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FREE ~ GRATIS

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Go out 'Green'

the dignity in simple pine

by Donald Byrne

A new local business takes Chatham County's focus on green and sustainable all the way to the end — and beyond.

Piedmont Pine Coffins fashions simple pine boxes for people and pets from local lumber using old-fashioned hand tools. Home base for this green cottage industry is 32-acre off-grid Melleray Farmstead near Pittsboro. The coffins are made without power tools.

The sanded, unfinished coffins have a spartan dignity. They are well-suited for use in contemporary funeral parlors, green or natural burials, and cremations. Their price point is another draw — thousands less than a consumer would customarily pay at a funeral parlor.

The coffins are designed to fit a standard burial vault, but where they really shine is in the context of the green burial practices that have been getting press in the Triangle and Piedmont ever since the premiere of a certain film at this year's Full Frame Documentary festival in Durham.

"A Will for the Woods" — which won the Audience Award in Durham and continues to garner prizes on the international circuit of festivals — tells the story of Durham's Clark Wang, a man who had cancer and wanted a "good death" — well-considered, with adieu bid and estates willed — and wanted, above all, a green burial.

His insistence persuaded Dyanne Matzkevich of Pine Forest Memorial Gardens in Wake Forest to open North Carolina's first green burial cemetery: no embalming, no vaults, and biodegradable coffins. Clark was buried there in 2011 in a box built with wood reclaimed from a chicken coop, and the dirt was mounded up around him with shovels by family and friends.

Pine Forest is only one option for those who want to go natural. There are five funeral homes and two other cemeteries in NC certified by the Green Burial Council, an international organization that promotes environmentally sustainable death care.



Only hand tools are used to craft the coffins

And there's more: Guilford College in Greensboro is considering opening a green burial ground in its 200+ acre woodland. You can find out more details from the friendly advocates at the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Piedmont. They can also teach you how to make use of Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina, the flagship natural burial ground in the Southeast.

Piedmont Pine Coffins supports this new ethic in funeral service. Their preference — hand tools — and their mantra — local wood, green manufacture, right price — line up nicely with the spirit of the natural burial movement.

It's a philosophy well-captured by Mark Harris in *Grave Matters*, a book that presents a series of alternatives for those who would plan a good death.

"Our best last act," writes Harris, "may, in fact, be the simple act of using what remains of our physical existence to fertilize depleted soil, push up a tree, preserve a bit of wild from development, and, in the process, perpetuate the natural cycle of life that turns to support those we leave behind. All the better that such basic, earth-friendly send-offs are sparing of resources, driven by families, and easy on the pocketbook.

Or, in the lingo of Piedmont Pine Coffins: Go out green!

Donald Byrne founded and operates Piedmont Pine Coffins.

by R.L. Taylor

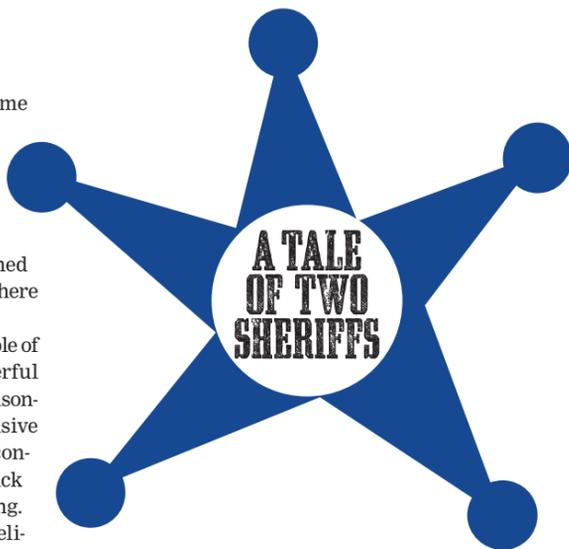
It well may sound silly but some North Carolina folks might be looking for a modern-day Robin Hood just as they did when they were dealing with the Sheriff of Nottingham several centuries ago. Some of them are concerned about the Sheriff of Rockingham over there next to Greensboro.

Sheriff Sam Page has served a couple of lifetimes as the Sheriff and has a powerful voice when it comes to paroling state prisoners. The state has established an extensive and complex system for modern-day convicted criminals to work their way back into society and into working for a living.

Doctors make sure that a prisoner eligible for parole is healthy enough to stand the rigors of an eight hour workday. In fact the state is so concerned about released prisoners they go out and inspect dwellings where the prisoner may live. Their concern is his good health.

