

Opinions

JIM HEFFNER
Columnist



Magical back yards

You know, it's getting harder and harder to find a good book to read these days. For some reason, I have been unable to get excited about the new ones being published right now.

For years, I read at least one book a week, and sometimes more, but I may have averaged one every six weeks this year, and none of the ones I've picked up have been memorable.

I like John Grisham's work, but *The Client* was a bad effort, it might take me a while to get back to him. The writing, of course was excellent, but the main character was just too unbelievable. There are no children as smart as that kid is.

I remember when I quit reading Tom Clancy books. His *Patriot Games* was so bad, I got away from him. I quit reading Stephen King when he came out with *Pet Semetary*.

The Lonesome Doves are few and far between. Larry MacMurtry, who penned that one is one of my favorite authors, but he isn't very productive right now. MacMurtry owns a chain of antique book stores and I'm afraid they're using up his writing time.

Maybe I'll go back and try Grisham and Clancy again, but not King. He is probably the best craftsman of the bunch, but in the past few years he has mentioned the South in less than glowing terms, and I can't forgive him for that. He's off my list forever.

I can always read baseball. I have one of the largest private collections of baseball books in this part of the country, and it will take me years to read them all. There's always Mark Twain. I think I might enjoy reading *Huckleberry Finn* once more, or Tom Sawyer.

I still enjoy westerns, too. I like the old time western writers such as Max Brand and William McLeod Raine. The library has most of the works produced by western writers. I might just break out the trusty library card and pay a visit to the stacks.

There's just nothing like sitting in the shade of my back yard oak tree with a glass of iced tea and a good book, especially early in the morning when it's still cool. I used to do that a lot, but I've sort of gotten away from it. I've no idea why.

Back yards - Speaking of back yards, I took notice of a pair of blue birds in mine the other morning, and it reminded me of how surprised I was when I realized there were so many birds of color around these parts.

Most people tend to think we don't have anything but sparrows and starlings, but that's far from true.

Lately I've spotted robins, with their rust colored breasts, blue jays, blue birds, American gold finches, pine siskins, a Tennessee warbler, purple finches, house finches, rufous-sided towhees sap-suckers and woodpeckers.

The American goldfinch is common to these parts. They are the only birds in the world with yellow bodies and black wings. They're my favorites, the pine siskins have a green tint. They jump around in the tops of the tallest pines. The best way to see them is to lie on your back under a grove of tall pines with binoculars at the ready. The warbler, I believe, was an accidental sighting. They're not common around here. The house finches and purple finches look almost alike. They give the appearance of having red paint spilled on their heads, and that runs down the body. The secretive rufous-sided towhee is dark black with rusty sides. At first glance many think they're seeing a robin, but they're too black. They like thick shrubbery for their nests. Sap-suckers and woodpeckers have areas of red and yellow here and there.

I almost forgot the ruby-throated hummingbirds. They're around, although a little scarce in my yard this year. I'm trying to sight an indigo bunting. I know they're here but I don't know where to look.

Back yards are magical places.

HERALD LETTER POLICY

The Herald welcomes your letters to the editor for publication in each Thursday's paper. We ask that you use the following guidelines:

Keep your letter brief and to the point. Type and double-space them, if possible; if not, write legibly. All letters must be signed in ink and include the full name, address and telephone number of the author for verification purposes.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length, spelling, good taste, clarity, libel, slander or any other reason; and reserves the right to reject any letter for any reason.

Mail your letters to The Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, N.C. 28086.



Former city commissioner Jim Childers, back to camera, Interim City Manager Maxine Parsons and Mayor Pro Tem Rick Murphrey are pictured following Tuesday night's budget hearing by City Council.

Don't be driving without a car

Rev. Jacob Golden tells the story recalling his teenage years in the early 1940's when he turned 16 and wanted a car. He worked all summer and saved \$20, and with his dad's help bought a Model T.

Jake was proud of his purchase, but it did have a few problems. The low gear didn't work, but he lived on a hill, and the school was on a hill, so it was no problem to get his car rolling.

The brakes didn't work either, but on a Model T you could simply push on the reverse pedal, which would make the rear wheels spin backward and get your car stopped.

