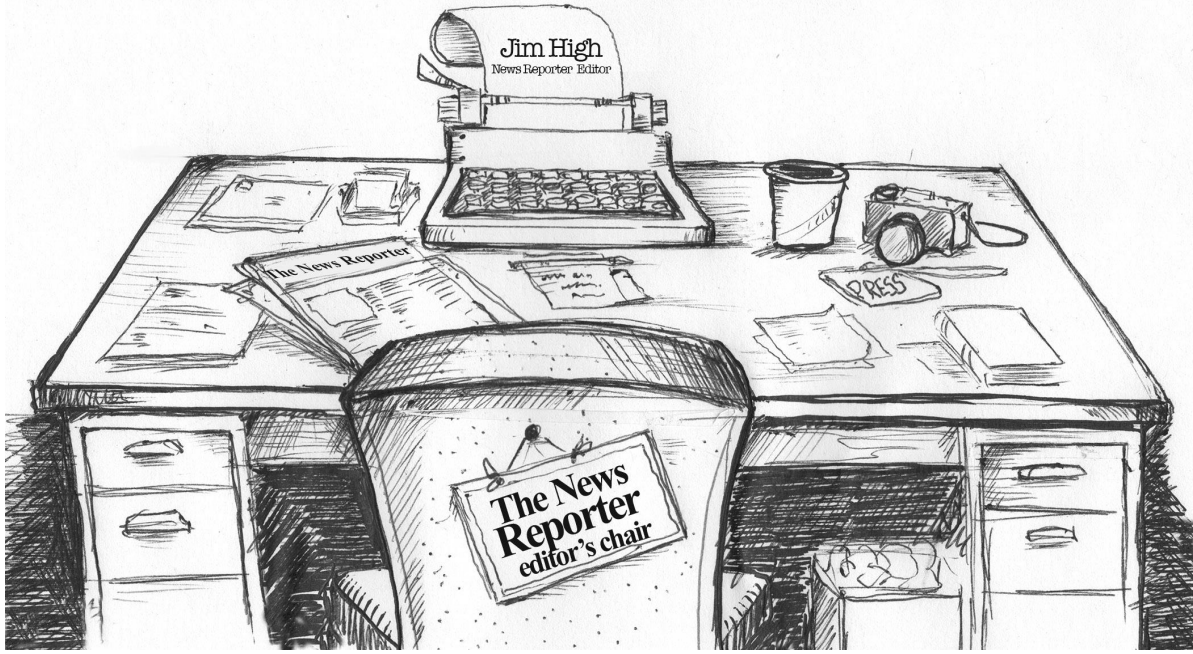


Tabor-Loris Tribune OPINIONS... SERVING TABOR CITY, NC AND LORIS, SC

Godspeed...

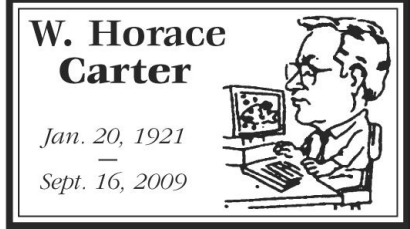
James C. "Jim" High Jan. 27, 1933 - Jan. 2, 2019



Client was higher priority than daughter

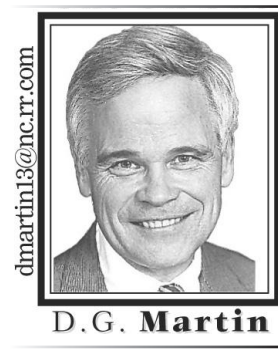
First published Aug. 19, 1998 Sometimes there is a commercial on television that really hits home. One such impressive message really made me think seriously when I saw it a couple of times on one of the local stations recently. Two small children were standing around their mother in the living room of their home. The mother was kind of frantic as she talked on the telephone and busied herself leaving messages about her agenda that day. Obviously from the conversations she was a busy attorney, as most of them are. The little girl cautiously asked her mother if she would take them to the beach for the day. "No, I can't do it! I have a client who is expecting me and I have to meet with him," he mother answered rather curtly.

Disappointed the little girl looked at her mother and asked the timely question that would tear your heart out: "Mama, what do I have to do to be a client?: she asked in deadly seriousness. The mother was startled. She paused only a moment and you could see that she was reflecting on that question from her daughter. "All right! I'm leaving for a day at the beach in five minutes. Everyone who wants to go with me better be ready to go," she said as the happy youngsters scrambled for bathing suits and sunscreen. Now isn't that a lesson for all of us parents? We have time for business and work, but not enough for the young people who cry out for attention at least equal to that of a client.



