

# Weekly Perspective

## Other views

### Our agriculture is on a diet

**By JOHN SLEDGE**  
 For the first time in a few years, we will be able to say that U.S. Farmers are not producing record crops this year. Think of it as agriculture on a diet. More than half of the nation's farms are enrolled in various acreage reduction programs to take more than a third of the nation's cropland for wheat, feed grains, rice and cotton out of production.

The Payment-In-Kind program, which returns surplus commodities to farmers for leaving cropland idle, was first detailed by President Reagan at the American Farm

Bureau Federation annual meeting last January in Dallas.

PIK was stalled in Congress at the time, but the President announced to the Farm Bureau that he was going ahead with it. Reagan rightly surmised that agriculture couldn't wait another year. And, he received the enthusiastic support of thousands of farmers at that meeting.

While some thought that interest might wane, it did not, and the result, was a tremendous participation in acreage reduction. PIK has already helped the farmers. Prices, especially for corn, have climbed steadily since January. This year's

production of corn may be the smallest since 1975, and feed grain stocks could be cut by 33 percent. Wheat production will probably be the lowest since 1979.

That doesn't mean we are in danger of running short of grain. We have more than enough even with PIK. But, after several years of steady diet of big crops, agriculture is going on a diet.

Instead of carrying all that weight around in surplus stocks, we are going to see a leaner crop sector, and that's going to be healthier for the whole farm economy, as well as for consumers.

### Facts need to be explained

Contrary to the old saying, facts do not speak for themselves. Facts cannot simply stand alone, and many are incomprehensible without interpretation. Historical research necessitates the explanation of discovered facts.

Consider the 1754 muster roll of the Perquimans Regiment of Militia. The facts present themselves as a list of names. What does the list mean? Why are certain persons named? What can the list reveal about those persons?

accumulate, suspicion is cast on various characters in turn. Only when the last or most important clue is revealed, does the true solution to the mystery appear.

So in the gathering of facts to various conclusions alternately seem possible until the last fact is dropped into the pot. (It is a fortunate historian who can be confident of knowing the last pertinent fact, and assured that a new discovery will not wreck his interpretation.)

logical, it is entirely wrong. Continued research proves Ann Peterson's death at a tender age and unmarried. When all the facts that can be found are interpreted, it becomes clear that William Hall was Mary Peterson's eldest brother; he was Mary's heir, not her husband.

A single set of apparently straightforward data may offer numerous possible interpretations, evaluations, or analyses. The 1850 Census of Perquimans, for example, lists together Thomas Newby, age 55; Sarah A. Newby, 30; and Robert B. Newby, 1. The obvious interpretation is that old Thomas has a young wife and infant son. The cautious historian, nonetheless, will hesitate.



Conclusions may vary at each stage of research. Jacob and Mary Peterson had a daughter Ann. William Hall and wife Ann sold property inherited from Mary Peterson. Thus far, these two facts point to an inescapable conclusion: William Hall married Ann Peterson. Although that conclusion is entirely

Thomas's advanced age suggests the possibility he had a son, deceased, whose widow and orphan survive. Still other possibilities emerge, but this instance can be enlightened by facts from other sources. In truth, Thomas sheltered his late brother's widow and orphan.

Much interpretation is far more complicated than these plain examples. The historian really has two difficult tasks. First, getting the facts; second finding out what they mean.



(Your last smug words before you realize — Daylight Savings Time.)

### Editor caught by surprise by daylight savings time

Daylight savings time slipped up on me again.

I wondered if I was the only one to be reminded during the 11 o'clock news Saturday night.

Probably not. Nor was I the only one to make a frantic attempt at assisting my digital watch to "spring forward."

I had made the mistake of throwing away the special tool made, I suspect, for this annual occasion. I was just about to "spring" my little watch out the window, when I discovered that a pinhead would do the trick.

Ah... set for six more months, unless of course the battery dies.

I don't think I was the only member of THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY staff to forget about daylight savings time, because somehow it failed to get in the paper last week.

"Do we set the clocks up or back?" "Does this mean we lose an hour of sleep?"

"It seems backwards to me... wintertime is when we need more daylight."

"At least it will be daylight when I get home from work now." And so on...

regular schedule... getting up and going to bed at a reasonable hour and napping and eating at the proper times.

But daylight savings time puts an end to all that. Your babies just might allow you to sleep a little later, but they make up for it by staying up later. And they are ready for lunchtime when it should be naptime, so therefore they sleep through suppertime.

When they are finally settled into a schedule again, it's October and time to "fall back!"

But after a few years pass, you realize that schedules really aren't that important and that Aprils and Octobers are passing faster than you can imagine.

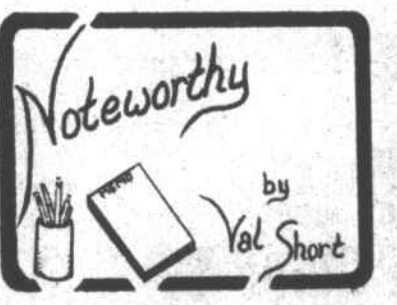
Oh there's one "daylight savings" conversation I forgot to mention. It involves the ole' how late is late syndrome that comes after a date or poker game on that fateful night in April.

It goes something like this... "Where have you been — it's one o'clock?"

"No, dear (Mom, Dad or whatever) it's only 12."

"My clock says one — don't change the subject..."

"It's only 12 — the clocks don't change till two!"



