

Opinion

JIM HEFFNER
Columnist



THOM GOOLSBY
Syndicated Columnist



Along came a spider

I've mentioned Maria, our graphics artist before. You may remember she's the young lady who once dated a guy who transported dead bodies between hospitals and funeral homes. Maria was also kidnapped once, but that's another story.

Last Thursday morning, Maria came dragging into the office five minutes late. "I didn't get any sleep at all," she said. "As I was going into my apartment last night, I saw a humongous spider outside of the door, and it scared me half to death."

The spider sighting upset Maria so much she dreamed about them all night. My question is, if she didn't sleep, how did she dream? You have to know Maria to conjure up an answer to that.

She told me about a classmate in college who kept a small spider for a pet. I'm not making this up folks. She tells it for the truth.

Maria said the girl would pick the spider up and watch it spin a web from one finger to another and crawl around on the web. Supposedly, when the pet spider produced a litter, she got rid of the mother and all the babies except one, which she then trained along the same lines as the mother. When this spider produced a litter, she did the same thing again. "She's now into the third generation of this spider family," Maria said.

I wondered, aloud, how the girl knew which spiders were female? Maria looked at me somewhat puzzled and said, "I don't know."

Maria's friend needs to be told that if these spiders continue to produce offspring, there's a male arachnid in the woodpile somewhere.

I hated to spoil Maria's image of her spider-loving friend, but I told her the girl was pulling her leg.

I don't think she believed me. Once, when I was a young boy, my father spotted a large spider on the wall in our living room. We had one of those black, pot-bellied heaters sitting on a hearth back then, as did many houses in the Travora Mill village in York, S.C.

My dad reached for a stick of stove-wood to dispatch the uninvited intruder, but stopped short because he found he was just before putting his hand on a large black widow spider, which was poised to bite him.

The incident was a scary experience for a young boy, and my father, one of the most fearless men I ever knew, was somewhat shaken as well.

One of the dangers of growing up poor during the depression years, and immediately thereafter, was using the outhouse. Most mill houses in York lacked indoor plumbing. During the winter months spiders found ways to get into houses, and especially outhouses, so when nature called, the adventure was on. People learned quickly to check the outhouse closely before closing the door.

I knew a man who went to the outhouse on his wedding night, and was bitten by a black widow spider. He didn't die from the bite, but it was several weeks before he was able to take a honeymoon. I mean that literally.

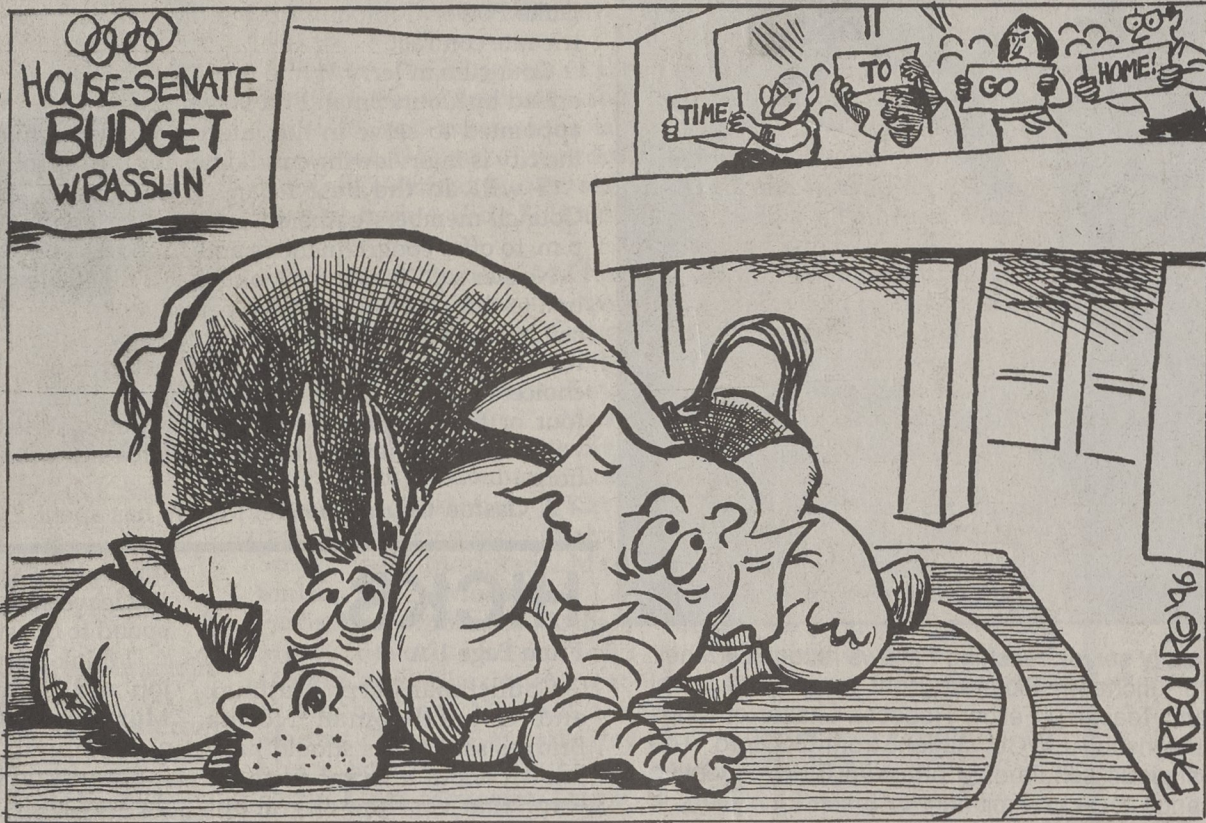
Fortunately, those "outhouse days" are gone for all but the most rural of people.

