

Ms. Green bids readers a fond farewell

DEAR READERS,

It is with this final column that Ms. Green must bid you, my 14 loyal readers, adieu. It's been a good run, folks, but Ms. Green has run out of things to talk about. She's spent the past three years answering questions big and small in the interest of saving you energy, money, and helping make central North Carolina more green, sustainable, and a better place to be, and it's time to move on.

HERE IS A FINAL THOUGHT

Despite all the sexiness and hype and promise around solar power, electric vehicles, and other alternatives to our current energy-hoggishness ways of doing things, Ms. Green knows for a fact that the best way to save energy, save money, and in the end, reduce our carbon footprints are through the unsexy, simple, and basic process of making our homes more energy efficient. Ms. Green has been preaching this for three years. Sealing leaks in your house, sealing your HVAC ducts, adding insulation and closing your crawlspace



are all the very best, least expensive, and most impactful thing you can do to make your home more energy efficient. Whether your goal is to lessen your energy bill or do your part to save the environment, this is a must-do if you are a homeowner.

The best way to figure out how to make your home more energy efficient is to hire a home energy auditor. This person should be certified by BPI (Building Performance Institute), and like anyone you hire to work on your home, should be experienced in the field and have excellent recommendations. The energy auditor will audit your home for energy inefficiencies. He or she will do this by doing a thorough visual inspection, performing a blower door test, which measures how leaky

your home is, perform thermal imaging, pinpointing leaks, and doing a duct blaster test, which will tell him (or her) how leaky your home's ductwork is. Based on the audit, he or she will then prepare a report, complete with suggestions of how to get the best return on your investment. This should NOT include new windows or doors (unless your windows or doors don't work) or radiant barriers in your attic. This should include labor intensive but inexpensive plugging of leaks, additional insulation, duct sealing, and additional work in your crawl space—at the very least a moisture barrier and also likely, a closed crawl.

Ms. Green's own house, which will be 100 years old next year, has had enough energy efficiency improvements so that it could qualify for Energy Star. Even if you don't count those initial, major improvements Ms. Green and her husband made when they first moved into this sieve of a farmhouse, our energy bills, over time and with continuous improvement, now average 40 percent less than what they were when we first moved into the house. And yes,

we use propane and electric heat. And no, we don't keep the thermostat to 55 degrees. And yes, Ms. Green is a strong and firm believer in air conditioning. Ms. Green has televisions and computers and her children leave the lights on constantly and despite knowing better, Ms. Green herself leaves her laptop plugged in all the time. This winter, which we would all agree was on the harsher side, Ms. Green's bills remained constant. This summer, her air conditioner won't run non-stop, no matter how hot it will get. Bottom line: get an energy audit by someone who knows what they're doing, like Ms. Green's husband, Mark Bashista, owner of Home Performance NC. Do what the auditor suggests you do! The end.

Ms. Green is Adrienne Bashista, co-owner of Home Performance NC, an energy auditing, energy rating, and home weatherization contracting company and a freelance writer/PR/marketing professional. Home Performance NC can be found on the web: www.homeperformancenc.com and by phone: (919)360-1570. You can contact Adrienne directly at ehba@mindspring.com

Memoir — from my memory to your imagination

by Patty Cole

I'm a small-town girl who grew up in Ravenswood, West Virginia, a little town on the Ohio River. An aluminum factory was the staple of our town. Dad was the band director in a place where pride wasn't something worn on shirt sleeves. For us pride beat in our chests like a bass drum every time the football team ran onto the field or when the band snaked its way from the school to the bleachers for Friday night football games.

When I was in the fourth grade, the band students and the entire town pooled money to buy my Dad a Galaxy 500 Ford sedan for his duty and service to Ravenswood. The ruse went well. Everyone, and I mean everyone, including my girlfriends, knew about the car except for

me and Dad. But I didn't take it personally. It was the first brand new vehicle my Dad had owned. What a thrill to ride in the passenger seat as Dad cruised the town the next day. The Shine of that moment has yet to wear off.

