

## N&O Sports Section is excellent

I suppose most of the readers here might think I don't like the News and Observer's news department because they are so politically incorrect they still think John Edwards is as handsome as ever.

But — the News and Observer has one of the best sports sections and some of the best sports writers anywhere. Even though they don't get enough space they still do a great job of covering sports when sports have become a dominating pastime. They have coped with big time college football, professional hockey, women's sports of all kinds, local professional baseball teams and the King of Them All, March Madness, the Final Four that always seems to have

more than two of our basketball teams on the verge of winning the National Championship.

The N&O sports staff does it well, all the time. Of course, everybody watches the big game on television but they all grab the N&O the next morning. The three minutes of a winning—or losing—

coach gets after a television game expands into a full column of how the coach really feels.

There is also the everlasting box score that has who did what and how much time it took to do it. And who had the most fouls and every other detail in the game. It is done in a time when massive communication churns though all American homes. Sport writers gather it all up and have it ready the next morning. It is simply impossible to make sense out of morning television sports programs.

You can go through two cups of coffee just waiting for your teams to be mentioned. The morning paper has it all just by turning a page.

It has always been that way around here. The Durham Morning Herald and the afternoon Durham Sun proudly covered the Big Four—Duke, UNC, State and Wake Forest — with amazing fairness, vigor and insight. Saturday afternoons tested ears, and minds and printing presses to produce a majestic Sunday sports edition.

Wake Forest moved away but it did not make much off the load, especially when basketball season came along. Remember that tantalizing year when Jimmy Valvano's State team won the big prize? State's journey began out on the West Coast and the afternoon Durham Sun sent its sports editor along to cover what was sure to be a quick show. State beat Pepperdine in three overtimes and kept winning right up to the time Valvano ran down the court looking for someone to hug — and the Durham Sun reported every second of it.

It is sad that the Durham newspapers don't do that anymore. Once they had 70,000 subscribers. The paper had a great sports staff headed by the Sun's Al Featherstone, the most intelligent, the fairest, the most knowledgeable in the entire area. Alas, the Herald-Sun's management team did not see it and were more interested in budgets than good sports writers.

Denied good assignments and unable to please one of the paper's high-management editors, Feather was forced to just drift along. When the paper was sold Feather and the much-talented Al Carson were among the first to be fired because the editors thought they could get the same thing done with less expensive reporters.

Feather is making fairly good living as a freelance sports writer who knows more about Tobacco Road schools than any mortal alive. Al Carson, despite a stroke, moved up to Oxford as the Ledger's editor. The latest circulation report from the Herald-Sun is hovering around 20,000.

The News and Observer sports writers moved in and took over the sports market completely. It is remarkable and gratifying that those guys are proving the worth and value of newspapers by delivering well-written news. God bless them all.

R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A newspaperman for more than 60 years, he was a vice president of the Durham Herald Company from 1982-1991.

## VOTE AGAINST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The wording of Amendment One threatens vulnerable unmarried seniors, too. It could force single or widowed seniors to marry in order to keep legal rights they receive through their unmarried partners, and marrying could strip these seniors of benefits such as pensions, health care, and social security. A widow receiving a pension from her previous spouse may find that this amendment would force her to marry and give up that pension in order to have hospital visitation rights or medical power of attorney for her new significant other.

The very real threat of danger to children, women, and seniors due to the poor wording is the main reason to vote against Amendment One, but there are others to consider as well.

Amendment One would tarnish North Carolina's constitution. Constitutions are put into place to protect the rights of the citizens of a state. Amendments should expand and

protect rights as opposed to limiting or denying rights to one group while giving special rights to another. Rights of a minority ought never to be voted upon by the majority.

Many years ago our license tags bore the words, "First in Freedom." It's a commendable phrase, an ideal to work toward, but it wasn't true. We weren't the first in freedom for African Americans. We weren't the first in freedom for women.

Now, North Carolina has managed to be the last state in the South without a marriage amendment soiling its constitution. Instead of following the trend and being the last state to write discrimination into our constitution, we can lead the way and be the only southern state to refrain from doing so. Wouldn't it be nice, many years from now, to be able to look back and be thankful we took the courageous stand against the current tide and did the right thing? Vote against Amendment One.

*Ed Crabtree, a life-long North Carolinian, lives in Durham, sadly seven time zones apart from his partner of more than 12 years. Skyping to Egypt and searching for employment fill his days.*

## Spring, 2012

By John Heuer

This is my second spring on Meadow Branch in Chatham County. My wife, Sue, built this house in 1978. Our porch is perched on the edge of a ravine overlooking the stream. Last winter, we had our first aesthetic disagreement. Sue loved the way the beech trees clung to their leaves through the winter. To me, the pale brown leaves were drab, like the faded yellows and reds, ready to fall.

But they didn't fall. Not the beech leaves.

Last winter's impatience became this winter's appreciation. It's funny to find beauty in the drab.

Last spring, I was so uninterested in the beeches that I never bothered to notice when the old brown leaves finally fell, pushed out by the new green buds and sprouting leaves.

This spring, I'm paying attention. When the breeze rustles up, the beech leaves take flight, feather light ornaments of winter.

Our other spring fling is a new television, and my reacquaintance with a former passion, NCAA basketball. The grace of these young players' movements and the quality of their teamwork is breathtaking. Yet, there it was, in between games, a commercial for the US Marines.