### Looking back

**20 YEARS AGO**  
**By VIRGINIA WHITE TRANSEAU**  
**MORE HATS THROWN IN POLITICAL RING:** Erie Haste, Jr., has put his hat in the ring for a seat on the Hertford Town Council, as has J.W. Dillion and Cecil C. Winslow.

Haste is a past president of the Hertford Rotary Club. He attended the University of North Carolina for four years. He is a member of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, a past secretary-treasurer of the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce and is present treasurer

of the Industrial Commercial Development Corporation which is a local corporation solely owned by residents of Perquimans County.

J.W. (Dill) Dillon, manager of W.M. Morgan Furniture Company, has filed as a candidate for a seat on the Hertford Town Board. Dillon is a member of the official board of the First Methodist Church. He is treasurer of the church building fund, and is also a member of the local draft board and an active member of the Merchants Committee of the Perquimans County

Chamber of Commerce.

C.C. Winslow seeks a seat on the council. He is vice-president of the Winslow-Blanchard Motor Company and has long been active in civic affairs in Perquimans County. He is a member of the Perquimans Masonic Lodge, of which he is past master. A past secretary for the lodge, he held the job for a number of years. He has been active in the Eastern Star, serving as past worthy patron. He is a Shriner and has been Perquimans County Chairman of the N.C. Automobile Dealers Association.

### Letter to the editor

Editor, THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY:

At the Orange County Republican Convention, I received a hand-out which troubles me. It was prepared by a young man who has worked for the Congressional Club and for the North Carolina Republican Party.

He has seen the way in which the Club rules the state Republican party and is fighting that influence by opposing the re-election of the chairman of the state party.

One paragraph of the hand-out describes how the paid staff of the Congressional Club insult and bully the local party officials and volunteers. Although I have not been active in politics myself for the last

year or two, I have served the party as County Chairman, of the Resolutions Committee at the 1980 state convention.

My own observations and the observations of many of my friends in the party give credibility to his indictment of the way the Club operates. Indeed, anyone who has paid attention to the Club's political advertising will recognize a quality of meanness in it.

I am far from being a pacifist in politics, but I do believe in a distinction between honest blows struck against someone you regard as a particular villain and poison gas attacks against innocent victims.

That young man, with the hand-out

has shamed me into standing up to be counted. Is there anyone in Perquimans County who cares enough about the party of freedom to stand up with us?

Richard Smyth  
 Rt. 5, Chapel Hill, NC

## Facing South

a syndicated column  
voices of tradition  
in a changing region

**MONTEZUMA, Ga.** — Southerners don't just casually enjoy their vegetables. They love them dearly and defend them passionately. They would approve adding a fifth verse to "America, the Beautiful" in which the black-eyed peas, the collard and the butter bean received their due share of choral praise.

And... maybe... with reservations...okra.

Okra is at once the most relished and most despised of the vegetables called Southern. By no means a "new" vegetable, it arrived with the first Africans to land on our shores.

As they struggled to recreate on their rough new hearths something of the taste of home, okra became a favorite (with some) in cabin and big house, lending variety to the corn, potato, bean and turnip cousins of the farming frontiers.

Okra is now working its way North. I have reports from spies who say that in Chicago, they have eaten young okra pods battered, deep-fried

and dipped in mayonnaise. In Wisconsin, you can get it dilled (as in pickle) — and in New York City, much to the surprise of a Greek-American Boy Scout visiting from Atlanta, it was built into a moussaka. "Jeeze, Mom," he protested, "eggplant and okra!"

Like the egg and the avocado, okra comes in attractive little packages. In France, according to *LaRousse Gastronomique*, the pods are sometimes called "ladies fingers." The word "gumbo," used for a sort of stew that incorporates seafood, ham, chicken, tomatoes, onions and peppers, is actually just another West African name for okra. The plant belongs to the mallow family and grows all over Africa and India, where, since earliest times, it has been cultivated as a garden vegetable.

It is the mucilaginous quality of okra that, for some choosy eaters, puts it beyond the pale. If boiled only a minute too long, it disintegrates

into a slippery mess. In gumbo, this is a desired quality; it makes a thin stew into fork food. But by far the most popular way of preparing okra is to slice the pods into half-inch rounds, shake them in a bag with salt, pepper and Southern cornmeal, and fry them in bacon fat.

What fast food chains have done for the potato and cabbage, through offering French fries and slaw, they may yet do for fried okra. In the Macon area, several truck stops near the Farmers' Market sell "Fried Okra Snacks" by the paper scoopful.

Retired Southern executives tend to go in for kitchen gardening, and in variably include a half-dozen okra plants. Accompany such a hobbyist on a post-picking tour and he will always stop by the okra patch, take out his pocket knife and carefully cut off a few tender young pods.

He will reminisce, "Mama always cooked a little okra along with black-eyed peas — she said it gave them flavor. Then she would lift the pods

out and put them down on Papa's plate, along with his peas and rice and his chopped onions and pepper sauce." Now he is Papa, and his wife indulgently lays the okra over the peas when she cooks them. So, in small ways, we reconstruct our personal pasts.

It has always been a puzzle to me that some vegetables are funnier than others. Take corn. Wheat and rye and barley are never comic, but corn is hilarious. Cucumbers are sober vegetables, while squashes bring chuckles.

Rutabagas and parsnips are amusing. But, as an ingredient of Southern ribaldry, okra takes the prize: "Play that okra song — 'Slip, Slidin' Away'" Or, to a child whose socks have fallen over his shoe tops, "What's the matter, kid? Been eatin' too much okra?"

One thing can be said for sure about this eccentric vegetable.

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