

OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

Commission will work to resolve problem at Tin Shed

As an elected Commissioner and supporter of Lacey Queen and The Tin Shed, I feel it is important to comment on this situation. Mind you, these are my comments and are not necessarily reflective of the board.

Lacey's business is a representation of the importance of entrepreneurship, and the impact small businesses have on our local economy.



Matthew GRINDSTAFF

This is what hard work and tenacity look like.

Since this unfortunate situation came to our attention, we have sought to help get this matter resolved.

Because the board of commissioners does not set health code – this is done by the state – we have served as advocates for helping move the process of a solution forward.

In doing so, the board wrote a letter of support for the Tin Shed.

We have also encouraged the cooperation and collaboration between the local health department – within all legal limits and state code requirements – and the state to help bring resolution to this matter.

Mitchell County has no intentions of hindering local small business growth for The Tin Shed or any other business. Just the opposite. We advocate for and encourage this growth. We are fans of this and all small businesses in our county.

We will continue to do everything possible to help bring this matter to a resolution. We wish nothing but success for Lacey and The Tin Shed.

Matthew "Vern" Grindstaff is chair of the Mitchell County Board of Commissioners.

GUEST COLUMN

The story of Luther Street and the barber

BY RICHARD GRINDELAND

Luther Street was, at one time, the "boss man" over many men at Tennessee Eastman.

His size and strength enhance his commanding presence and he didn't mind in the least a confrontation with any of his men.

He had to have an iron will and nerves of steel as well as powerful physique to back up his "words" in order to manage his rough-neck crew of men.

On the side, Luther farmed and raised a sizable allotment of tobacco. One year he was in line to unload his tobacco to sell to the Boone Tobacco Warehouse when another truck tried to jump line in front of him.

You're tromping on dangerous ground if you jump line at the tobacco warehouse.

Luther got out of his truck first and the other man followed suit. Luther "spoke" with a sharp right to the other man's chin. That seemed to settle the issue, or so Luther thought.

A few years later, Luther noticed he was in definite need of a haircut and shave after work, so he stopped at a nearby barbershop.

When his turn came, he sat down in the chair and was given a good haircut. But when his face was lathered for his shave, the barber held up a newly sharpened straight razor directly under his nose and said, "Don't you remember me? I'm the guy you slugged at the Boone Tobacco Warehouse."

Luther knew he was a goner, but the barber proceeded to give him his shave without any mishaps. Luther paid him and left. He never returned to that establishment.

He had escaped unscathed once, but to test his luck again might prove to be the "undoing" of the connection of his neck to his head.

He surely did not want to find out.

The late Richard Grindeland was a 30-year teacher and 20-year pastor in Mitchell County.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote against all 6 amendments

To the editor:

Voters will be asked Tuesday, Nov. 6, to vote for or against six proposed changes to our North Carolina State Constitution. This extremist General Assembly is attempting to bring permanent changes to our constitution through confusing, vaguely and poorly written rhetoric intended to confuse and divide voters. We deserve better than this from our elected officials.

One of the more blatant ironies of these proposed changes is our current legislators do not seem to have read or studied our constitution as it already stands. For instance, "Beneficent provision for the poor, the unfortunate, and the orphan is one of the first duties of a civilized state." This is from Article XI, Section 4, of the NC State Constitution. If passed, however, the Income Tax Amendment will provide a permanent tax shift, which will benefit the rich while placing an unfair burden on the poor and working class. It will also hurt vital funding the public needs for roads, schools and natural disasters. We deserve better than this.

The General Assembly, through the trickery of the "Elections and Ethics" and "Judicial Appointment" amendments hopes to create gridlock for our election process and take power away from the voters to choose their judges. If passed, our legislators could fill judicial vacancies with their friends and citizens will have little input in picking judges. The separation of the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches will be diminished. We deserve better.

While the "Voter ID" amendment may seem innocuous, it has proven to be an unnecessary piece of legislation. In Article I, Section 10, of our constitution, "All Elections Shall Be Free." Past voter ID laws in have been thrown out by the courts for discriminating against black voters with "surgical precision." This could also prevent an estimated 300,000 folks from voting, including disabled, veteran and elderly voters. And while our legislators might tell you other states require voter ID, the fact is Mississippi is the only state with a constitutional amendment requiring voter ID.

