

# Perspectives

## The Perquimans Weekly

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## Puttin' in a garden

Nothing is more natural than a seed sprouting, unless it's enjoying the results, and the spring afternoon I found Ma Frattie deep in the chore of "puttin' in" her garden made me realize that even more.



Nature in a Nutshell

Gail Roberson

"Grownups can't frolic about in the dirt respectful like when they was younguns, so they put in a garden instead," she grinned up at me as I rounded the back of her house to find her bent over a tiny, freshly prepared plot of land. "To get a green thumb, you gotta get a black thumb first," she explained, extending two wrinkled and soiled hands stained from her labors. Even though she was then standing, her back was still half bent in place, and I noticed it had taken her a long time to get there. She had absolutely no business messing with a garden at her age, but I knew she needed to plant and nurture and piddle about her yard in order to live any kind of worthwhile life. If that was taken from her, she would wither up and die altogether. I'd rather find her dead down the bean row than half comatose in her deathbed. And she was of the same opinion.

"Might as well have a tea party," she stated, shuffling to the back porch. "Hit's time I rested for a spell ennyhow." I went directly to her kitchen, opened a container filled with cookies and poured two tall glasses of lemonade while the old woman cleaned her hands in the sink. She was by then of the mind to take her afternoon snack on the front porch, so we paraded carefully through the house with our homemade booty. I swung open the screen door with my foot and allowed her time to make her way onto the porch before taking my seat beside her in the swing.

"Life is like a garden," she stated thoughtfully as I washed down a cookie with the sweet liquid. "And a garden is like life. The first thang you gotta do is prepare the ground. Then you plant the seed. They're itty bitty thangs...like the human seed at first, but pretty soon them sprouts appear. You give hit plenty of manure to grown on. Like you give a child good guidance and discipline. You water with the sweat of yore brow, and you weed out and pitch away all the bad stuff trying to take ovah. You do yore best to get it growed good, but the whole thang kin die accordin' to whut the season does it hit. Hit's whut the season brings to the seed and to life whut determines hit all."

I thought of my own gardens back at home, of the hours of hard toil it took to make them,

and shape them, and keep them that way. Even at that moment my hands were stained with the evidence of my labors.

Frattie rocked as she talked. A tiny kitten was precariously close to having its paw mashed, but seemed attuned to

the old woman's rhythm. It even dared, so near to catastrophe, to close its tiny eyes in sleep. I sensed an unspoken partnership between the two.

"You know, girl," Ma continued, "us humans was first created in a garden. The good Lord didn't choose no football stadium, no bank, no battlefield, and no factory. He chose a garden fer to put us in. And disobedience was also started in a garden. Hit was in a garden we was made and we played. Hit was in a garden we slept, learned, ate, and walked in and talked in. And committed the first sin in. And hit was the garden we got throwed out from. We humans been trying to recreate the old garden we got throwed out of ever since. We all got so mech to answer fer that I reckon the whole idy of gardening makes us feel a mite like we're repenting a bit evvy time we sow a seed or pull a tater."

The old woman's words seeped deep into my soul. On her porch sat two women from two totally different times. We were so different, yet so much alike. Even if the only thing we ever had in common was our love for gardening, it would be enough. So what, if the accumulated hours, tools, nutrients, and accessories we use to garden today totals up to the fact that each bell pepper we pull from our vines cost us \$50. So what, if our joints get a lot stiffer and our backs stoop a lot lower. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can take the place of our vegetables, herbs and flower gardens. What they do to our souls alone is worth the effort and the price. Gardening is an art and a science. It gives you a high higher than snorting cocaine. Gardeners don't need social or emotional crutches. They just need the soil and a seed to get them by even the worst of times.

We left our glasses in the kitchen and I left Ma Frattie digging in the fertile land around her stumbling feet. Her last words rang clear in my heart. "Plants are the living garment of God. When I've got my fingers tight 'round a plant a'settin' hit in the rich dirt, I've got my fingers wrapped tight 'round the hem of the Lord's robe." And the old woman became absorbed once again in puttin' in her garden, while I drove home...to mine.

## We should applaud our volunteers

Sometimes we see so much bad in the world that we fail to see the good. This week, National Volunteer Week, we should be especially mindful of all that is good.

Perquimans is not a rich county economically, and yet, there is a rich spirit of helping others present here.

When someone is sick or needs a hand, a group often forms to help out. Just a handful of friends and neighbors have been known to raise a lot of money for others.

There is no way to count the hours civic and church groups donate to worthy causes. Just read our Happenings column each week. Most of what is publicized there relates to volunteer efforts.

