

## The Perquimans Weekly

Established 1932

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## Plight of the pocupine

I read my mail, newspapers and open my packages as I relax on my sofa each night, a few feet from the large fireplace in my den. Over the mantle is hung a beautiful reproduction of Fair



Nature in a Nutshell

Gail Roberson

Morningstar's cradle board which she used to carry her babies in on her back, prop beside her as she worked or hung in a tree to let the movements of the breeze rock infants to sleep. It took years to find someone capable of Native American crafting to copy this ancient heirloom, for the original was in shatters beyond even handling. It is one of my most prized possessions.

Each time I see this object, I am especially taken with the use of porcupine quills in both its construction and decoration. The animal itself is equally unique, and a viable and most curious part of our world.

There was a time when the porcupine occupied all the forested areas of the country. Today, they are primarily northern animals. Unfortunately, as a result of exaggeration and misrepresentation, the prejudice against this relatively harmless animal still exists. It's gnawing and eating habits often make it enemies.

The porcupine has not always been considered a pest, however. To Indian tribes it was a precious resource, even treated with reverence by some. Beyond its life-sustaining function as food, it played a second important role for Indians. Its quilly, both in the loose state or as elaborate quillwork, came close to serving as a medium of exchange. Porcupine quillwork, like that on my cradle board, is an exacting, time-consuming craft. The quills were collected, sorted according to size, dyed with vegetable dyes and then woven into beautiful art and useful pieces. Most articles were small, but the amount of work required was staggering. Thus, these pieces were often traded, as use for money.

This animal feeds on the bark of trees in winter. They are nocturnal animals. They give fair warning before they strike by clattering their teeth. When the visual and auditory warnings fail, it will fall back on its wave of pungent smell. That's your last warning. It will then unleash the ultimate weapon...the quill. More than 30,000 cover the body. The tips carry microscopic barbs that make removal difficult once embedded.

Porcupines have sharp front claws used for climbing and digging. After winter gestation, the female gives birth to one pup in April or May. They often chew antlers dropped to the ground for the calcium and other minerals found in them. Generally, they are solitary creatures, though in severe winters several may share a common den. They are rare along the Atlantic coast.

I have a naturalist friend who lives out west and is accustomed to porcupines there much like I am to raccoons here. Her main problem with them is that they come up at nights to constantly chew the handles of her paddles, shovels, hoes, rakes and other wood and leather items. Porcupines love salt, and they usually come around humans looking for it because of our salty sweat absorbed in the handles of these items. I used to send her pretty hair clips and other personal pleasures she finds hard to get out in her "wilde." One year I sent her four handles, instead, after her last letter complained of the severe damage to her best tools and the long drive into the nearest town to find them. You would have thought I'd sent her a diamond ring. She now puts salt blocks out for the porcupines.

The plight of the porcupine is sometimes uncertain, but one certainty for real is that this unique mammal is an expert at survival.

### Letter to the editor policy

The Perquimans Weekly welcomes the opinion of its readers. Letters should include the name, address and telephone number of the writer. Letters without signatures or telephone numbers will not be printed. Only the name and city of residence will be published with the letter.

The subject matter should be of interest to the community, not a personal gripe. Letters may be edited for clarity and space limitations.

Submit your letters to The Perquimans Weekly, P.O. Box 277, Hertford, N.C. 27944, or drop them off at our office at 199 W. Grubb Street. Call 426-5728 for more information.

## Finding fault



View from the Bench

District Court Judge Edgar Barnes

The other night after supper my best friend Jim, and I were as usual solving the world's problems.

Also as usual the issues as to the cause of the drastic increase in juvenile delinquency and over all moral decay came up. In our regular manner, we battled around numerous explanations but made no comprehensive determinative conclusions.

Therefore, I decided to embark upon a journey to once and for all conclusively find that elusive and rare animal called "fault." The next morning I got up at 5 a.m., ate a hearty breakfast, put on hiking boots and began my long quest in search of "fault." The first candidate I happened upon was "The Government." "Sir I said, as you know, the moral condition of our society is becoming intolerable. Are you at fault?" "Why certainly not young man," the government said with resolute indignity. "Without the government the poor ignorant masses would surely perish. We must protect them from such dangerous things as public affir-

mations of faith and allegiance to God and even parental sovereignty. And of course we can't in any way violate anyone's right to be immoral, why that would be unconstitutional." "Oh," I said, "sorry to have bothered you."