The so-called "Victims' Rights" and "Hunting and Fishing" amendments are redundant and were introduced by various lobbyists who wish to divide voters and incite paranoia. Our constitution currently protects hunters and crime victims. These vaguely written amendments open the door to many interpretations that may have a negative impact on our citizens and environment.

These amendments are a bad deal for North Carolinians no matter what you look like, where you live or the party you support. All living NC governors – Republican and Democrat – have condemned these amendments publicly. Our General Assembly is playing fast and loose with our democracy. Legislators have toyed with the language and refused to provide plain intent as to the impact of these dishonest additions to our constitution. Current legislators will have free reign to fill in the details later however they wish. We deserve better.

Vote against all six.

**Robin Acuff Ellis
President,
Yancey-Mitchell NAACP**

Hise urged to publish accomplishments

To the editor:

When Joe Sam Queen was our Senator, he would list his accomplishments for the term in this newspaper. Would Sen. Ralph Hise please do the same?

All I know is he sponsored Amendment 1, which discriminated against non-traditional couples. How much did defending this action costs the taxpayers? He then supported the infamous "Bathroom Bill" that discriminated against another minority group. This bill cost our state hundreds of millions in lost revenue due to canceled events. How much did this cost the taxpayers in legal expenses?

Our two counties, Mitchell and Yancey, are home to more than 500 working artists, not including writers and musicians. The Advantage West Region of NC, our 22 western coun-

ties, had a total expenditure of \$239.8 million from the art industry. Revenues to local governments were \$11.5 million. These are 2015 figures. Locally, Penland School of Craft brings in more than 1,500 students and directly employees more than 65 residents. Toe River Arts provides education for local children as well as support for local artists. What has Sen. Hise done to support our arts? Why has he never attended events at either Penland or Toe River Arts?

Mayland Community College is paying Sen. Hise \$24 an hour. What does he do to earn that? I have asked repeatedly, and no one seems to know. When does he find time to work for Mayland since he is always in Raleigh? I think people need answers to these questions if he expects their support. I know I do.

**Joseph O. Schnauffer
Spruce Pine**

We are losing our capacity for empathy

To the editor:

What we witnessed in the Kavanaugh hearings and President Trump's refusal to end the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia after the murder of a journalist who lived in the U.S. reveal a disturbing, underlying truth about our society: We are losing our capacity for empathy.

What allows one human being to ignore the pain and suffering of another? For example, Brent Kavanaugh ignoring the pain and suffering of Christine Ford, who experienced sexual assault, or Trump ignoring the pain and suffering of the Saudi journalist's fiancé just so the U.S. could sell billions of dollars' worth of weapons the Saudi government before the Russians and Chinese could. She was waiting outside the Saudi embassy in Istanbul so they could get married. He was abducted, tortured and dismembered within a couple of hours of entering the embassy. He happened to expose corruption in the Saudi government.

An economy such as ours, hell-bent on profit, has, over the decades, turned us into people who "hanker after" the next big thing. What's the next hyped-up, entertaining shiny experience or object we can consume? In the process, our humanity gets left behind, so we become mean, small-minded people bickering across a hearing room or we play politics with the murder of a person and focus on the money involved in a weapons sale.

We must stop all weapons research and development and stop selling them on the open market. The U.S. is the world's largest arms exporter. Two of our biggest customers are Saudi Arabia and Israel. These two countries are committing what amounts to genocide on the people of Yemen and the Palestinians, respectively.

Both men and women need to put aside politics and listen to the pain and suffering of the victims of sexual assault. This is the only true path to forgiveness and reconciliation between an offender and victim.

Almost 2,000 immigrant children are living in tent cities on the Texas border who have been taken from their parents. This is nothing more than government-sponsored child abuse. The moral imperative here should compel us to welcome strangers, refugees and those seeking asylum in our communities.

Let us follow this imperative and recapture authentic, compassionate relationships with each other as well as the natural world and thereby recognize our true, God-given dignity we possess as children of God.

**Jim Plato
Penland**

If Tin Shed closes, we all suffer

To the editor:

Thank you for your story on Tin Shed and Lacey Queen's continuing challenges. I am sure this story touches many in our local community, and it would be a huge loss if she has to close.

