

Sustainable Chatham?

Dear Readers,

Normally, Ms. Green answers questions you ask of her. Today it's time for you to answer a question she asks of you: Do we see Chatham County as a place that illustrates the word "sustainable?"

Ms. Green leans towards yes. And here's why:

Chatham county is artsy and full of a wonderful, diverse group of individuals from many different backgrounds. It has a reputation for valuing small farms, local food, and local businesses. It's "green," right? Meaning people who live here are concerned about the environment? Energy efficiency? Clean air? Water? Responsible disposal of waste?

In Chatham county we all think people should be paid a fair wage for a job well done, and discrimination because of race, religion, or sexual preference isn't anything we support. Am I still on track?

And everyone living in Chatham county right now – whether Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Independent, whatever – believes that we should leave our little slice of Heaven a better place for our children, don't we?

If we believe all of that, regardless of political affiliation, how long we've lived in Chatham, educational level, profession,

religion, whether we live in Pittsboro, Siler City, Goldston, Bonlee, Silk Hope, Bear Creek or Bynum, whether we're farmers or RTP professionals or plumbers or shopkeepers or teachers or factory workers...well then it's true, we do believe that Chatham county illustrates the word, "sustainable." Because that's the definition of sustainability: the belief that preserving the world we live in is important, that people should be treated fairly, and that our businesses should be self-supporting, and that all three elements support each other so that we leave our world a better place for our children.

With that in mind, Ms. Green and some like-minded friends and acquaintances and co-workers have decided to form a group: Sustainable Chatham. The purpose of this group is to spread the word about Chatham County as a sustainable place to live and work. We're not exactly sure how we're going to do this at present or what form our group will eventually take: a loose collection of like-minded individuals? An eventual non-profit like Sustainable Sandhills? A business organization that focuses on branding? A meet-up? Or just a group on Facebook (which exists, by the way. Look us up: Sustainable Chatham. It's a start).



ASK MS. GREEN

We know what we don't want to be: a political group. Ms. Green and her cohorts honestly, perhaps naively believe that sustainability is a value that transcends politics or religion. She believes that despite her experience on the recently dissolved GBASE (Green Building and Sustainable Energy) advisory board to the county commissioners to the contrary. Ms. Green and several of her friends, acquaintances, and peers in the energy efficiency and green-building community of Chatham county spent over a year repeatedly asking our current county commissioners for guidance as to how best to serve our fair county. Previous commissioners had created the group in order to tap the expertise of our county's green building professionals: architects, attorneys, business owners, builders, and others, to ask advice about county building projects, sustainable growth, and to research and report on projects, grants, and programs that may be useful for Chatham.

Ms. Green and her peers provided

suggestions for action, a plan for the commissioners to use their assistance on matters like energy efficiency (which the Commissioners claim to support), grants and programs the county might pursue to increase resources for its citizens...and received no response at all, until the commissioners finally dissolved the board. Which is their prerogative, to be sure, but also is a commentary on our elected officials' opinion of green building and sustainable energy specifically and citizen advisory boards in general.

In spite of all that, Ms. Green still believes that valuing sustainability is a human value, not a political one. And by promoting Chatham County as a community that values sustainability is a smart thing for our citizens and our businesses. Sustainability is a selling point! We need to capitalize on our reputation.

So, how about it? Readers, are you for a Sustainable Chatham? If yes, join the conversation on Facebook and stay tuned for meetings and other opportunities to participate in the future. If you'd like to help plan and organize please contact Ms. Green (Adrienne Bashista) at adrienne@homeperformancenc.com or Mike Dasher, builder and owner of Orange Communities, at mike.dasher@orange-communities.com. We'll be in touch!



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Book review: "Midstream"

by Brett Yates

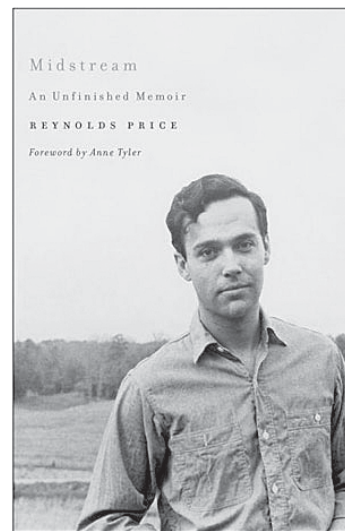
Until his death in 2011, Reynolds Price was the finest chronicler of the North Carolina Piedmont, but his recent memoirs suggest that, like some great Southern writers before him, he may have enjoyed himself best overseas.

Published posthumously, "Midstream: An Unfinished Memoir" picks up where Price's previous nonfiction work "Ardent Spirits" ended, with the young writer (and former Rhodes Scholar) returning to Oxford in 1961 for a year of mirth, following the start of his teaching career at Duke and the completion of his first novel. Although the story begins with heartbreak – the revelation that Price's lover from his prior English sojourn has moved on to a new companion – it quickly slides into the bliss of good-fellowship that apparently characterized Britain's Ivory Tower in those days: long lunches, afternoon tea, and hearty intellectual discourse among professors who potter about within the supreme tranquility of an ancient institution that has not yet begun to admit women.

In this idle period, Price has little to do but enjoy the company of England's leading literary lights: Stephen Spender, L.P. Hartley, and Christopher Isherwood all pop up. All are praised – in sort of the same hazy terms – except the poet Robert Graves, whose "meanness and self-aggrandizement" Price recalls with perhaps greater clarity.

As Price once again sets sail, the stars in his galaxy grow even brighter: in Rome, he visits the set of "Cleopatra," meeting Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton – who laments his future wife's "jowliness" and "washerwoman's arms." Even in ordinary situations, Price seems unable to avoid brushes with fame, running into Alain Delon in a restaurant and Ronald Reagan outside a clothing store.

The author possessed what seems now an incomprehensibly glamorous life for a rookie novelist. To readers who know Price for his depictions of humbler folks, this volume – slender as a Hollywood



actress and so chatty as to elide chapter breaks – may seem a strange addition to the late writer's bibliography. But for all the well-known personages it mentions, "Midstream" is not a work of gossip – Price is too kind for that – or of name-dropping, though many of its anecdotes consist of little but names. The intent is not to impress, and in fact there may not be an intent, except the pleasure of recollection. It

sings with the pleasant pointlessness of all happy stories.

When Price finally returns to North Carolina, the book takes a darker turn, relating the illness and death of his mother in Raleigh. It leaves off in a cheerful place, however, with Price once again a teacher, merrily reading his students' papers, as he would for the next 45 years.

Exactly where Price planned for "Midstream" to leave off will, of course, remain unknown. As its subtitle indicates, Price never completed this work, though only occasionally does it read that way, with prose that might have received some further polish: it contains repetitions (especially in two paragraphs discussing a party given by Natalie Wood), and a bit too much of its information is wedged into sentences via parenthesis.

Of course, Price is a major enough writer that, simply as windows upon his life, his memoirs are valuable. "Midstream," however, is not just a book about Reynolds Price but – published despite its unfinished state, accompanied by his star pupil Anne Tyler's vivid foreword, a dozen beautiful pictures of the author and those close to him, and Bill Price's plainspoken, heartfelt essay about his brother's final days – a tribute to Reynolds Price, who, after the heady days remembered here, settled into a steady, relatively unpublicized life in Durham, remaining, of course, a star on the page.

Brett Yates moved to North Carolina from Vermont in 2011. He lives in Durham and works in Chapel Hill.

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