The lights didn't work, but he never drove if after dark. This car was strictly basic transportation!

Everything went great with the Model T until the town decided to put a stop light at the bottom of the hill between Jacob's house and the school. Stopping at the bottom of the hill simply wasn't acceptable with a car like his. So Jacob would carefully time when he left home or school and could generally catch the light while it was green, yellow, or a "little bit" red.

But one morning, after working feverishly all night to finish a paper, Jacob dashed out to his car late for school and charged down the hill. Unfortunately his timing was a little off and the light was full red when he went speeding through the intersection. And before he could top the school hill, a police officer chased him down in a shiny new police cruiser. The officer came up to Jacob, put his foot on the running board and said, "Son, you just ran a red light."

Jacob quickly explained about the brakes and the officer exclaimed, "No brakes! You're driving with no brakes!"

Then Jake explained he could stop but there was no low gear. "Now low gear!" exclaimed the officer.

Then the officer walked around the car and noticed

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

Rev. Harold Schwantes
Pastor
Central United Methodist Church



the worn-out tires, the broken lights, and the general condition of the car, and said, "Son, I'm not going to ticket you for running a red light, I'm going to ticket you for driving without a car!" And he did! The ticket cost Jacob more than the car did. He had to sell his car to pay the fine. But he never was arrested again for driving without a car.

On the other hand, there are times in life we try to drive through our responsibilities without a car. A church trying to do God's work without missions, a marriage trying to exist without love and affection; a parent trying to discipline children without self discipline; a government asking the citizens to obey the law while its leaders are unethical; all these illustrate the principle. Perhaps there are more who are guilty of "driving without a car" than first thought!

Being a father myself, I look forward to Father's Day with a sense of humility that I have been so privileged to have two wonderful children who lovingly call me "Dad." And I will renew my personal goal to be a "career father" who gives the love, faith, guidance, discipline and time required to prepare my children for life. Otherwise, I'll be a father guilty of "driving without a car."

Your Right To Say It

Taylor credited in P.O. case

To the editor:

The current headlines of Representative Dan Rostenkowski being indicted on 17 felony charges reminds me that Congressman Charles H. Taylor, our Congressman from the 11th Congressional District, can take much of the credit for this long awaited indictment.

In spite of political obstacles, Congressman Taylor, as a freshman Congressman in 1992, and as a member of the "Gang of Seven," helped to expose the House Post Office scandals which involved Rostenkowski.

I hope that the voters in this Congressional District will not forget Congressman Taylor's efforts to help us clean up part of the mess in Washington while they are engulfed in the media reporting of the Rostenkowski legal battle during the next six months or so. It is a pity that it took the Grand Jury two long years to bring this indictment to a conclusion.

Not only should be voters give credit for Charles Taylor's stellar performance with the "Gang of Seven," but they should also remember his firm stand on term limitations for all Representatives and U.S. Senators. The Rostenkowski scandal should rekindle the movement to limit lawmakers' terms which Taylor vigorously supports.

There are good arguments for allowing members of Congress to become "career politicians" such as continuity of government, but frankly I would rather see the abuse of power on both sides of the aisle thwarted by limiting congressmen to six years and senators to twelve years.

If congressional terms are limited, we taxpayers will gain because pork barrel legislation should be drastically cut. It is because of some old time, power hungry politicians that too many of our tax dollars are continu-

ally wasted.

Franklin C. Basler
Tryon

Thanks from team

To the editor:

This past Saturday night the players and coaches of Patrick yams along with their families treated themselves to an evening of fun.

The team had sold raffle tickets for two drills and raised over \$400. With that they purchased tickets to go see the Charlotte Knights play and went out to dinner. I don't know what was more entertaining, the game or the entertainment in the stands.

Thanks to everyone who made this night possible.

Phyllis Weaver

Thanks for hospitality

To the editor:

I would like to thank the people of Kings Mountain and Alexander Realty for their help and hospitality on our recent visits.

The people at Alexander Realty worked very hard to find us some property that met our needs. Their expertise and honesty were greatly appreciated. They even mailed information to us before our visit that helped us greatly.

I want to thank the people of this town for their warmth and hospitality as we visited your town and the hospital.