We had just learned of the latest atrocity committed by one of our soldiers in Afghanistan, and I imagined these young athletes joining the military and being sent overseas to fight and kill and die.

The juxtaposition was incomprehensible to me. Imagining these graceful athletes armed with automatic weapons,

sporting Kevlar armor, trained to shoot first, asks questions later, in a language they little understood. It was heartbreaking.

Military service can be honorable, but successive combat tours are guaranteed to injure our soldiers, if not physically, then morally and spiritually. It is excruciatingly difficult to serve honorably in a dishonorable mission. The American wars of the last decade have little honor about them. Vengeance, perhaps, but little honor. That's why so many of our soldiers lose their lives to suicide.

The slogan of Quaker House in Fayetteville is "Yes to the troops. No to the wars."

Let's bring these young men and women home, and end these expeditionary misadventures.

The same pundits who beat the drums for war against Iraq are calling for war against Iran. They were fools then and they are fools now. Under the Nuremberg Principles, they could and should be tried for Crimes Against the Peace.

Let's bring our soldiers home and provide the health care, education and housing they need. Their families, too.

These soldiers and future generations of military women and men can be trained to defend rather than attack; and to provide disaster relief when needed. Young citizens trained for these tasks will display the grace and teamwork worthy of any championship team, and make the nation and our world a happier, healthier place to live.

This spring I'm paying more attention. I hope you will, too.

*John Heuer is chair of NC Peace Action.*

## Post Environmentalism

By Don Lein

In handicapping the upcoming election, it is abundantly clear that the candidate who will move us beyond the ruinous effects of this administration's environmental policies will probably emerge victorious. Energy prices, jobs and a very large part of the economy have been sacrificed on the altar of environmentalism.

If environmentalism is so destructive, why do politicians embrace it? The lifeblood of politics is money and environmentalism's prime appeal is to the affluent, who once having achieved affluence want to stand astride the river of progress and say "stop!!" and preserve that environment under a regulatory bell jar, and they will contribute generously to a candidate who will help them realize their goals. It's not that they want to slow their own progress, they simply do not want others to catch up. As the Forest Service used to say the person who built their mountain cabin last year is an environmentalist. The person who wants to build one this year is a developer. We saw this phenomenon approximately 10 years ago in Chatham County when newcomers insisted upon restrictive regulations that would thwart others from becoming newcomers. Fortunately, sanity returned to the public square a couple of years ago in both Raleigh and Pittsboro. This sanity must be restored in DC, as well. Let's look at one obvious area, others will follow as we near the election.

### OIL/ENERGY PRICES

While it is true that the President has no direct control over gas prices, he nonetheless continues to disparage carboniferous fuels by calling them "fuels of the past", yet the Institute for Energy Research indicates that the U. S. has 1.4 trillion barrels of technologically recoverable oil. This is enough to meet all U. S. oil needs for the next 200 years, without any imports. Of course this is in direct conflict with the President's claim that the U. S. has only 2 percent of known world reserves. Investors Business Daily claims that the U. S. has 60 times more oil than the President claims. Currently about 60 percent of our trade deficit is paid out for importation of crude (\$332 billion out of \$560 billion).

The President also disparages the "drill, baby, drill" approach, saying drilling is up under his administration, but he fails to give the Clinton and Bush administrations credit

because these leases that he refers to, originated a number of years ago. Under the present administration new leases are down (up to 70 percent in Federal Lands in the Rockies) or minimal to non-existent in many off-shore locations and at ANWAR. Demagoging the issue doesn't help either. In a February 23 speech on energy, he claimed the "only solution" was that "we start using less — that lowers the demand, prices come down", yet five paragraphs later he claims "no matter how much oil we produce at home... that's not going to set the price of gas worldwide". In effect, decreasing demand will lower prices, but increasing supply will not. Is this any sort of logic upon which to build a policy or elect a leader?

We have seen efforts to find "cleaner" energies which have largely failed in providing a suitable inexpensive substitute to our present energy usage. Whether their failure is simply a continuation of the government's inability to pick winners or more likely a government payback (read stimulus) for direct supporters or bundlers of support for the president's campaign, the effort has been an abject failure. One wonders how many millions will now be squandered upon current and past contributors in pursuing the latest fad — algae.

Environmentalists have spent decades pretending they have common ground with working people, because they are both "anti-business". Alas, this façade also has been ripped to shreds with the defeat of the Keystone Pipeline. The most environmentally vetted pipeline ever proposed and with a case that is overwhelmingly positive in terms of tens of thousands of shovel ready jobs, improved relationship with our closest ally, depriving our enemies of billions of dollars of revenues, decreasing our dependence on outside powers, etc., yet the President killed it. The unions wanted it, but the affluent environmentalists did not.

Much the same as scares about global warming, alar, DDT, acid rain, nuclear energy, etc., the veto of Keystone had nothing to do with science or logic. The Keystone veto deserves special opprobrium because there is no logical reason for its turndown, particularly at this point in our economic "recovery". It, like many other illogical actions in Washington, is best expressed in the old Washington truism "follow the money" — in this case from the pocketbooks/wallets of the affluent environmentalists to Washington policy makers and power brokers.

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