

Perspective

Perquimans County People drive with one hand on the wheel



and one hand waving

Don't allow your dreams to die ... keep them alive

While visiting her doctor, a 72-year-old woman proceeded to list all her ailments, both real and imaginary. She seemed most concerned, however, about a recurring dream. In the dream, a handsome young man pursued her and kept trying to kiss her. The doctor listened patiently, making notes of each ailment. When she was done, he discussed the real complaints with her, advising her on what action to take. For the dreams, he suggested some medicine to help her sleep more soundly, thinking that deeper sleep would cause her to forget them. A week later, the woman was back, and seemed more concerned than ever. "Don't tell me you are still having problems sleeping," said the doctor. "Oh, I'm sleeping fine," she replied, "she replied, "but I sure do miss that young man!" Like so many of us, she had traded her dreams for something else, and discovered she had lost more than she gained.



It is a sad thing to allow our dreams to die. We all have dreams. Sometimes we disguise them by calling them something else. Maybe we call them goals, or ideas, but they're really dreams waiting to become reality. We dream about our lives; about what we plan to do with our time on earth. We dream about the future, and assemble in our minds the way we would like tomorrow to be. We dream about our families, about where we would like to be spiritually or financially. We are always dreaming about, or for, something.

But, as life will have it, reality strikes and we postpone a dream here, another there, or we try to stop dreaming altogether.

Perhaps some dreams aren't very realistic in the first place. Maybe we dreamed for too much. But maybe some dreams were good and we never realized them because we allowed them to wither away and eventually die. Like the last embers of a smoldering fire will die without more wood, dreams that are ignored will fade away.

Maybe we should remember how to dream as we did when we were children. I recall so well time spent lying in the cool grass on a summer day, watching the clouds drift by, my head full of dreams. It was so easy then to dream, to hope, to wonder.

I especially remember one dream. It was a dream and a wish for a toy I knew couldn't have. The local John Deere dealer had a display of various toy tractors, combines and other equipment in the front window of the

building. As often as I could, whether they were open or not, I'd stop and stand for hours, looking into the window and dreaming about the toys.

I imagined all the fun I could have if I had just one of the tractors, and perhaps a trailer or a plow to go with it.

Though I never did get the tractor, I didn't stop dreaming about it. Perhaps my dream has become reality today as I now have a John Deere garden tractor with a trailer and various implements. While it doesn't make up for all the hours I spent with my nose pressed against the glass so many years ago, having it does satisfy a dream.

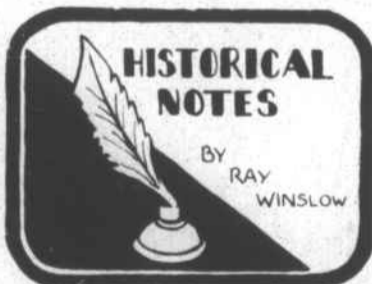
We can't stop dreaming because they don't all become reality. In the book of Timothy, Paul encourages his friends to "fan into flame" the spirit that is within him. In other words, don't allow your dreams to die. Keep them alive. They just might come true.

Perquimans soldiers plan for area invasion

In February 1862 Perquimans County was in fear of invasion. Half the population dreaded the arrival of the Union Army, so much so that the threat "The Yankees'll get you!" would be used to frighten children for years thereafter.

Less openly, the other half of the county's inhabitants looked to the coming of federal forces as a promise of better days. Slaves hoping for freedom, Quakers hoping for peace, and pro-Unionists hoping for the restoration of "legitimate" government were not supporters of the Confederate authority.

County authorities had disposed the few militia men left for local defense. Nearly all the men with any military training had gone into the Confederate Army, so only old men, boys, the sick, the disaffected, and



the ineligible remained. To the east, Perquimans' own "John Harvey Guards" stood in the path of the enemy. Most of the "Guards" had been in service since Capt Lucius J. Johnson had enlisted them the previous May.

Captain Johnson had already had a taste of warfare, having opposed the federals at Hatteras in August. He had known war was not patriotic ro-

manticism, having been captured and imprisoned in Boston for several months. He was released just in time to face his opponents again.

Second in command of the "Guards" was Thomas H. Gilliam, who had a brother-in-law safe (for the moment) with the "Perquimans Beauregards" in the defenses around New Bern.

Sergeants in the "Guards" were Francis Barrow, William F. Stokes, Richard H. Leigh, and Uriah W. Speight. Corporals were Wilson L. Mardre, Noah Felton, James M. Skinner, and Henry C. Stokes.

Privates in the "Guards" included farmers, clerks, merchants, sailors, carpenters, millers, and tailors—all

turned soldier.

Since the fall of 1861 the "Guards" had been in garrison on Roanoke Island at Fort Bartow, "a sand fort well covered with turf, having six long 32-pound guns in embrasure and three 32-pounders en barbette." Protecting the western side of the island, the fort was an important part of the Albemarle defenses. Perhaps it was there that Quartermaster Matthew O. Jordan had erected wooden barracks, the men "having never been furnished with tents."