It was to be the first time of many when my Dad and I would stand speechless together. Another time was when my oldest brother died summer 2013 from an inoperable brain tumor. He lingered a week. Dad called me while I was at the beach. It's Over. We both choked up at the same instant, blurted stifled sobs, then went stoic as we Porters do. I remained in shock for six months and then I cried like a newborn baby crying for its mother.

I share everything with my Dad, as many daughters do. But ours is a special bond, for my mother was sick with schizophrenia disorder from before I was born. I don't know or remember her cuddling me, ever, but Dad gave me lots and lots of hugs. When I was 5 to 9, I sat beside him in his easy chair as he worked the

crossword puzzle or jotted notes with a pencil onto green-lined paper for the high school band to rehearse the next day.

Yes. I was skinny enough to sit in an easy chair with my Dad—room to spare. I could do cartwheels, hold my breath under water, and put my fingers up under my ribs. I was that hungry. Dad struggled to tie together ends on a school teacher's salary and take care of a sick wife who required lots of medicine.

Usually I spent nights with my friends where I got a full meal, and milk, lots of milk, and cookies. And to all those mothers who were surrogates, I raise my glass in toast, for you never turned me away hungry.

I stole Launa Mallet's bike when I was 6 years old. It was simple. She had a bike and I did not, so I took hers from her front yard when she and her family weren't home. What a find. It was a pink and yellow dream-cycle with a banana seat, U-shaped handle bars with green streamers hanging from the hand grips.

I didn't see myself as a thief. I was an opportunist without knowing the word. Of the have's and the have-not's in our neighborhood, we had not, so perhaps for the first time in my life I managed, and felt good about myself, until that evening.

Dad and Sue Neil, the lady from across the street, talked to me about where I got that bike. I didn't answer. Of lessons, besides sharing, Dad taught me to say "I'm sorry" that day when I returned what I had taken. And what did I get? A bicycle.

Ravenswood was a special place when I was young—a place big enough to hold my imagination and small enough to feel safe. And Dad is no longer 47 to my 11, but rather 87 to 51. I call him every day to hear him say hello one more time.

Patty Cole is a writer and poet who lives on a 17-acre farm in western Chatham County with her husband, Hoyt.

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TRUTH

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convey a positive intent even when the truth may contain some difficult or painful parts.

Let's also think a little bit about our society and why lying and deception seem more and more commonplace, even endemic these days. We are taught to admire national leaders such as Washington and Lincoln. But what about our current national leaders? Do our politicians tell the truth? Recent jokes ring true. "You can tell when a politician is lying... his lips are moving!" Who else do we hear from other than our politicians? The media. How many of you feel that news commentators and advertisers tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? You're probably thinking something like, "only fools." It seems that

financial gain is the standard these days, not honesty or virtue. Think about the common statement: "Money talks!"

You have a big problem if you believe in modern advertising. Truth is so distorted these days that it takes a great deal of research to actually discover the facts about the products we're asked to purchase. Stephen Leacock defines advertising as "the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it." Levity aside, there is a great need for information which is unfortunately hard or impossible to obtain through the mass media. Factual information must be provided by do-gooders and non-profits such as the Environmental Working Group which researches an increasing number of areas: toxins in the environment, consumer goods, energy, farm, food and water.

Let's think about the difference in these

words. Truth-telling: honesty, virtue, trustworthy, ethical, righteous, honorable, moral, genuine and straightforward. From the Bible: "The truth will set you free." Lying: deceptive, false, fraudulent, cheating, corrupt, trickery, underhanded, unscrupulous, not trustworthy. From Plato: false words "infect the soul with evil."

Your choice is clear: deception and stress or truth and heart-felt happiness.

Need Advice? Send questions to BettyPhillips@BellSouth.net or 466 Eagle Point Road, Pittsboro 27312. Questions can be anonymous. Betty looks forward to hearing from you! Visit her website: www.bettyphillipspsychology.com.

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