Since opening, the Tin Shed has purchased and served my produce. In turn, I buy more of my ingredients from Griffith's in Tipton Hill, and we produce enough that we are sometimes able to share with local food banks. So as you can see, there would

be downstream effects from a closure. And I am just one of the many farmers Lacey supports.

What's also troubling is the state inspector responsible is brand new to the job, not just to the mountains. During an unrelated recent experience I had with the inspector, a second, seasoned inspector from Yancey County was brought in for training and advice – and this was a much simpler situation. So in the case of The Tin Shed, we have an inexperienced official who is new to the role, overturning approvals rendered by the previous inspector. This does not seem to represent the interests and needs of our county.

I am glad our county commissioners and county manager are doing what they can to resolve this. I also call on Sen. Hise and Rep. Dobson to represent the agricultural industry here in Mitchell County so we can succeed. We need our state officials to speak up for us when we need it most.

If The Tin Shed closes, we will all suffer a significant loss, and this will set a terrible precedent for future agricultural businesses in Mitchell County.

**Matt Mazzuckelli
Bakersville**

Expanding Medicaid helps nearly everyone

To the editor:

In 2013 our General Assembly decided to reject Medicaid expansion and the millions of dollars per day that would have come with it. That decision has jeopardized rural hospitals and denied health coverage to hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians.

Rural areas of North Carolina have higher rates of drug and alcohol use, suicide, teen pregnancy and preventable hospitalizations. Rural residents are more likely to be uninsured than urban residents and benefit more from Medicaid expansion.

Rural hospitals are much less likely to close if located in a state that expanded Medicaid. According to the UNC Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, 40 percent of rural NC hospitals are in the red. Five hospitals closed and two lost critical services like maternity and labor wards. Would Mission be for sale if Medicaid was expanded? According to the NC Justice Center, more than 13,000 jobs could be added to the 80 North Carolina rural counties if the General Assembly expanded Medicaid. Some of these jobs would be in Yancey and Mitchell counties.

According to a 2013 study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Urban Institute, approximately 23,000 North Carolina veterans would receive Medicaid coverage under an expanded program.

Studies from Ohio, a state that expanded Medicaid, show that providing coverage so that people could take care of their health needs first allowed them to find work or better employment later once they were healthy. Medicaid expansion would provide a path for people to access medications, screenings and treatments rather than rely on the emergency room. It would minimize risks for personal bankruptcy and medical debt.

Polls show 66 percent of voters support Medicaid expansion. So, why haven't our legislators expanded Medicaid? Why have they not provided health care to millions of North Carolinians while helping our rural hospital?

**Bob Carey
Burnsville**

MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL

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Our Mission

The Mitchell News-Journal is published with pride for the people of Mitchell and adjoining counties by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens, Georgia.

We believe strong newspapers build strong communities – "Newspapers get things done!" Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers.

This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

Tom Wood, Chairman **Dink NeSmith, President**
Rachel Hoskins, Regional Publisher
rchoskins@thefranklinpress.com

Periodical postage paid in Spruce Pine
Regular yearly subscription rates: \$27 in Mitchell, Avery & Yancey Co.; \$37 for seasonal residents of Mitchell County; \$47 for out-of-county
Postmaster: Send address changes to: Mitchell News-Journal, P.O. Box 339, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. In the event of typographical errors in advertisements, the Mitchell News-Journal is responsible only for the space occupied by the actual error.



LETTERS POLICY

The Mitchell News-Journal welcomes letters to the editor about issues of local importance. Deadline to submit a letter for publication in the coming week's edition is 5 p.m. Friday. All writers are expected to abide by the following policy:

- Letters must be exclusive to the News-Journal;
- Letters must include the writer's full name, street address and daytime telephone number for verification. The writer's name and city of residence will be published;
- Letters must be original – no photocopies;
- Letters should be 500 words or fewer;
- We do not publish poems, excerpts from other publications, lengthy submissions of scripture or letters signed by groups or multiple individuals;
- Letters endorsing or criticizing a business will not be published;
- We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity, style and libel. Publication of any letter is at the discretion of the News-Journal.