While many of us parents juggle schedules all year long



Ramblin' with Susan

Susan Harris

to make sure that our children get to and from ball practices, we should remember to thank those coaches who give countless hours in all sports. We might not always agree with their methods, but we should still be thankful that someone is willing to give up all those hours for our children. The

coaches have other things they could be doing with their time. They choose to give that time so that our children will have the opportunity to play ball. And let's face it, playing ball is certainly a favorite pastime in Perquimans County - football, fall soccer, volleyball, basketball, spring soccer, baseball, softball. There's something going on all the time.

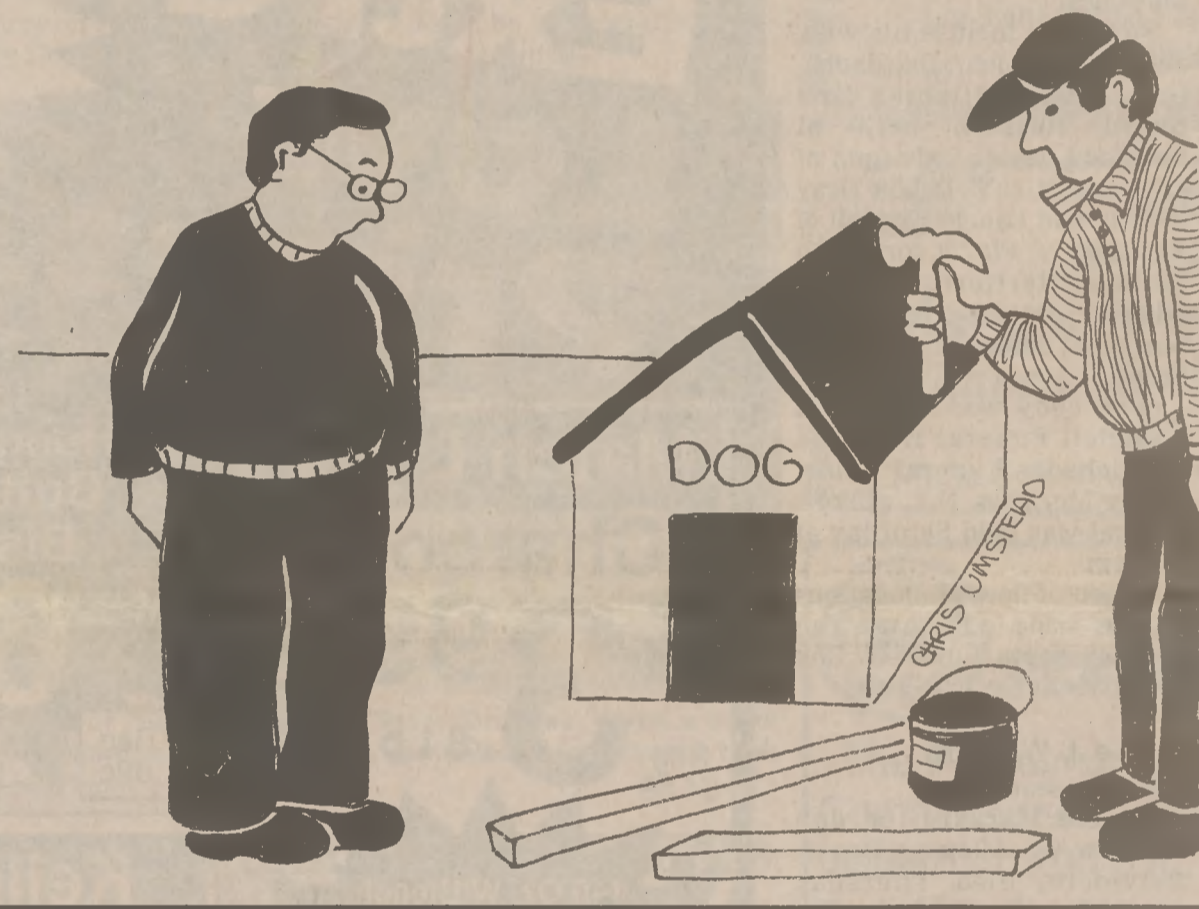
Volunteers also provide invaluable services in our schools. Countless hours are spent in the classrooms, running errands, serving on committees, working in booster and support groups, chaperoning events and other services. Funds are raised, facilities are built, uniforms and supplies are purchased, and many extras are provided through the efforts of volunteers.