It takes a long time to fulfill all the requirements a prisoner goes through to become eligible for freedom. On paper the state has prisoners ready for freedom. In February prisoner Bobby Ray Brown, convicted of murder back in the 80s had finally crossed all the 'T's' and dotted all 'I's' so that he could walk out of the prison again.

He had won that right earlier working his way up the complex plan and won the right to go home on weekends to spend some time with his family. Unfortunately, Page's pal Sheriff Terry Johnson of Alamance County, used local radio stations to warn the public that the vicious murdering killer had



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PROSPERITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Seeking a "Manna Mentality"

by Gary Simpson

This is the 10th in a series of articles sponsored by ConnectChatham, a network of civic groups working for a better future for Chatham and the planet (see www.connectchatham.com). In this series we seek to define true "prosperity" in a 21st century world. We've boiled it down to a (not so) simple equation:

$$\text{Prosperity} = (N+E) \div P \times (T+W)$$

In other words, prosperity is the product of natural resources (N) plus environmental resources (E) divided by population (P) times technology (T) plus work (W).

However, the popular view more often equates prosperity or wealth with an economic system that perpetuates mass consumption of natural/environmental resources to produce non-renewable "stuff". Because this system reinforces the business-as-usual disparity of wealth among the world's population, it is both unsustainable (untenable) and unjust (immoral). As such, the current system that drives America's and the world's economy is not a high road to success (prosperity), but rather a low road to failure (austerity). It is a dead end street.

The fact that the economy (and the jobs and wealth we perceive it produces) lands near the top of most every public policy opinion poll, indicates that we do a poor job of connecting the dots to form the big picture of true prosperity. We fail to draw a clear picture of how the current unsustainable growth and materials dependent economic system confounds true prosperity by sacrificing the common (public) good on the altar of unfettered laissez-faire market driven ideology and unbridled greed. So, let's connect a few dots along the high road to 21st century prosperity.

DOT #1: MORE IS NOT BETTER!

Contrary to what is drummed into our conscious and subconscious awareness day in and day out, the one with

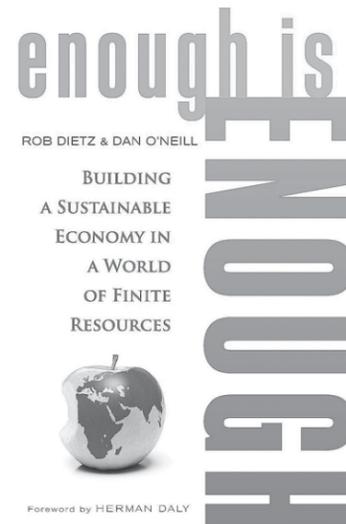


the most "stuff" at the end of the day does not win in the game of Life. More (and bigger) is not better. Annie Leonard's "The Story of Stuff" cartoon movie should be required viewing for all. It is the core curriculum — "Consumerism 101" — for every citizen on the planet. In only 20 minutes Annie connects the dots to paint the big picture of how the materials economic system works, the problems it produces and why we need to change the system if we're ever to achieve true

prosperity. Do yourself and the planet a big favor. Go online as over 15 million viewers have done already, and watch "The Story of Stuff" (<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff/>). Then visit the entire "The Story of Stuff Project" (<http://www.storyofstuff.org/>) to connect even more dots along the high road to prosperity.

DOT #2: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

We live in a time of growth economics that demands "more than enough." But for the first time in human his-



tory, we also live in a time where the old growth economy has butted heads catastrophically with the constraints of a finite earth. As such, we need dramatic change in our economic behavior if we are to avoid catastrophic collapse. Today, instead of perpetuating a grow-grow-grow economy that places profit over people and individual greed over the common good, we need an economy that promotes hitting the brakes, turning the wheel and sounding the horn that warns, "Enough is enough!"

It is time to stop butting our heads against the immovable wall of finite (unsustainable) resources. The goal of the new economy that is needed if true prosperity is to be achieved will no longer be MORE, but rather ENOUGH. "An economy that chases perpetually increased production and consumption, always in search of more, stands no chance of achieving lasting prosperity." Such is the grave pronouncement that prefaces the 15 chapters of the highly acclaimed new book by Rob Deitz and Dan O'Neill, "Enough is Enough".

The authors offer specific policy proposals for an economy of sufficiency that gets us off the growth treadmill and onto the high road toward an ecologically sound economic system. It is a system that meets human rather than financial needs, achieving true biological sustainability and shared wealth for all. If you've read to this point in this

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