shiloh, was injured also slightly, when his sulky was in a crash with one driven by Elwood White. Mr. White was hurt when his horse stumbled attempting to pass on one of the curves, and the driver was thrown from the sulky in front of two oncoming horses in the race. He was brought to Dr. T.P. Brinn's clinic for treatment and was later removed to the Abemarle Hospital in Elizabeth City. His condition is reported good.

LOCAL MAN ASSIGNED DUTY AT HARVEY POINT: Lieut. Shelton White, U.S.N.R., son of Mrs. Sarah White of Hertford, has been assigned duty at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station at Harvey Point. Lieut. White, since receiving his commission with the Naval Air Force, in December 1942, has seen duty at a number of Naval Training and Air Stations in this country. While a native of Hertford, Lieut. White has been away from this community for 22 years and states that he is very glad to be stationed so near home.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT: Cpl. and Mrs. Vance Proctor announce the birth of a daughter, Marsha Lynn, on September 7, 1944 at High Point. Cpl. Proctor is now stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, as an instructor.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT: Mr. and Mrs. W.T. Jones announce the birth of a son, William Thomas Jones, Jr. born September 14, 1944, at Lakeview Hospital, Suffolk, Va.



**THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY**  
Tom Ostrosky  
Editor  
Jane Williams  
Advertising Manager  
Pat Mansfield  
Circulation Manager  
NEWS AND ADVERTISING  
DEADLINE 5 P.M. MONDAY  
Subscription rates  
ONE YEAR \$7.50 IN COUNTY  
\$8.50 OUTSIDE COUNTY  
P.O. Box 277 Hertford, N.C. 27944  
Published by Advance Publ.,  
Elizabeth City