Next I ran into "The School System." "Sir, I asked, rather cautiously, I am looking for who is "at fault" for the declining state of our society. "Are you the one?" "Certainly not my arrogant fellow. Why we can't teach morality and ethics in school. These are virtues and therefore derivatives of religion and this could cause the government to censure us, or worse at least one parent out of 5,000 might complain or sue on the basis that we are warping their children by putting such ludicrous notions in their head as respect for authority, charity, integrity, divinity and patriotism. And of course everyone knows that right and wrong are such gray areas." "I'm sorry," I mumbled, "how could I be so

foolish." I journeyed on.

Next, I encountered "The Church." "Ma'am," I said, "I know you are probably aware that many of our younger generation are replete of healthy social and moral attributes. Would you by any chance be "at fault?" "Why my gracious no," she protested. Although "the word" is clear as to our role of promoting Godly principles in our society, we surely must be careful to stay in our place or the government will take away our tax exempt status. And of course, notwithstanding what Proverbs, Psalms or The New Testament proclaims, to boldly stand up for Godliness, we would have to become politically active and politics don't belong in the church, right?" "Oh," I said, "my mistake sorry to have bothered you."

Next I ran into "The Parents." "Sir and madam I am perplexed by the immorality and confusion exhibited by many youth today. Would you by any chance be "at fault?" "Us, why absolutely not. Don't you know how difficult it is to honor our marriage vows and commit our lives to raising children in this age? We can't discipline our children, it might damage their psych and even if we did,

the government might allege abuse. Furthermore we only got divorced because it was in our children's best interest, it wasn't just for our own happiness or anything. Everyone knows kids are resilient, they'll get over it, right?" "Thanks anyway I said, despondently. "Goodbye."

Finally I returned home exhausted and discouraged. Before I went to bed I went into my five-year old sons room to kiss him goodnight.

"Son," I asked, you haven't seen whose "at fault" today have you?" "No daddy, he innocently replied, what does he look like?" "I'm not sure son." "Daddy does he look like you?" "Oh I'm sure he wouldn't look like me son." "Daddy, why do you want to find him?" "Because he isn't making this world a very good place for you to grow up in son." "Daddy if you never find this "fault person," does that mean I'm going to have to grow up in a bad world no matter what?" At that, I looked in the mirror, stopped looking for "whose at fault," grew a new backbone, rolled up my sleeves and said, "no son not if the light of one candle can make a difference."

God save this State and this Honorable Court. Court's adjourned.

## Addresses

Your elected representatives need to hear from you. Here are their addresses for your convenience.

**U.S. Senate**  
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**U.S. House**  
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**Hon. Walter B. Jones Jr.**  
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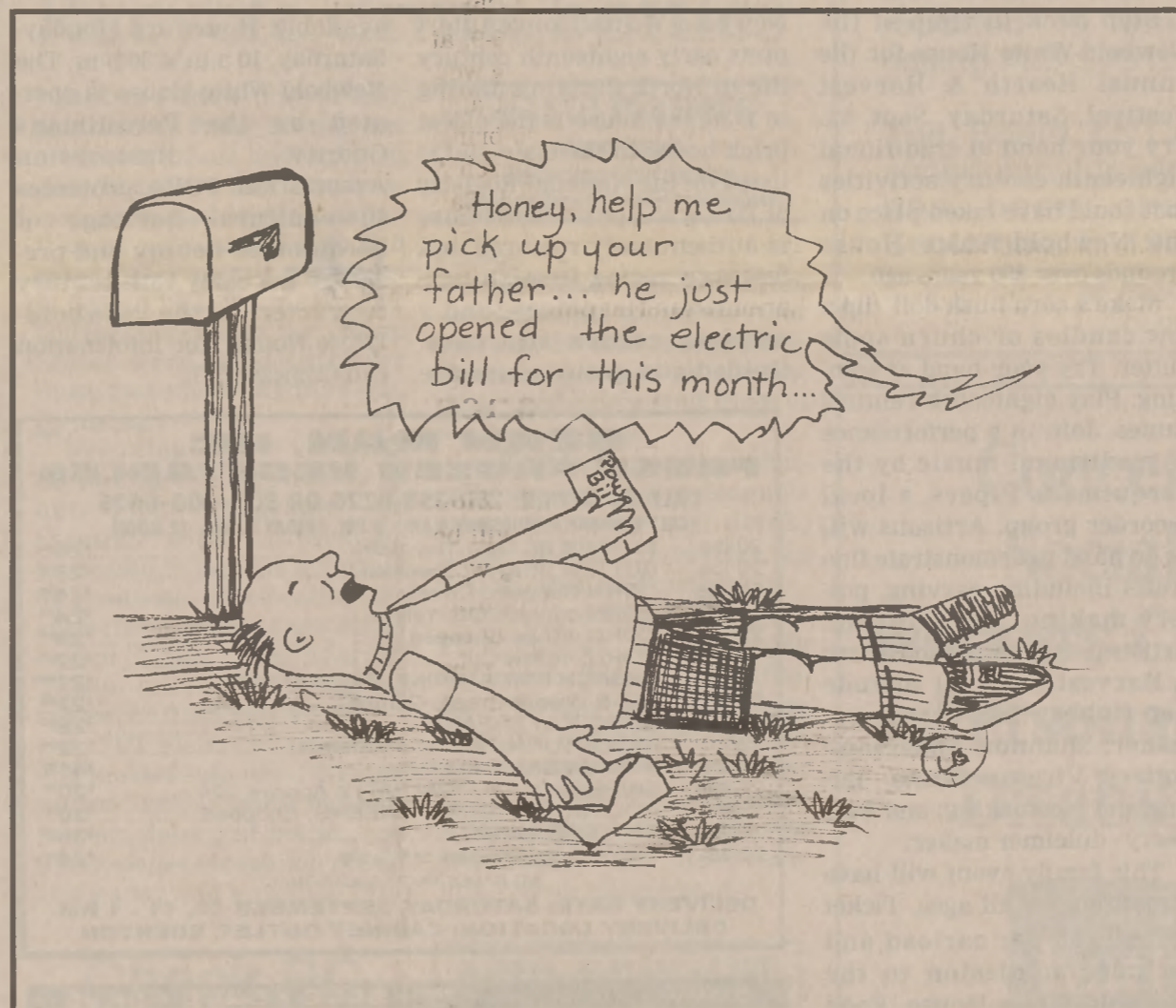
**Hon. William C. Owens Jr.**  
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**Winfall Mayor**  
Fred Yates  
P.O. Box 275  
Winfall, N.C. 27985  
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**Perquimans Commissioners**  
Charles H. Ward, Chairman  
Perquimans County Courthouse  
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Telephone: 426-8484 (county manager's office)

