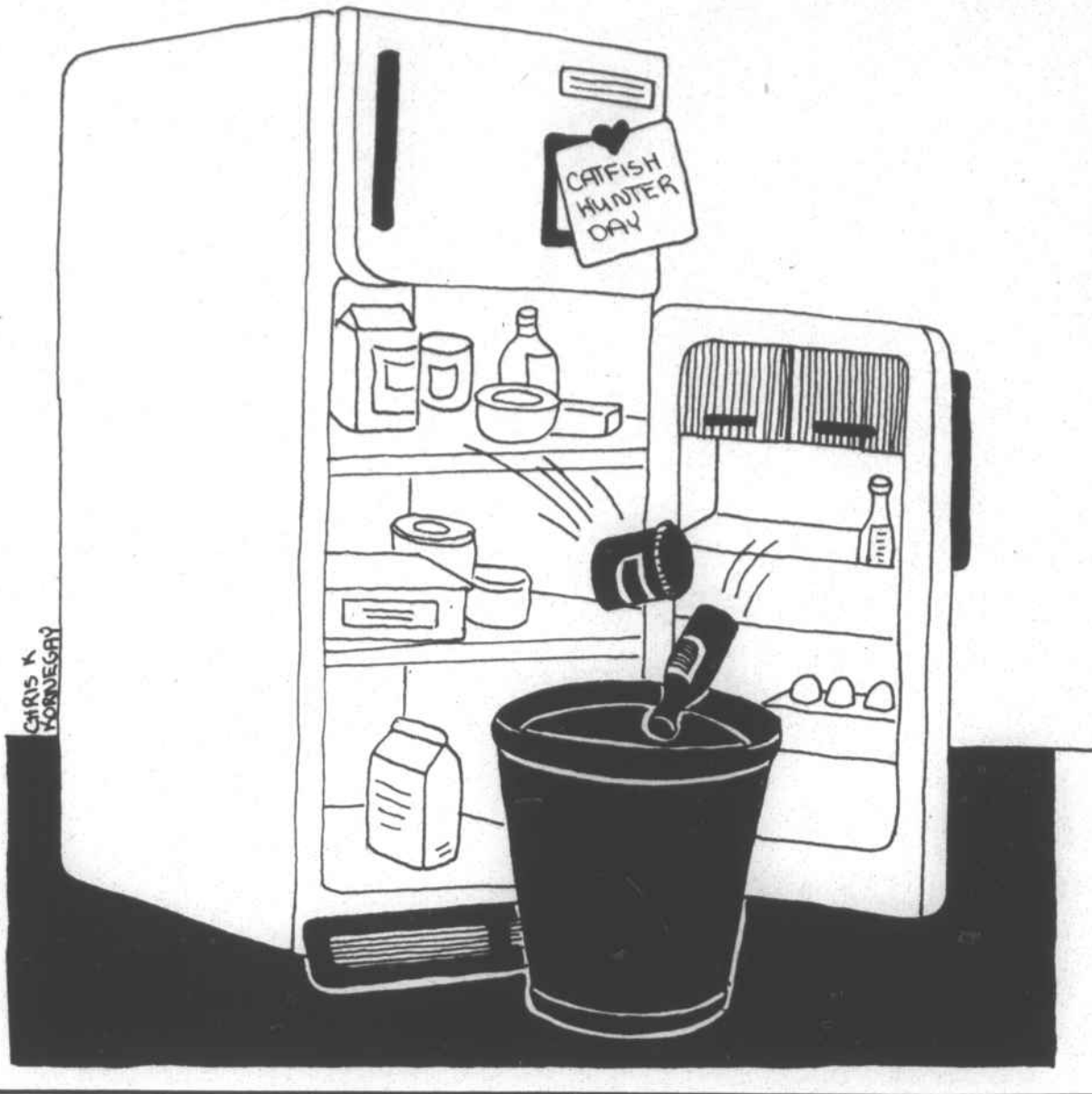


# Perspective

## A self-cleaning refrigerator



## Children should be allowed to grow up as children

They were called grading sticks, though they had nothing to do with school or report cards. Unlike regular tobacco sticks, these were very smooth and uniform. When the tobacco had been carefully graded according to quality and tied in bundles about the size of a half-dollar, the appropriate number of bundles were separated in the middle and placed on the grading sticks. The tobacco was then ready to be piled, pressed, and taken to market.