Volunteers man the Open Door, clean up roadside dumps, pick up trash along the highways, collect food for the needy, visit those in health care facilities, man the Red Cross blood drives: The list of services volunteers perform in Perquimans County is long indeed.

If you are a volunteer of any kind, thank you. Folks might not tell you very often, but what you do contributes greatly to this community. You are to be commended for sharing your time and talents with others.

If you are not a volunteer, why not? Don't make excuses. Get up off your duff and lend a hand in your community. It's one of those responsibilities that comes with the rights of being an American.

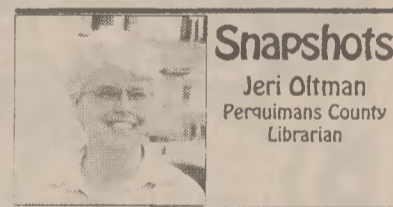
Uh oh, don't let the Perquimans County Tax folks see this property improvement...up you by at least \$7,500!



## Celebrating Mother Earth

I hope you celebrated Earth Day 1995 in some appropriate way on April 22. Five years ago on Earth Day I was on the island of Bali, visiting the Monkey Forest. Children brought bats and monkeys up for us to hold and we watched monkeys clamber over the ruins of a temple. Nearby were booths where families sold various goods. Our ten-year-old guide took us to her family's "store," where her aunt gave us each a bottle of 7 Up to drink while we browsed among the various kinds of dyed cloth and batik for sale. It was an opportunity to see another culture, which I think is a great way to celebrate Earth Day.

Another way to celebrate Earth Day every day is to recycle. We are so fortunate to have the Albemarle



Snapshots  
Jeri Oltman  
Perquimans County  
Librarian

Environmental Association, because they make recycling so convenient. We have four containers in the library in which we accumulate paper, outdated magazines and catalogs, and junk mail.

We can recycle the ink cartridges used in the computer printers by returning them to the supplier.

We creatively recycle in a variety of ways. For example, we utilize outdated job announcements from the Employment Security Commission (ESC), which are printed on only one side, in our computer printers. Most

computer users don't mind having an old job listing on the back of what they've printed. I can take the styrofoam "peanuts" used for cushioning in many of the boxes we receive to Nuts D'Vine in Edenton for them to use when they ship real peanuts around the country.

Several people donate their magazines to the library when they have read them and we make them available to our patrons. Many times students use them as sources of color pictures for reports.

One of my favorite examples of recycling is our adult paperback system. Most of the fiction that we display on the paperback racks are books that have been donated. After we've circulated them for a year or two, offer them for sale for 25 cents each.

## The birds, the bees and Mr. Aldridge

The issue of abortion, always a hot topic in these United States, has become an even hotter one in North Carolina, due in large part to recent remarks made by State Representative Henry Aldridge from Pitt County.



All Over the Map  
Tony Key

It's Rep. Aldridge's belief that a woman who's raped, truly raped, can't become pregnant as a result of her assault. So, he reasons, why should state funds be made available for a category of persons who can't possibly exist - pregnant victims of rape?

The debate over abortion and nearly everything connected to it promises to continue for decades. Many side with Rep. Aldridge in his opposition to state funding for abortion; they don't want their tax money spent on a procedure many consider murder. Swell; I don't want my tax money spent to bail out the Saving and Loan bandits - it's a free county. But to turn science on its head in order to support one's personal convictions is a bit of a stretch. Mr. Aldridge's comments might be a little racy for a family paper like the PW, so I won't quote him here. Suffice it to say that we disagree.

In telling why, I'll try to be as tactful as possible. Contrary to Mr. Aldridge's notions, (1) Arousal is not the same thing as consent, (2) Blaming the victim may be a time-honored tradition and is nearly always wrong, and (3) If what participants thought alone affected the biochemical processes of conception, there'd probably be less need for contraception or abortion.

In further muddying the debate over abortion funding, Mr. Aldridge has unintentionally highlighted another touchy subject; sex education. Maybe the representative could sit in on a particularly instructive class and see how far we've come and how much more we know since he first heard about the birds and the bees.

## NOTICE

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners will convene as the Board of Equalization & Review on May 1st, 1995 at 10 A.M. The purpose is to hear from all citizens requesting a hearing on Property Assessments.

Please contact me on or before April 28, 1995 for an appointment. As assessor, I will review all information and make changes needed to keep assessments uniform and fair.

The Board will adjourn June 3, 1995. Notice will be given if there is a change in these dates.

Tony Jordan  
Perquimans County Tax Assessor

We welcome the opinions of our readers, especially on local topics. Speak your mind: Write us a letter to the editor.