



## Too many consumers deluded about debt

I think WRAL has the best local news channel. I enjoy the restaurant scores and the Consumer Reports segment.

Recently their news staff did public service interviews about household financial budgets. It tricked me at first and I laughed

hard at the simplistic approach but realized they were serious. Some people just don't understand one cannot spend money one does not have.

The budget expert explained it something like this:

Your budget has two columns. The left column consists of your incomes from all sources. This usually is only about three items. Add the column and record the bottom at the end month. That is your income.

List all your expense in the right column. The list will be much longer and must include all you purchases and charges. This is things like food, shelter, car expenses, heat and power, dues, clothing, recreation and liquor—everything you spend in one month.

The lady presenting the budget rules said—with a straight face—that one must not pretend they have more money than they see in the left column. That will only cause trouble.

By the same logic, she warned, one must include all expenses such as cell phone bills, cheeseburgers, diet pills, 32-ounce soda pop and taxes, credit cards and credit card interest.

The magic of this is, she said, if the right column is larger than the left column you will be in trouble.

At that point, I almost broke up laughing but realized again some adults today do not understand life. The unlimited use of credit and the disaster that follows foreclosure escapes them. After all, the air is filled with commercials providing even more credit to keep the cycle going.

Only a few months ago, someone said what the country needs is a recession to knock some sense into people. Well, we have the recession but WRAL has to explain that we still can't spend what we ain't got.

I doubt if anyone cares.

*R.L. Taylor is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He has been a newspaperman for more than 50 years, working as a reporter, editor and publisher.*

### Media Meditations

by R.L. Taylor



# Hometown superstar turns skunk

By Julian Sereno

I hate to kick somebody when they are down, but when it is John Edwards and the North Carolina Democratic establishment who formerly fawned over him, I can't resist.

I developed a personal dislike for Edwards in 2002 when he was a U.S. Senator and I was editor of *Chatham Crossroads*, the earlier incarnation of *Chatham County Line*. His office didn't return my phone calls.

As a senator, he got more press as a rising star in the Democratic party than for anything he accomplished, no doubt because of his good looks and good Southern manners. His voting record was solid conservative, and he denounced then-President Bill Clinton for his dog-like conduct concerning Monica Lewinski.

His voting record showed no evidence of any particular concern for poor people. He voted in favor of the bankruptcy "reform" pushed by the banking industry, which became law and makes it much more difficult and costly for bankrupt consumers to get back on their feet. And as we all know, most bankruptcies come about because of catastrophic medical expenses.

He voted to allow Bush to invade Iraq, then defended his vote a year later when it became clear that there were no weapons of mass destruction, the stated reason for the invasion. It was only later, as a presidential candidate appealing to left-leaning voters in Democratic primaries, that he declared that vote a mistake and apologized for it. Sound familiar?

As presidential candidate and then Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2004, he won over voters by showing a sunny personality and pleasant disposition. But when he ran again, he was an angry populist railing about the two Americas.

The UNC Law School, his alma mater, set up the Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity and made him its director. Supporters could make tax-deductible donations and he could use that money to travel around the country decrying the ills of poverty, neatly avoiding the morass of campaign finance law.

He built the largest and most expensive house in Chapel Hill, no small feat, and never disclosed anything about its carbon footprint, or how much OWASA water he used to keep his pool topped off during the most recent drought. As a presidential candidate, though, he did denounce SUVs and told people they needed to get rid of them.

The working people's candidate located his campaign



headquarters in Southern Village, not Siler City. He famously spent \$400 on a haircut, which comes to 16 campaign contributions of \$25 each. A real feel for working America.

The angry populist of 2008 didn't appeal to voters and he quit the campaign after early primary losses.

Then he got outed for being an adulterous skunk. The private aspect of Edward's personal peccadilloes don't bear comment. But in his public statements, he has lied—consistently, willfully and deliberately—each step of the way. As he issued his most recent personal statement and departed for Haiti, he stands as the most unpopular public figure in the history of polling.

Oddly, the *Raleigh News and Observer*, which was slow to report anything about his scandalous personal life to begin with, continues to treat him with kid gloves. A feature on him relies on quotes from sympathetic friends and continues the canard about service to the poor. Edward's most recent statement, characterized as "contrite and humble" in another *N&O* article, struck the *Washington Post* as "smarmy and self-serving." The most read article about Edwards on the *N&O* website, however, was the one asking for an apology from him for all of the loyal campaign volunteers whom he betrayed.

Edwards enablers need to apologize too.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line*

## BRIEFS

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fight back against this disease and let the community know that you can beat cancer."

Contact Natalie Leary at 919.334.7201 or [Natalie.Leary@cancer.org](mailto:Natalie.Leary@cancer.org), with any questions.

## Enjoy slow food on Valentine's Day

The Love u Lunch, on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 1-4 p.m. at Chatham Mills in Pittsboro, will benefit your heart.

Sponsored by Slow Food Triangle, the Abundance Foundation, and Loom, the profits will be used to fund a solar panel to light up the new Chatham Marketplace sign.

Come enjoy a wonderful lunch of local foods, thoughtfully prepared and joyfully served. Join in a

3:30 p.m. tour of the Mill as well. Cost is \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door, those these events usually sell out. Beer and wine available, or BYOB. Info or RSVP at [ILoveLunch@gmail.com](mailto:ILoveLunch@gmail.com)

## Studio Tour looking for artists

The Chatham Artists Guild is seeking artists to apply for the 18th Chatham Studio Tour to be held the first two weekends in December 2010. If you live or have your studio in Chatham, you are eligible to offer your work to our jury. For more info, go to: [www.chathamstudiotour.com/artists/application-files/New-Artist-Appl-2010.pdf](http://www.chathamstudiotour.com/artists/application-files/New-Artist-Appl-2010.pdf). You may also discuss the Tour with our Executive Director, Maggie Zwilling. Call Maggie at 1.336.581.3700 or email her at: [artstour@blast.com](mailto:artstour@blast.com).

## Free tax help for all ages

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) provides a free tax service beginning Feb. 1. Clients of any age whose family income is below \$60,000 are eligible for this service provided by IRS-certified volunteers under the Orange County Department on Aging's RSVP 55+ Volunteer Program. Appointments for the homebound or disabled can be made by special arrangement. Returns are filed electronically at no charge.

In Chatham County (appointments only): Pittsboro and Siler City, Wednesdays and Saturdays, Evelyn White, 542.4512. Carolina Meadows, Tuesdays and Saturdays, 942.4010 x596, leave message and phone number.

Got briefs? Email your news to [chathamcoline@mindspring.com](mailto:chathamcoline@mindspring.com)