Grading sticks also served as another purpose. When cut into proper lengths and nailed side by side with a short length attached to the bottom, a grading stick became a shining double-barreled shotgun, ready for use against deadly outlaws or charging indians. The years have seen many battles won by small boys with guns made from tobacco sticks.

The more fortunate youngster might have a genuine cap-firing replica of a six-gun. Made of sturdy metal and housed in a real leather holster, the fast-drawing cowboy could gun down most imagined foes. You probably won't find such a gun



in toy stores today, and if you do, don't expect a leather holster with real leather leg ties. Most of today's toys are made of plastic, including the holsters. The selection of realistic looking weapons is so great kids will never have to use their imagination again. From M-16's, Uzis, and sophisticated laser guns that let you know you've scored a hit, today's young warriors can find a weapon for any purpose.

There are those who believe these "toys" are too sophisticated and realistic. The death a few weeks ago of a young man in California has led to cries that such toys should be banned. While playing Laser Tag

with friends, a 19-year-old was killed by police who mistook his flashing toy for the real thing.

A recent editorial in several area papers indicated blame for the young man's death should not be directed at the makers of the toys or the police officer. Instead, the writer blames society as a whole, citing our exposure to violence as the leading cause. "It is time to teach that fantasies are fantasies, and you don't act them out by running with realistic-appearing guns in darkness through today's violence-prone neighborhoods," stated the editorial.

Times, like toys, have changed. While there is probably no more violence in today's world than the one many of us grew up in, our exposure to violence is much greater.

Since on-the-spot reporting of the horrors of the Vietnam War, modern communications expose us to worldwide violence as it happens. And while there has always been violence in television programming, today's features seem to be more oriented toward crime and murder, and unlike programs of old, the good guys are

less apt to win.

If there is a problem with today's toys, it's the fact that kids aren't required to use their imaginations. Modern toys are so real, that children are able to act out combat and related situations with such realism that it is difficult to distinguish games from the real thing.

Perhaps some restrictions should be placed on the types of toys made available to children. But in doing so, we shouldn't become so obsessed with protecting our kids that we discouraged them from using their imaginations. Whether the battle is won with tobacco stick guns or plastic laser weapons, children will always be fascinated with doing battle with the enemies of their generation. We shouldn't attempt to correct the ills of society by restricting our children's right to the same fantasies we had. Today's kids are smart enough to understand the difference between fantasy and reality. They just need a little direction. Most of all, they need to be allowed to grow up as children. Let's not take that away.

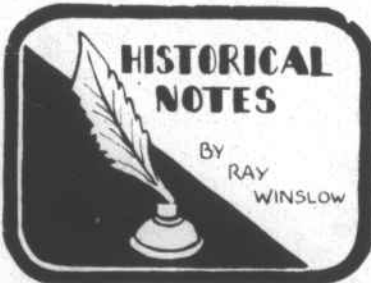
## Perquimans County residents hear a sermon and speech

In the late spring of 1856 the people of Perquimans County were given two opportunities to hear new ideas on religion and politics, from a preacher and a politician. A sermon was scheduled to be preached in Hertford on Sunday, May 11, and a campaign speech was to be given there on Thursday, June 12.

The sermon was from the Rev. A.C. Thomas of the First Universalist Church in Philadelphia. His denomination had been organized in 1750 by the Rev. James Reilly in London, but it had not reached many areas. The Universalists believed in universal salvation, declaring that all would be saved and that there was no eternal punishment for sin.

What Thomas might have preached would be quite unlike the doctrines of four churches then represented in Perquimans, i.e., Quaker, Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist. It is not likely that his talk had much effect on a population which considered that damnation was a real—and deserved—reward for the unrepentant wicked.

A politician, too, could work up a sense of indignation at wickedness. So John A. Gilmer, the American



Party candidate for governor of North Carolina, might have done in his June address. He was a former state senator from Guilford County who had joined the newly organized American Party.

In the controversies over slavery and states' rights, the old Whig party which had so often taken the majority vote in Perquimans had broken up. Many ex-Whigs, especially those perturbed by waves of foreign immigration, joined the party of Gilmer.

Its origins in a New York secret society and its password of "I don't know" led to the American Party's popular name, the Know-Nothing Party. It particularly opposed office-holding by foreigners and Catholics. (Thomas' sermon and Gilmer's

speech might have turned on a common axis, as Universalists were against Catholic doctrine and Know-Nothings were against Catholics. Prejudices was a disgracefully common platform for speakers in that era. Some wag might have noted the know-it-alls and know-nothings were brothers.)