An Old Testament prophet

While I have been traveling up and down North Carolina's roads in search of local eateries, UNC Law School professor Gene Nichol has been traveling the same roads looking for something else. I was gathering material for my book, "North Carolina's Roadside Eateries," and enjoying bountiful helpings of warm comfort food in the company of well-fed, well-clothed, cheerful people experiencing the luxury of a secure and happy time with friends and family. Meanwhile, Nichol was exploring a darker side of North Carolina life, the plight of people suffering from poverty in our state, for his new book, "The Faces of Poverty in North Carolina: Stories from Our Invisible Citizens." He was standing in the cold in the woods in small towns like Hickory where people were camping in tents and flimsy shelters, exposed to the weather and other dangers. Nichol was also standing in line early in the morning in places like Fayetteville where people gather early in the mornings for help in securing shelter or food or critical health care treatment. Finding the depths of sorry conditions resulting from widespread poverty, Nichol rings out like an Old Testament prophet challenging those of us who are comfortable, well-clothed, and well-sheltered to face the truth and accept responsibility for this suffering. Like the prophets, he condemns those of us who really don't want to know about the poor, hungry, sleepless, ill, and deprived. Or about those who suffer from gang violence, educational discrimination, and poor or non-existent health care. All these things are so interconnected and reinforcing that, even if we cared enough to try to help, there are no quick and easy fixes that can win a war on poverty. Who are these 1.5 million North Carolinians stricken by poverty? Nichol answers, "They are not the folks on the side of the road asking for handouts. They're our neighbors, the ones who wait on us or take care of our kids or sit down the row at church on Sunday. They are usually employed. They are almost always embarrassed. Frequently, they once had better jobs. But now



they work longer hours for poorer wages and with fewer benefits. Their stories can crush. Parents willingly sacrifice their dignity, their health, and their well-being for their kids. Children are robbed of the ability to thrive and the joy of life by the ravages and the fears of hunger. These are folks who make choices daily that shouldn't have to be made in a nation of surpassing resources. They are forced into choices that most of us cannot readily contemplate. I know I can't." Nichol has numbers at his fingertips to show the dismal conditions in our state and many of its localities. A 2015 survey found that 21 percent of the state's residents "suffered from food hardship." Poverty is not just concentrated in our small towns and rural areas. The same survey found the Greensboro-High Point statistical area was the "hungriest in the United States." An earlier study had found that "Winston-Salem was the nation's worst large community for childhood food hardship among kids five and under." Nichol's book is full of numbers that confirm the tragedy that surrounds us. But he says, they are only numbers. "Ripe for the forgetting. Poverty, though, isn't a number. It is a draining of the body, a wound to the soul, an injury that divides and diminishes, as it rejects. The numbers alone miss that." Solutions? Nichol concentrates on describing the extent and dimensions of poverty in our state rather than proposing solutions. An exception is his assertion that by failing to adopt expanded Medicaid, our state government has condemned a host of its citizens to early death or disability. He criticizes leaders of both political parties for not addressing the monumental poverty crisis he describes. Although there are no simple, obvious, or quick solutions, many readers of Nichol's passionate presentation and Old Testament-style prophecy will feel a compelling call to action. Note: The book's moving introduction is available on line at: https://uncpress.flexpub.com/preview/the-faces-of-poverty-in-north-carolina

Get ready for smaller school districts

The average public-school district in the United States enrolls about 3,700 students, according to a recent Governing magazine analysis. In North Carolina, the average school district enrolls more than 12,500 students. Only six other states in the nation exceed North Carolina in this regard. (South Carolina's average school district size is 8,759, the same magazine reports, with only ten other states exceeding that number. - Editor) Although North Carolina politicians and activists normally exhibit a great deal of interest in state education comparisons, most either ignore the fact that we stick out like a sore thumb on school governance or attempt, rather awkwardly, to label it virtue rather than an oddity. For example, when it comes to the gargantuan districts in Wake (enrolling 159,000 students this school year) and Mecklenburg (146,000), increasing numbers of parents — many residing in suburban communities or hailing from other states where multiple districts per county are the norm — seem skeptical that countywide school governance serves the interests of their children and neighborhoods. Some are explicitly demanding the creation of smaller, more manageable districts. Others aren't waiting for policy-makers to catch up with their preferences, opting instead for chartered public schools (each of which has its own governance board) or private alternatives if they can swing them. In the face of these developments, the education establishment offers two defenses: cost and race. Countywide school districts reduce the cost per student for delivering education, the argument goes, while combating re-segregation. Neither argument can withstand close scrutiny, which is why the powers-that-be keep trying to change the subject as quickly as they can. This strategy isn't going to work in the long run. It would be wiser to prepare for a future in which North Carolina public schools are organized differently, with multiple districts coexisting in at least a dozen or so of our counties. I believe this future is inevitable.

