

## Idioms & idiots

“I won’t there” looks fairly stupid in print but constantly spoken. In Eastern North Carolina it is considered perfectly good English spoken by well-educated people—including English teachers.

The word “won’t” is the abbreviation of the future “will not” so they are really saying, “I will not there” which makes no sense to out of state visitors. East of Raleigh the usage is as common as “hello, Tar Heel, and thank you Ma’am” and is delivered with such softness it is sometimes missed.

### Media Meditations

by R. L. Taylor



I was a sophomore in college before a friendly tidewater-Virginian asked for a translation of “I won’t there”. I agreed if he would tell me what the heck “hoye toyd” meant. That only proved there is a lot of speech diversity in America.

But there is no excuse for bad grammar. “I won’t there” is bad grammar because the tense is wrong. Another really annoying error explodes out of your television screen day and night. Golden voiced news stars often explain something today is different than yesterday.

Good gosh no, no, no. It is “different from” not “different than.”

I suppose I am being prudish but part of a newspaper’s job is to keep the language consistent to eliminate confusion. That includes the use of clichés that are annoying and dull. The “bottom line” is a dreadful example that can mean a lot of things. Why not use “the end”?

Of course the language needs to grow. Some words are just outside the door waiting to get in. “Ain’t” has almost made it in a sort of a renegade way. Good old-fashioned cussing is only on the cusp. The public accepts colorful language quickly but most of it fades away. Take “23 skidooo” as an example. “Jazz” has grown to adulthood and accurately describes a special type of music.

Local dialects can be troublesome to visitors. In West Virginia some years ago a highly educated young lady reporter from up North wrote a story about a small fire at the local fire station. She said the fire was started by a “sodaing arm.” It did not take us long to know she meant “soldering iron.”

Local knowledge is always essential in this business. Around there a fellow could get knocked in the head with a “tar arn.”

That is the value of a consistent and accurate spoken language that means the same all over the country. Lazy TV announcers who are only interested in what they look like on the screen reach millions of people who think if Sleazy Sarah says it on TV she must be right.

Back in high school, our English teacher never tried to break us of our dreadful twisting of “I won’t there.” I guess they all grew up east of Raleigh. That is not true today. From what I hear, changes are coming to some North Carolina’s English classes. One teacher says it’s her life ambition is to erase “I won’t there” from the language.

It will be hard. Long ago I discussed the problem with Ed Hodges, one of the most prolific writers around. I said “Ed, the kids are still saying ‘I won’t there.’”

He responded, “Hell, I won’t there either.”

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

## To the Editor,

The Chatham County Commissioners should consider tearing down the Pittsboro Courthouse Annex as opposed to spending \$3.2 million to renovate the interior.

- 1) It’s ugly.
- 2) A park in its place would complement the new Courthouse and the new Pittsboro Justice Center.

- 3) The upkeep on a park would cost less than maintenance of the ugly annex.
- 4) It’s ugly!

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

*Michael Strong, Chatham County*

## Fast Food On A Roll

by N.A. Booko

“Perfect blood pressure.” “Perfect cholesterol.” That is what my doctor said, “You never have to worry about cholesterol as long as you live”

As long as I live? One could lose their life tomorrow just in the pursuit of food!

A couple of years ago, I encountered fast free food, but with a different twist. I was on a roll: It was on a roll.

I waited at the Pittsboro traffic circle to go round the courthouse — a truck circled and I noticed something fall off the back. Round, about the size of a softball, it looked like a sweet potato. I proceeded to my destination, but as we all know, we come back to the traffic circle several times per visit when in Pittsboro.

The next trip around the circle, I had the whole thing to myself, no rush. There in the shoulder of the circle, next to courthouse lawn, was the object I had seen fall off the truck. Looked like a big sweet potato. I could see it clearly.

I kept thinking what a treat it would be for someone to pick it up, take it home and bake it! Three days went by before I circled again. There it was, still there. I circled again, just to make sure. Yep, a big sweet potato. I waited for a break in the traffic, ran over, swooped up the treasure. Took it home, baked it. Worst sweet potato I ever risked my life for.

Then there was Fast Free Food on a roll at Food Lion Pittsboro. You may not have noticed, but from the entrance of Food Lion out to U.S. 64 it is sloped slightly downhill. As I pulled out of my

parking space and headed out, I noticed a large white onion slowly rolling downhill. The smart thing to have done would be to stop the car and run after the onion. But no, I didn’t want to make some kind of a fool of myself. So, I decided the best thing to do was drive slow and let my van straddle the onion to keep anyone from running over it.

The onion, not being completely round, wobble-wobbled and I in turn had to do likewise driving. This put me right in the middle of the driveway. Honking horns and waving arms did not stop my pursuit of “my” free onion.

Yes, I finally got it. A beauty. Raw, it was wonderfully tart, pungent and moist. To eat a slice of big sweet white onion is like having access to one of nature’s greatest inventions. I deeply believe that sweet white onions possess magical and healthy properties. The icy pungent crunch as you bite into one is an exhilarating experience, unequaled by anything else. The same is not true with yellow onions that can burn the crapola out of your mouth and innards.

