

CHATHAM CountyLine

where all voices are heard

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FREE ~ GRATIS

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Hundreds of local farmers gather weekly at Farmers Markets in Chatham and Orange County bringing us foods that are not only delicious and good

for you but also innovative and exciting – bitter melon, sweet potato leaf chips, local popcorn! Market managers are the unsung heroes of our burgeoning farmers markets and Bev Carr, Southern Village Farmers Market Manager, loves her role as the bridge between consumers and farmers.

“The Market is more vibrant than ever, and our customer base is larger than ever, but still not large enough,” she said. “I’d like to see more consumers make more of a commitment to building more of their weekly menus based on what’s in season at the Market. They’d help and encourage our farmers, and improve their own diet and health.”

To stabilize, grow and compete, local farmers need to connect to urban markets through multiple marketing channels—farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, retail, institutions, and “food hubs,” centralized locations where farmers can drop off their farm products for distribution.

Many area farmers sell their farm products throughout the Triangle at farmers markets, and to grocery stores, restaurants, schools, milk coops, and even to other farmers. Ann Campbell also distributes her cheesecakes through Cornucopia, an online cheese and specialty foods company in Graham and is looking for ways to deliver her cheese spreads to restaurants and wineries across North and South Carolina. Esta Cohen of Cohen Farms would like to see a more centralized, destination market to maximize the presence of farmers and consumers in a single market.

A pricing gap for small farmers persists partly because the needs of consumers take precedence over those of the farmer. In her book “Animal, Vegetable, Miracle”, Barbara Kingsolver observes that “We

obligingly give \$85 cents of our every food dollar to the processors, marketers, and transporters. And we complain about the high price of organic meats and vegetables that might send back more than three nickels per buck to the farmers.”

Local farmers earn little on their produce; even selling to retailers says Cindy Hamrick, an Orange County farmer.

“...sustainable farming is labor intensive but nobody is paying for what it costs me to grow,” she said. “A dozen eggs cost \$5 to produce without labor because of the cost of GMO grain, let alone organic grain which costs \$25 a bag; but the retailer pays me \$4 or less.”

Agricultural Extension Agent Debbie Roos sees the pricing challenges for small farmers as one of scale. She said, “We have smaller scale farmers – hopefully we will get more mid-size farmers to open up the wholesale markets. Most farmers make money at bigger markets.”

“The challenge is not just for farmers but for consumers and food brokers as well – all involved in the farm to fork local food system have a role in developing a system that is equitable for farmers and consumers, all the while being good stewards of our natural resources” says Noah Rannels, an Orange County farmer.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

What has been the role of the community to champion and advocate for our health, nutrition, food security, and environment? Can local food advocates make a compelling case for organic and local foods over industrial foods? Can farmers get fair prices for their products? Can the community work together to bring local foods to schools? Can consumers choose to place more of their food dollars into the local food system?

The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association’s



FOCUS: Farm to Fork II

INSIDE:



'DEEP CHATHAM' AT SHAKORI HILLS

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4TH ANNUAL CHATHAM EMPTY BOWLS FUNDRAISE

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► Diana Hales reports on the Fracking Commission and the Chatham County Board of Commissioners

PROSPERITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Troubled Waters

By John Alderman

Throughout history, adequate natural resources, environmental resources, population, technology and work have been prerequisites for widespread prosperity. Of all the natural and environmental resources necessary for prosperity none is more important than clean water. When packaged and sold as a commodity — in a bottle, a can or a pipe — water is a natural resource. As a river, lake or ocean, water is an environmental resource.

More than ever, two questions now confront us in the 21st century. First, will we continue degrading water as an environmental resource and allow the growing biological collapse of our rivers, lakes and oceans to continue unabated? Here, we should consider the biological condition of the largest body of water on the planet — the oceans — and note the 2011 findings of the International Program on the State of the Ocean: “the world’s ocean is at a high risk of entering a phase of extinction of marine species unprecedented in human history” ... a period of time covering approximately 200,000 years. As is described below, the same can be said of our rivers in Chatham County. Secondly, when viewed as a natural resource, will we continue consuming water that increasingly is loaded with unregulated and often cancer causing chemicals such as Bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates?

Let’s examine these questions as they relate to the three rivers in Chatham County: the Haw, Deep and Rocky Rivers. All three are undergoing rapid biological decline due to reduced stream flows and water pollution.

The Rocky River Heritage Foundation has asked that I evaluate water quality in the Haw, Deep and Rocky Rivers (all part of the upper Cape Fear River Basin). Before doing so, consider how these rivers looked 600 or more years ago. In general, water was crystal clear, even during major storm events, and a great diversity and abundance of fish, mussels, snails, insects, and other organisms existed in these waters. Basically, no matter the location within these rivers or their tributaries, water quality was excellent.

During modern times, the NC Environmental Management Commission designates certain streams Outstanding Resource Waters if water quality is excellent and the water body has other characteristics which

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Nemo Nearman

by R. L. Taylor

Last year I gathered up all my venom and natural bad nature to scold the University of North Carolina athletic system for inventing new ways to cheat in school. As usual, I probably overdid it.

This week, out of the clear blue, I now feel good three times better than I felt bad after getting a single telephone call from Charleston, WVA. It came from Nemo Nearman. He played basketball for Carolina from 1946 to 1950 and he read me an unflattering editorial about McDowell County, where I used to live.

We chatted a bit about West Virginia and I asked how he was doing like we always do and he said he will be playing in a basketball tournament next spring. He has been doing this for a long time. He previously played on three-man teams for guys over 30, over 40, over 50, over 60 and over 70.

Still loyal to Carolina, he calls his team the Tom Scott Tar Heels, named after his coach at Chapel Hill. I am not sure he entered the over 80 games but he is now sporting a new hip and a couple of new knees and will play in the top bracket — the over 85 guys.



Nearman on the court at UNC in 2010 when 70 former basketball players (ages 21-89) came together for a celebration of 100 years of Carolina basketball.

not mingle with the campus gods. Years later our paths crossed at Howard Johnson’s in Wytheville, VA. I saw him in a rear both with a smile that could light up the Dean Dome and instinctively shouted — just like I used to do at

Nemo was a Navy veteran of World War II. He had some sort of scholarship as well as help from the GI Bill. He and a bunch of other athletes lived below Emerson Stadium at the old baseball field. Nemo was involved in a dozen campus clubs and organizations, also played lacrosse and graduated on time — just like the rules say.

He got a job and moved back to Charleston but his heart never left Chapel Hill. I never met him on the campus because I was a green sophomore and did

Woolen Gym—“Nemo Nearman!”

We shook hands.

Sherman Yale Nearman says he got the name “Nemo” in the Navy because the ship’s mailman could not pronounce “Nearman” and always came up with “Nemo” The name stuck.

Nearman is a constant UNC supporter. He is at every basketball promotion event and three years ago made the first basket in a game of graduates that included Phil Ford and a dozen others who went out to conquer the world and did it.

This week Nemo still has memories of local sports writers who used to be as famous as the players. He said he never could understand Jack Horner of the Durham Morning Herald. Face to face, Nemo said Horner was nice as could be. In print he was very unkind. It was not because Horner liked Duke. He was mad because the coach benched Carolina’s All-American Hook Dillon and started Nemo instead.

Nemo did not do that. The coach did. Coaches I know try to help the team. As for me, I try to be an umpire and call ‘em like I see ‘em. And if universities turn out a dozen Nemo Nearmans, America will be far ahead of the game.

R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He has been a newspaperman for more than 60 years.