The efficiency argument for big districts just doesn't comport with the available evidence. While consolidating sparsely populated rural districts into larger entities probably did exploit economies of scale to reduce operating cost per pupil, there is very little evidence of such benefits when school districts run into the tens of thousands of students. As for race, browbeating recent arrivals from high-scoring states such as Massachusetts (3,300 students per district) and (Continued On Page 5)

Passing's too soon in new year

"Where are you going?" Those words tumbled sleepily from my sweet wife, just hours into the new year. We had both watched the ball drop in Times Square on TV, or tried. Smoke from fireworks, I presume, blocked the camera's view of the big crystal ball and its iconic descent into a new year. We had no plans to rise early on the holiday, but I got word that a Tabor City Fire Department escort would accompany former Fire Chief Jerry Watts' body from McLeod Loris hospital to Inman Ward Funeral Home, and felt compelled to document the moment. "Working," Amy would say later. "You've started the year working, that's what you'll be doing all year." Superstition, or myth because it's so often true? I don't know. I do know that the year that began with the loss of one public servant has quickly claimed another, The News Reporter Publisher Emeritus James C. "Jim" High taken just a day later. My memories of both will be shaped by some of my last encounters, both brief, both friendly, if different. As fire chief and politician, Watts was also a former Tabor City Council member, many of our conversations ended with a hint that there was more to come. In our last conversation, some months ago at Coleman's restaurant, Watts talked a bit of politics, and with a gleam in his eye I'd seen many times before, hinted that there was more to say, just wait for it. Revelation or not, I'll miss those conversations. Through all sorts of circumstances we had remained friendly, if not close friends, Watts part of the fabric that makes, now made, Tabor City. To call Jim High part of the fabric that makes, now made,

Columbus County, is clearly an understatement. For more than six decades he shepherded the county's largest newspaper, and leaves behind a legacy as one of the state's best community publications, always evolving, now under the leadership of his son Les. That legacy includes a commitment to public service, to making the community better, commitments Jim High embraced, as has his son. Mr. High, the prefix earned and deserved, was simply one of the nicest people you could know. It's a tribute to his character and leadership that his newspaper and this one have enjoyed a remarkably close relationship in a competitive world for more than seven decades. It was a collaborative effort between those newspapers, the late Willard Cole at The News Reporter and Tribune founder the late W. Horace Carter, that made this publication "The First Pulitzer Prize Winning Weekly Newspaper In The United States," a fact we proudly display on our front page each week. We each had our own press when that Pulitzer was awarded in 1952, recognition of dogged reporting and editorial writing that challenged the place of the Ku Klux Klan in Columbus and Horry counties. Mr. High's newspaper made the transition to offset printing first, which eventually made this newspaper not only a friendly competitor but a customer. We still print on their Goss Community press, an arrangement that has proven to be mutually beneficial. More importantly, those relationships have endured and grown. Jim High, in some of our last conversations, called me a friend. I know he was mine, and I will be eternally grateful.



Tabor-Loris Tribune W. HORACE CARTER - FOUNDER January 20, 1921 - September 16, 2009 Our Staff DEUCE NIVEN GENERAL MANAGER/EDITOR JENN BOYD CAUSEY ADVERTISING/REPORTER PENNY HOLMES ADVERTISING DIRECTOR/CIRCULATION

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- 1998 - NCPA JOURNALISM CONTEST/SERIOUS COLUMNS 1999 - NCPA JOURNALISM CONTEST/INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING 1999 - NCPA JOURNALISM CONTEST/SERIOUS COLUMNS 1999 - NCPA JOURNALISM CONTEST/FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY 1999 - NCPA JOURNALISM CONTEST/FEATURE WRITING

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