There are just two poisonous spiders in our part of the country. The black widow is still around, and then there's the brown recluse, a transplant from foreign soil. The bite of either can kill, but usually doesn't if treated properly.

The best thing to do is avoid the vicious little varmints. Resist the urge to visit an outhouse if you chance to spot one out in the country somewhere, and above all don't take them in as pets.

I still think Maria's friend was putting her on.

Cartoonitorial



Comp Time bill is good one

This week Congress will debate a bill that is good for American workers and their families. The Working Families Flexibility Act (Comp Time) would amend the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to give employers the authority to offer interested employees the chance to take compensatory time off, instead of cash for working overtime.

Specifically, the bill would allow employers to compensate their employees with 1.5 hours of paid leave for each hour worked over 40 hours in a seven day work period. The bill allows employees, together with their families, to decide whether to take this time off or to take the additional cash associated with overtime. This is a choice that employees at various levels of government have had and used successfully for over a decade.

The bill does not require employers to offer compensatory time, but instead makes that option available if both the employer and the employee so desire. These new options will provide many workers with a more flexible system that will allow them to spend more time with their family, run errands, or attend to whatever personal matters they may need time to address.

The changes proposed by this legislation provide relief for which millions of Americans have been asking. As the percentage of men and women who must balance work and family responsibilities grows, employers are often hampered by federal law in their attempts to accommodate employee requests for more flexibility in their work schedules. This will remove one of those obstacles and give private sector employees the