Through the winter there was little to do but to drill and check equipment and plan for the day when the fort would come under hostile fire. In the first week of February that day did come.

(Part 3 next week.)

"One letter...too late"

With guilt-ridden shame and emotional conflict, I read her letter over and over all day long. I left it lying on my desk and went to start lunch, then returned and read it all again. I filled the washing machine and the dryer, and I read the letter. I filed the wood boxes and dusted the house, and read the letter. All day long, I'd do a chore, then pick up the letter and read it again. And all day long I was filled with an emptiness and a longing to turn the weeks around. All day long, between every chore and on every hour, I'd read that letter and cried.

There was no need to try to get serious writing done. The features and short stories and poems would just have to wait. I couldn't concentrate. Not with her letter laying so heavy in my hand and hard across my heart.

Her shaky handwriting was scrawled over the wrinkled page. She said her hands hurt, but she'd been quilting again. She told me she'd been cooking something from an old family recipe, and she also said:

"I don't know why I keep thinking of you so much girl. You remind me of some of my family back when the years were young. I just loved seeing you. It meant so much to me. I can't hardly walk without my stick, and sitting does me just as bad. I am almost down, but I am fighting to keep going, trying not to be such a burden. I know I am. But it's not my will to be on anybody or make it hard for anyone. Gail, I hate to try to write because I have forgot how to spell and sometimes spell one thing and write another. Then lay it down someplace and can't ever find it again. I can't read this myself, so I hope you can. Please take all the mistakes as love, for if it won't love in my heart, I would not even try to write. But, if you have time, I would appreciate a letter from you. I get so lonely sometimes and you make my heart smile. I love you. Please write to me." And it was signed my great-aunt.

It was on one of those rare days when I happened to be nearby, that I stopped to see her. I found her on the screened-in porch, humming an old hymn and thumbing through her Bible. She welcomed me with open arms, and told me of how much she



missed her flower garden and her husband's gentle blue eyes.

Then we went inside, and she settled me in a chair near the piano. I lost all sense of time as the two of them melted together.

Those old hymns spilled out of her and onto that keyboard with a magic that held me spellbound, oblivious to anything but the worn ivories, wrinkled fingers, and the peacefulness of just being there.

Though it was late when I finally left her that afternoon, I came away with a light heart and a satisfied mind. A part of my past was now welded in my soul. A woman I had known far too little about and seen far too few times, had now merged with the woman I was. For she was my great-aunt, and a part of me, and me her, and I loved her, and was so thankful for that afternoon.

So, how could I have been so neglectful? Why did I let my priorities slip like this? How could I have forgotten her letter? I didn't forget her. I thought of her often. But, she didn't know that...because I forgot her letter. I let it get lost beneath a pile of manuscripts and rewrites and research. All useles, unimportant papers compared to that sweet old woman and what she represented to me. And yet, I let it stay there at the bottom of that pile. I let all this time pass. I answered all my mail from editors and readers and made doubly sure I had paid all the bills. Yet my great-aunt's simple request lay forgotten upon my desk. Until today.

But now it's too late. Too late to call and say I'm sorry. Too late to write and apologize for taking so long. Too late for anything. Except regret, and guilt, and the tear-stained reality that, for my last great-aunt, I will always be...one letter too late.

Looking back

20 YEARS AGO
American Legion Auxiliary First District Meeting To Be Held April 16: Mrs. Tim Craig, Sr. Department President of North Carolina American Legion Auxiliary, from Charlotte, will give the address at the Annual District Meeting of the 1st District meeting of the American Legion Auxiliary to be held in Hertford, Wednesday, April 16th at the William Paul Stallings American Legion Post 126, located on the corner of West Academy Street.

Harry Winslow Hurt In Accident: Harry Winslow, local lumberman, received a severe cut hand last Thursday while at work in the log woods. Mr. Winslow's left hand was cut, and he was taken to the hospital where 13 stitches were required to

close the wound.
Man Injured Slightly In Accident: Johnnie Howell, 25, Rt. 1, Hertford, was treated and released from Chowan Hospital Saturday following a one-car accident on U.S. 17 six miles South of Hertford. Howell told State Highway Patrolman Y.Z. Newberry that he "blacked out" and the car left the road and struck a telephone pole.

Donald Perry Given Scholarship: Donald Perry, senior at Perquimans County High School, has been awarded a College Scholarship given by the Committee on Scholarships at Wake Forest University. The amount of the award is \$1,000 and is renewable at the end of each school year. Donald is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Perry, Jr. of Rt. 1, Hertford.

NEWS COUPON

The news and editorial staff of the Perquimans Weekly would like you to tell us what kind of stories you like to see in the paper. If there is something or someone you feel is important — or some provocative issue you would like us to examine — please, let us know.

Just clip and fill out this coupon. Include as many details as possible (Names, addresses, telephone numbers, etc.)

It may not be possible for us to use some of the stories suggested but we are always looking for new ideas.

So, next time you think of something you feel would make a good story, send it to: News Coupon, Perquimans Weekly, P.O. Box 277, Hertford, N.C. 27944.

STORY IDEA:

COMMENTS:

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