

# Perspectives



## Sharing the figs



"It is only when we share that we make room to receive," her letter stated. She was writing to me of how she continuously learned from her routine daily living, though she no longer stood as straight as she once did, saw as brightly, or heard as keenly. For her, growing, learning, and experiencing life would end only when she drew her final breath.

When she first started having figs on her tree, the birds in the area thought the fruit belonged to them. It was a daily race to see who would get to the tree first in the mornings...her, or the birds. She tried everything...even put aluminum pans on the bush to scare them away, but nothing worked. The birds still beat her to the tree and feasted until they were full, each morning. Every day she'd pull the ones they had pecked and throw them as far as she could...then scold the birds...telling them that it was HER tree and HER figs.

But one day a thought came to her as she watched the birds outside her window squawking and raising a fuss as they came in reinforced droves, beating her to the bush yet another morning. "Why is it YOUR tree?" she asked herself for the first time. God looks after the birds too. HE made the tree. YOU only set it out after your friend gave you a cutting from her bush. So why not share with them? It really isn't yours.

From then on she had a peaceful feeling about the figs and shared the fruits willingly. She told the little birds to "eat on." She didn't pull a single fig that they had pecked. To her, the little holes on the fruit staked their claim. Slowly, the birds stopped squawking and raising a fuss as she approached the fig tree, and would finish the fig they first pecked before going to another.

Sometimes there would be a bird

in the top of the tree eating a fig while she picked among the lower limbs. For the first time ever, there were more figs than she could possibly handle, so she made preserves and cakes and other things and shared them with friends and family. That experience truly warmed her heart.

One day she found only two ripe ones left on the bush. When she had pulled the second one she discovered it had a little peck on its side.

"Oh no," she thought. "I've pulled the birds' fig. What can I do? Where can I put it so they can eat it later on." As she looked about, the thought came to her to get a string and tie it back on the tree.

She did it right then. The birds came to it and ate it all, and the stem is still hanging there, dry on the string, as a reminder to her to be very careful and not bother what was not hers. And to share.

I've kept her letter on my desk for a long time now, for many reasons. But mainly I've kept it to remind me that too many of us hear without heeding, read without responding, confess without changing, profess without practicing, worship without witnessing, and seek without sharing.

And, as I travel that same path down which she has long ago walked, perhaps it will also remind me to open my hands to give, open my eyes to care, open my mind to learn, and especially...open my heart to share.

## Elliott accepts new position at college

MRS MARIE ELLIOTT ACCEPTS POSITION AT CHOWAN COLLEGE: Marie S. Elliott has accepted a position in the Infirmary at Chowan College, Murfreesboro and will begin her duties Tuesday, August 25. Mrs. Elliott will serve as night nurse and attend classes on a part-time basis during the day working toward an Associate Degree in Nursing. She received her License Practical Nurse in 1963 and since that time has done private duty nursing for a short time, worked in a physicians office for about 5 years and until recent resignation to accept the present position, she has been associated with the Pasquotank County Health Department in Elizabeth City for about 2 1/2 years. She is a member of the Hertford Baptist Church, assistant teach of the adult ladies Sunday School class for 10 years, and a member of the Hertford Business and Professional Women's Club. Her hobbies are reading, sewing, and oil painting. She is currently enrolled in the Art Class at The College of the Albemarle, Elizabeth City, and also attended classes there last winter in other fields of education. Mrs. Elliott is the widow of the late Norman Elliott of Hertford and has two children, Mrs. Ann E. Young of



Hertford and Mrs. Frances E. Smith of Portsmouth, Va.

TOWN BOARD BACKS REQUEST TO KEEP PIEDMONT IN E.C.: The Board of Hertford Commissioners adopted a Resolution requesting the Piedmont Airlines to remain in Elizabeth City at their recent meeting. The Resolution was made at the request of the Elizabeth City Board of Commissioners.

ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED: Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Elliott of Route 1, Hertford, announce the engagement and approaching marriage of their daughter, Nancy Jane Elliott to Douglas Vernon Harrell, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Vernon Harrell of Route 3, Hertford. The wedding is planned for September 20th at the Hertford Baptist Church at four o'clock.

## Castleton proves embarrassing to Phelps of Perquimans

Every family has relatives who can be an embarrassment. George Castleton was the discord spoiling the harmony of the Phelps of Perquimans. Jonathan Phelps was a leading Quaker in the 1680s, but his brother-in-law Castleton was quarrelsome.