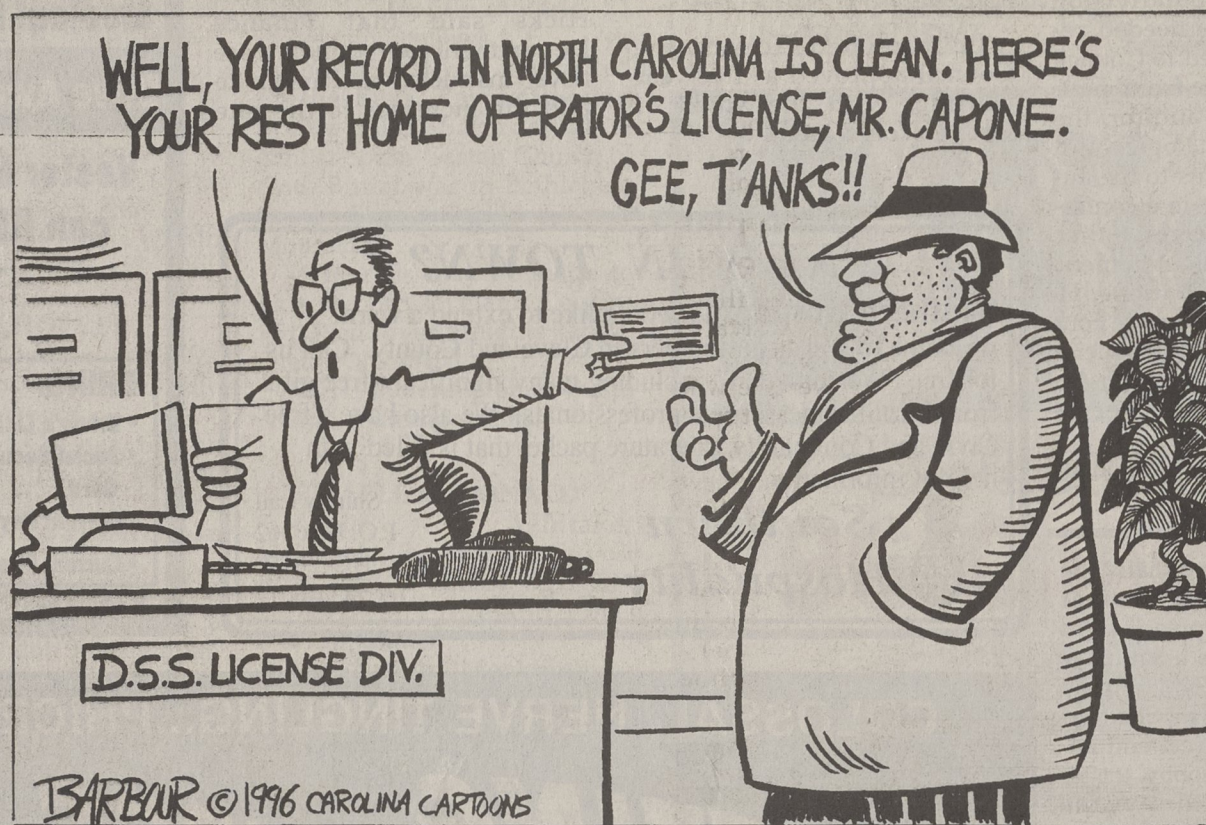


Rep. Sue Myrick
NC 9th District
Guest Column

same option that their counterparts in the public sector have had for years.

While the option of choosing between more time or more money may not seem that important to some salaried workers, the flexibility this option provides single parent households who are dependent upon an hourly income, is immense. Any working mother who has had to choose between making money to put food on the table or missing work to nurse a sick child, will appreciate the flexibility this bill offers. Hard working fathers will also enjoy the extra time as they will now be able to attend more Little League games and PTA meetings with their family.

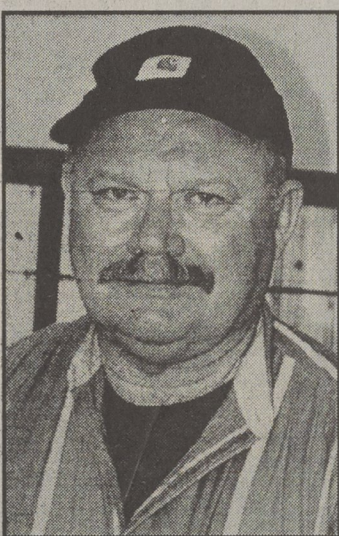
As a wife, mother, grandmother and former small business owner, I know firsthand how hard it is to balance the responsibilities of work and family. This bill offers a common-sense approach to help with this balancing act. Hopefully it will garner the President's signature and become law - a law that "works" for "working families."



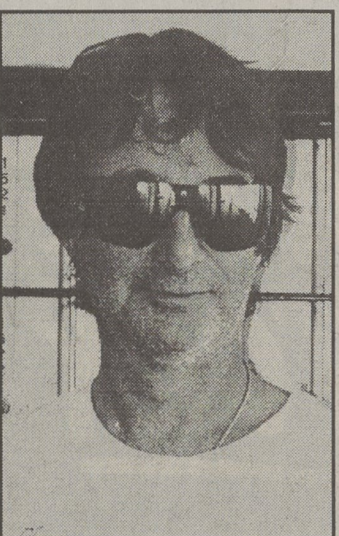
Sidewalk Survey

By Elizabeth Stewart

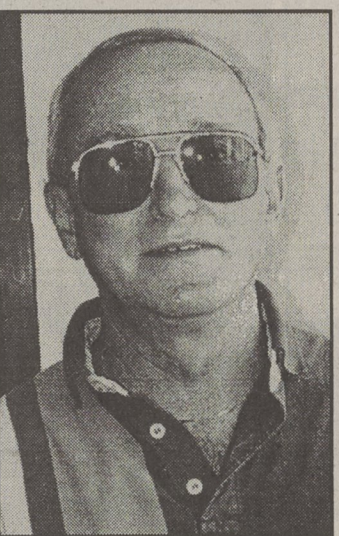
Are you tired of The Olympics?




PAUL DOVER
Production Operation
Kings Mountain
No. I have tickets for track, field, archery, basketball, canoeing and equestrian events this week in Atlanta and I am excited.



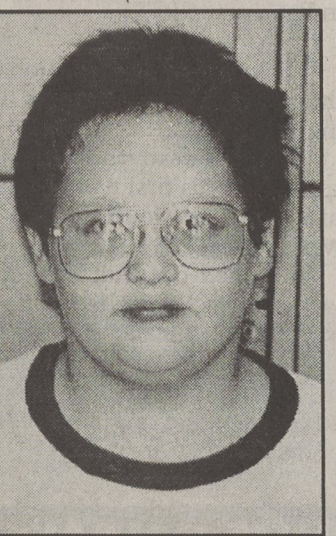
WAYNE LOWERY
Self-employed
Kings Mountain
Not really. Virgil (my pet parrot) and I stayed home while my wife went to Atlanta and really enjoyed the Olympics. I enjoy the TV coverage.




W.D. HOLDER
Club Manager
No. I don't think the TV coverage of the games has been enough.



EMILY BLAKE
Student
Kings Mountain
Yes. I wish they would put something else on television for us to watch.



SCOTT SMITH
Student
Kings Mountain
No. I love the gymnastics best of all. I'd like to see more on TV and would like to be there.



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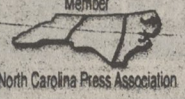
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