**Perquimans School Board**  
Wallace Nelson, Chairman  
Perquimans County Schools  
Administration Building  
Edenton Road Street  
Hertford, N.C. 27944  
Telephone: 426-5741 (central office)



## Dodging bullets

It's fair to say we all knew there was a hurricane lurking somewhere around last week, but all-in-all, I think we have to admit we dodged a bullet here in Perquimans County one more time.

It looked for a while as if nothing could stop Bonnie from blowing us into the river, but one more time we got a reprieve. The storm crept upon us slowly, making us crazy with anticipation, then moved on after stopping just long enough to turn back as if to say, "Ha, ha, ha. Gotcha!" as she unleashed her worst winds Thursday night.

We've been so lucky for so long. When we see news reports of those people left homeless, those people left without electricity for days on end, those people who lost a loved one, then it should hit home just how

fortunate and blessed we've been here over the past few years.

But we must not let down our guard. I agree that it's a real pain to drag everything into the garage or shed when a storm is predicted. It's not fun trying to find batteries or water in the hurricane-buying frenzies, or standing in long lines as everyone else does the same thing. It is, however, the smartest thing to do when a storm threatens.

The worst thing we can ever do is let down our guard. We all know about Newton's laws and the law of averages. One day, there will be no fronts from the west or north to save us from the full wrath of a hurricane's fury. One day we're very likely to get the full force of one of these powerful storms. And the best way to protect our lives and

property is to continue to prepare for that one storm that comes sailing down the river.

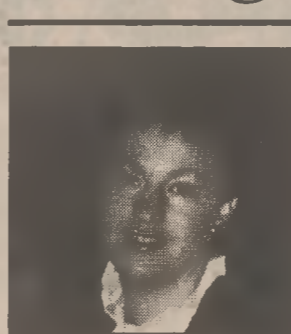
Can you believe it's September already? Good grief! Where did the summer go?

Don't forget the Indian Summer Festival is set for Sept. 19 in downtown Hertford.

Many people are fond of the festival, and the Hertford Downtown Merchants Association has worked really hard to organize its first fall fest. This year's edition will be a little different, possibly a little smaller, with no streets to cross to get to the kids' pavilion. It should be like a real county fair.

There are still booths available for the day. Anyone interested should contact Mary White at The Wishing Well for crafts and displays, and Frankie Eason at Hertford Cafe for food.

The downtown businesses are working hard to save the festival. If we want a festival, we must support them.



Ramblin' with Susan

Susan Harris