October 1686 was the month that problems between Castleton and his wife Hannah (nee Phelps) spilled over into the County Court of Albemarle. Hannah was ordered in July to make her appearance to answer complaints, while George was to be taken into custody by the sheriff to guarantee his appearance.

When the court met in October, however, it seems the Castleton matter had disappeared from the docket. Had George and Hannah answered all complaints out of court? Had the court dropped the charges? Had the couple betaken themselves out of the court's way? The court minutes are without answers to such questions, and it would appear that anyone attending the October term to hear the showdown on the Castletons had to be disappointed.

The disappointment was dis-

## Weekly constitution corner

In the last installment of Constitution Corner, we noted five areas in which the first "liberal" Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren acted decisively. These (rearranging them into chronological order) were: racial inequality, church and state, apportionment, protection of criminals, and rights of women.

In this column our subject will be the Court, the Constitution, and race.

On May 17, 1954—the second year of the Eisenhower administration—the Supreme Court handed down its authoritative opinion in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. This was the most important decision of the highest Court in the second half of the 20th century—perhaps of the entire century.

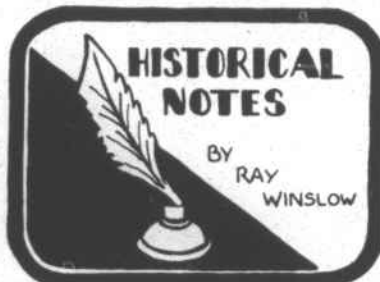
First of all, this was a verdict which affected decisively the meaning and thrust of the Constitution. The original instrument has accepted, if it had not endorsed, the institution of slavery. Abraham Lincoln, who revered the Constitution as highly as the late Senator Sam Ervin, held steadfastly to the view that the Federal government had no power over slavery in the existent States. Three Amendments - 13, 14, and 15—were undoubtedly intended not only to abolish slavery but to extend equal rights to black people. Despite this and, I believe, because of the follies of Reconstruction—against the mind and will of Lincoln—this drama ended up with the Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) affirming the doctrine of "separate but equal" in race relations.

It was 58 years before the highest Court saw fit to reverse this dogma in the landmark decision of Brown, the focus being the public schools and the governing principle being the equal protection of the laws clause.

The implications of the Court's action were profound and far-

## Correction

It was stated that Kelli Haines was a resident of Perquimans County and a Perquimans County editor. Kelli is a resident of Pasqu-



elled the next October, however. The 1687 airing of the Castletons' soiled linen revealed that Hannah had left her husband.

For a seventeenth-century wife to forsake her husband was quite an undertaking. Apart from her spouse she would generally be without any means of support, as the law gave him general control over property which might be hers and gave her little claim upon property which was his. Divorce was virtually unheard of and the spouses could not be completely separated by anything short of death.

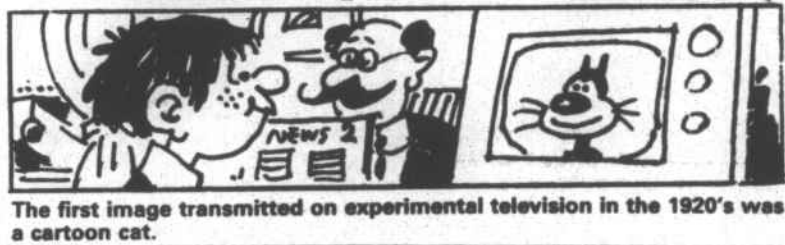
The records do not say why Hannah had left George. True, George had been convicted of embezzling

the estate of her children by her first husband. Yet, at the time of that incident it was George who had left home. Evidently he had returned, then she had left. One house could not hold the pair of them.

The Court never heard of marriage counseling. It "ordered that Hannah Castleton the wife of George Castleton do repair home to her husband live with him, and that if she departs from him any more it is ordered that the magis-

trates do forthwith use such means as may cause her to live with her husband."

A few months later the story took a twist. In March 1688 George Castleton sold his land in Perquimans. Was he then depriving Hannah of the home to which she had been ordered to repair? Perhaps, but then it might be that Castleton all along had lived in the home Hannah had from her previous husband, a home that might have been quieter if she had remained a widow.



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