Annett Jackson
Union, SC

A lesson on how to blow \$1 billion

So you heard that we had a \$1 billion budget surplus and you thought that you might get a tax rebate? If you face toward the Imperial City (i.e., Raleigh) and listen closely, you will hear two distinct noises. One is the sound of politicians laughing at you. The other? It is the squealing of hundreds of pork-barrel projects preparing to receive our tax dollars. This is in addition to the three-quarters of a billion dollars from the approval of statewide bond referendums earlier this year. For all practical purposes, that additional \$750 million is already spent.

Our politicians apparently have an insatiable appetite for tax dollars. The North Carolina Senate recently approved its own \$10 billion budget, and guess what? They found all sorts of creative ways to spend almost every dime of the extra one billion dollars that "unexpectedly" fell into their laps. I heard one senator being interviewed soon after the budget was overwhelmingly approved 43-2. The senator actually had

GUEST COLUMN
THOMAS GOOLSBY
Carolina Syndicated
Columns

the audacity to claim that whatever pork existed was of the "lean" variety. I don't know about you, but I have a very hard time believing that spending almost all of a \$1 billion windfall somehow fits the definition of "lean" pork.

What happened to all those promises for tax cuts? "Not this year" the pork barons tell us. Even those politicians calling for "eliminating" the intangibles tax

LIB STEWART
News Editor



These friends will be missed

The passing of longtime Grover resident Glenn Rountree and Kings Mountain merchant Dougle Davis saddened a legion of friends.

Rountree's affection for Grover Cemetery as the longtime superintendent was almost an institution in the small town he loved. Rountree knew almost every inch of the cemetery and when vandals took down some of the markers it was almost for him like a death in the family.

Davis, the manager at Cooper Furniture, was well liked by customers and friends. A retired military man, he was one of the most active members of the Kings Mountain Lions Club and endeared himself to fellow Lions with his tail-twister antics at meetings.

Mr. Rountree had been sick prior to his death.

Mr. Davis died suddenly of an apparent heart attack.

Both these men were valuable members of the community.

Our sympathy to their families.

Over 20 years ago the late Paul Hambright, the former agriculture teacher, said "If you folks want a county commissioner you've got to do it like we did. We made the election of Broad Ellis a community project. That's what you've got to do."

In the second primary run-off election that year the small community of Grover voted the book. Carl Finger of Kings Mountain got only three votes in the Grover precinct.

The tape on the recent runoff election results in which Kings Mountain's Joyce Falls Cashion, a veteran of 10 years on the county board, was narrowly defeated by Pat Spangler of Shelby reveals that not all Kings Mountain's registered voters went to the polls.

The voters will decide in November the two seats up for grabs being hotly contested by two Democrats and two Republicans.

It is not mete to complain when we do not vote.

Bethlehem volunteer firefighters are currently conducting a campaign for funds to pay for a new \$176,000 pumper/tanker truck.

It's a much needed piece of equipment.

If a fireman comes to see you, give generously or make your check payable to Bethlehem Fire Department and mail it to Fire Chief Larry McDaniel, Phifer Circle, Kings Mountain, 28086.

Some of the news coming out of county board of commissioner meetings hasn't been favorable lately but the recent meeting brought smiles, not only to county employees, but to taxpayers.

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners recently adopted an \$88.2 million budget that raises employee pay and expands existing programs without an increase in property taxes.

The commissioners also voted to fill 20 budgeted positions that have been frozen since 1993.

There was even more good news. Revenues are up \$1.3 million over last year, the increase attributed to an improved economy and a higher property tax collection rate on vehicles.

The unanimous decisions, which have been almost unheard of in recent months, also gave the county's 635 employees a 4.5 percent pay raise, their first in three years.

Congratulations to the commission and County Manager Lane Alexander. The brighter budget picture is good news indeed.

The weatherman predicts that the state is for a dry, hot summer.

Although rainfall has been below normal since March, this area has had some refreshment falling on its gardens and parched grass.

Last year, after it didn't rain all summer, the state's 100 counties were declared disaster areas.

We aren't facing another drought yet but one could be building across the state, forecasters and agriculture officials warn.

Perhaps it in order that local churches add 'rain' to their regular prayer lists.

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