The sermon was a failure to the extent that no Universalist Church was ever organized in Perquimans. The campaign speech, however, resulted in a local victory for the American

Party.

Gilmer polled 348 votes in Perquimans at the gubernatorial election of 1856, compared to 304 for Democrat Thomas Bragg.

However, Perquimans was not in step with the site as a whole, for Bragg won the election by 57,598 votes to Gilmer's 44,970.

The American Party had so short and unsuccessful a life that candidate Gilmer's name is given incorrectly in two standard North Carolina reference works.

## Letters to the editor

Editor  
The Perquimans Weekly,  
Recently I had the pleasure of returning to your lovely town for a short business trip.  
Let me say what a pleasure it was. The genuine feeling of hospitality ex-

tended to me by old friends was heart warming indeed, making Hertford a special place in my heart.

I thought you ought to know.  
Fred Tabescent  
Tarboro, NC

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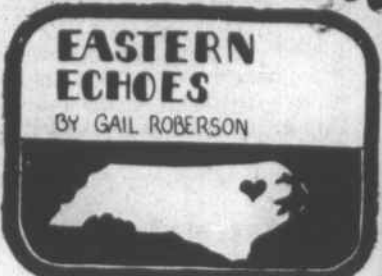
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## Not even on mother's day,



The huge glass door closed sluggishly while allowing a silky swirl of gently May breeze to follow him inside. The lobby was nearly empty. There was a semblance of order everywhere, and a slight tang of disinfectant and familiar chemical that both offended and arried his sense of smell.

He continued through the lobby and turned the corner, his footsteps barely noticeable to those in the rooms he passed by as he found his way down the corridor. His shoes could have probably gone on without him; he had walked this hall that many times before. A few doors down, he paused, shifted the large potted plant to the curve of his other arm, and gently pushed open the door.

He found her in the wheelchair that had been positioned near the large window in her room. Everyone knew she loved this spot. She liked staring out at the huge tree whose sunny silhouette danced a delicate, lacy pattern off the walls. But, most of all, she loved to watch the birds gather on the feeder just outside the glass that was now her only window to the world. The flutter of delicate wings always brought a childlike excitement to her face that filled his heart with both pleasure and pain.

He moved quietly, careful not to frighten her with his sudden presence. The plant that bloomed so profusely, wrapped with colorful paper and tied up with ribbon, now felt awkward and heavy, so he sat it on the table by her tiny bed.

As usual, he paused for a while before kneeling down beside the chair. He wanted to see her before she saw him. He wanted to absorb all the details of her face before she realized anyone was near. He wanted to study and store up, to preserve the memory of her simple but beautiful response to the birds that was the only emotion she had anymore. It was all that remained of her for him now. That, and memories.

"Hello mama," he finally spoke softly, as he wrapped her tiny hands in his. He couldn't tell if it was her boney fingers that trembled so fiercely or his own strong ones that clung to them, but he swallowed hard and held on tight. Maybe today she would know. Maybe just this one time there would be some sign of recognition, some signal, some manner of response that would reassure him that she knew he was there, that he cared, or that there was even a world out-

side her window other than the feeder and the birds.

But, there wasn't anything, and it tore his heart out to know that the woman who had given him life now had so little of it herself.

God, if she would just say something! If she would only realize how sorry he was for so many things, how much he wanted to take all the illness away, and how he longed to hear her say "son" just one more time.

Suddenly, a gush of tears spilled from the depths of his soul, and he laid his head in her lap while racking sobs shook both their bodies as if they were one.

"I'm so sorry, mama," he cried out to the woman who sat staring out the window. "I meant to tell you years ago. I just never did it. I don't know why. I just never could say it. But, I love you mama. I really love you. God how I wish you could understand me! What I'd give if you only knew I was here."

He didn't know how long he stayed there on the floor beside her, but when he finally stood, his legs trembled with the stiffness that he had once heard her, herself, complain about. The delicate shadow of the tree no longer danced along the wall; instead the room held a meltness that accompanied the arrival of late afternoon. He placed her hands comfortably in her lap, and drew a handkerchief from his back pocket to clear his face of the residue of runaway emotion. Then, he reached for the water pitcher and fed the plant whose blossoms were as brilliant as the cardinal that chirped outside her window.

"I'll bring some seed next time, mama," he spoke gently to her as he turned to leave the room. And then, with a fevered pain that still burned his eyes, he looked back one last time at the woman who sat so still beside the window, never knowing...one way or another. Not for any moment nor in any way. Not even on Mother's Day.

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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:

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