If you put a big slice of sweet white onion on a saucer and place it in a microwave on high, watch very closely. Frequently you can see sparks arise. Sparks that resemble those of kid’s Fourth of July sparklers. Not as showy, but they are there.

Disclaimer: Don’t be a fool. Get your potatoes, onions out of your garden, from your local Farmer’s Market or favorite food store. Stay out of the highway — road kill is not pretty.

*N.A. Booko lives and writes in Chatham County.*

## Neo con men strike again

by Julian Sereno

Less that a week after President Obama’s inauguration, ugly right wing attack ads are back on TV. This time they are trashing Chuck Hagel, Obama’s nomination for Defense Secretary. The ad accuses Hagel of being weak on defense, warning gravely that he will gut the U.S. Military, and project weakness with geopolitical adversaries such as Iran and North Korea.

Hagel, a former Republican U.S. Senator from Nebraska, is a Vietnam combat veteran who still has shrapnel in his body from his service to his country. And that cuts to the core of their problems with him.

Hagel is a brave man who fought for his country. As a result of that experience, he is reluctant to send others to war because he knows the horror that it invariably engenders.

That puts him at odds with the Neo Conservatives — the brain trust behind the invasion of Iraq 10 years ago — who favor the use of military force as a central feature of U.S. foreign policy. The Neo Cons, who include public officials such as former Vice President Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, and journalists William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer, never served in the military let alone in combat, although all were of an age where they could have served in Vietnam. Cheney took five student deferments to avoid getting drafted; Wolfowitz, Bolton, Kristol and Krauthammer likewise took student deferments during Vietnam. Krauthammer, 18 in 1968, the year Hagel was injured, was still years away from his paralyzing accident.

All have been called “chicken hawks” because their bellicose beliefs are matched by their physical cowardice. They believe

strongly in war as the principal tool of U.S. foreign policy, they just don’t want their own lilly-white rear ends, or those of their children, getting shot at.

Disclosure: I, too, was 18 in 1968, and took a 2-S student deferment when I registered for the draft. By that time I also thought the Vietnam War was a really bad idea, although I didn’t start going to peace marches until 1969, when my next-door neighbor, Peter Moldenhauer, also my age, enlisted in the Marine Corp and lost his life in combat two weeks after arriving in Vietnam. As a college student, those I loathed the most were the likes of Cheney et al, who claimed they supported the troops and complained about peace demonstrators interfering with their right to an education. Their idea of supporting the troops was to let our soldiers die anonymously and unnoticed as they went about their business.

I surmise that none of those who coughed up the money for the ads trashing Chuck Hegel ever served in the armed forces, nor did their children or grandchildren. What we can say for certain about them is that they, unwilling to put their names at the bottom of their smears, like their fellow Neo Conservative ideologues, are cowards.

The tag line of the ad is for viewers to call Senator Kay Hagen and demand that she vote against the confirmation of Hagel. So this message is to Senator Hagen — please vote to confirm Chuck Hagel as Secretary of Defense. I vote in North Carolina, and you know what my name is.

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

## ACT!

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reform’s positive social changes in Chatham County would in turn elevate everyone’s quality of life.

Let’s consider Mercedes, a holistic healer who multitasks to make a living and who knows how to keep a backyard garden. She has a 12-year -old daughter, Anita, who attends one of the county’s schools. Anita is a well-behaved girl who does what she can to keep up with her school work and to stay afloat navigating the competitive social world of middle school. Anita is a U.S. citizen. Mercedes is not. Although the family lives modestly, Anita believes the U.S., is the land of possibilities. Chatham County is the only home Anita has ever known. After school, Anita acts as her mother’s interpreter as the two deal with the English speaking world.

Mercedes also has fallen in love with this country. Here, she says, she became her own woman, and learned to be her own caregiver. When Anita’s father left the picture both mother and child had to wade alone the murky waters of poverty. In the process Mercedes has hardened: “We each have to care for our own needs. We’ve got no relatives here.” Mercedes has no choice but to pull herself up by her own bootstraps. She does so every day she puts food on the table.

Mercedes and Anita rent a humble, rundown trailer that ought to be retired; given the drafty winter cold, the owner clearly feels the place doesn’t merit improvements. They have no car parked on

their driveway. While visiting Mercedes in her home we found the boldness of the mice foraging in the kitchen to be distracting.

Since our world will certainly be sustained by the children of undocumented migrants, wouldn’t it be better to prepare them well for the task? Wouldn’t we all benefit from their accomplishments?

As we sat listening to Obama’s inauguration’s speech, we thought of Anita, as he avowed that: “We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American, she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own.”

Obama continued: “Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome these thriving, hopeful immigrants, who still see America as the land of opportunity.” In this respect, some local administrators think that denying Driver Licenses to eligible deferred-action applicants makes good American sense (N&O, 01/20/2013, p. 3-B). The opposite decision might truly demonstrate American resolve. For we need qualified, fully insured, financially responsible drivers in our roads! If these law abiding drivers think America is the best place on earth, our message should be: “Good, and with this license, we need you to help us keep it that way.”

*Nora Haenn teaches Anthropology and International Studies at NC State University. Luis Melodelgado lives and Works in Pittsboro, his interests are childhood education and community outreach.*