

Viewpoint

"Although I disagree with everything you say, I will defend unto death your right to say it"

Schools should rethink hiring process

While his colleague to the north is being tarred and feathered over the fiscal unravelling of the Iredell-Statesville Schools, Bruce Boyles, superintendent of Iredell's other school district, watches with sadness.

But Boyles, beginning his second year as the Mooreville Graded School District's top administrator, is being careful to remain officially detached from the ugly situation.

He politely declines to talk about the suspension of Iredell's Statesville Supt. Howard Coleman, saying, "It's probably best for me not to comment at this time on what our colleagues in the Iredell-Statesville Schools are doing."

Adds Boyles, "A lot of folks have asked me about it, but I wouldn't want to do anything that would damage our relationship, because it's a good relationship."

Boyles' promotion from assistant superintendent to superintendent just over a year ago was an example of what Iredell-Statesville should have done: Promote from within. Instead, the I-S Schools have a recent habit of bringing in outsiders and passing up strong candidates already in the system.

Some feel that keeping the job within the "family" would have slowed the revolving door that first brought in Jesse Register several years ago to oversee the newly combined Statesville and Iredell systems, and then led to the hirings of two more outsiders: Joe Sinclair and Coleman.

Instead, the system has incurred a poor track record of bringing in superintendents who, for whatever reason, are in charge when the finances get mucked up, then leave.

And leave is what Coleman will do, whether sooner or later. He has been suspended from his job as chief administrator of a school system that is in financial disarray and wracked with employee dissatisfaction, and even though he is sitting home still drawing a paycheck, his sense of pride will surely prompt his resignation soon.

Of course, that's what the board of education is hoping for. A suspension was the members' only avenue to take last week, until the results of an independent investigation of school system finances are learned, but the board hopes Coleman will do the noble thing and step down.

No matter what the investigation reveals, he will never be a trustworthy leader again with the system, because he was in charge when much of the current mess occurred. If Coleman truly cares about the county schools, as he professes, he must resign immediately and allow the healing process to begin.



Giving hope and help

The writer is N.C. Volunteer Recruiter for the Guardian Ad Litem Program.

By JEAN HARWELL

No child should ever have to suffer the horror of abuse or neglect, but unfortunately some do — even in Iredell County. National statistics show that one child in three will be abused by the age of 18. The terrified children, who survive these acts of violence, abandonment, or neglect, end up in a court system that is both baffling and confusing to them.

But there is hope and help in court, through the local Guardian Ad Litem Program, for Iredell County's abused, neglected and abandoned children. Administered through the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Guardian Ad Litem Program recruits and trains community volunteers to advocate in court for the best interests of abused, neglected, and abandoned children as these children's cases move through the court system.

Yes, the child has an attorney advocate, who represents his or her legal rights, but the Guardian Ad Litem focuses on just that child's best interest, then advocates for the services the child needs. The Guardian Ad Litem interviews everyone involved in a child's life — the caregivers, the teachers, the counselors, the parents, the child, etc. — and then makes recommendations in a written report to the judge.

Because the judge cannot interview all these people outside the courtroom, the judge must depend on the Guardian Ad Litem. It is as if the Guardian Ad Litem becomes the eyes and ears of the judge and the voice of the child.

Last year, almost 16,000 children in North Carolina were represented by 3,500 Guardians Ad Litem, yet another 3,600 children went to court without someone to represent them.

Make chips go faster; try some dip

Preface: For a long time I have been known as a journalist who can find the "facts behind the facts." Sometimes the facts I report are so far behind what other journalists report that my facts seem to be "made up."

Often, a recent litigation will attest, the factuality of my facts are called into question. Few people know this, but it was this sort of vile character assassination that led to the Spanish-American war recently fought in Grenada.

I have unnamed sources who also link it to scurry so I make this appeal to all who claim to covet the truth, let's try to end these attacks of professional jealousy and get back to doing what we, as respected reporters, are in a unique position to do: work only 2 hours a day.

In two nearly simultaneous landmark announcements, microchip makers from both Intel and IBM have revealed startling breakthroughs in microchip technology. Intel announced that they have pioneered a method of reducing the size and increasing the speed of silicon transistors even further and IBM said that they have perfected a manner of altering silicon to increase the speed with which electrons can flow through transistors on the chip.

Either of these two advances alone would have marked a massive leap forward in chip technology. But taken together, and there is no way to really overstate this, they are nothing short of physical proof that God exists.

While microchips are often called the "brains" of the computer, they actually serve as the "spoons" of the computer, though they look nothing like real spoons. They are little square wafers, like expensive Cheese Nips, which are jammed onto a bigger square called a motherboard. The motherboard, as is so common today is rarely present, and sometimes only sees the



Corey Walcott

sent their best interests. Another 1,000 community volunteers statewide must step forward before these children's best interests can be represented in court.

Today the situation is critical in Iredell County, with 150 abused and neglected children in the court system and only 15 Guardians Ad Litem. No child in Iredell County should have to go to court without someone to speak for his or her best interests — a Guardian Ad Litem. You can become the help and hope for one of these children in court. Make a commitment today to become a Guardian Ad Litem.

No special experience is required, but you must be a mature adult and pass a criminal background check. After receiving 25-30 hours of free training, you are sworn in and given your first case. Once the initial interviews are completed, a commitment of 10-15 hours a month is usually all it takes to maintain the case until the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. A local support staff is available to assist the Guardians Ad Litem.

Many of the Guardians Ad Litem are employed full time, yet they find time to represent a child in court. On a personal note: I am employed to travel the State of North Carolina as the Guardian Ad Litem Volunteer Recruiter. I also serve as a Guardian Ad Litem volunteer in my home county (Brunswick). It feels so good when the children I represent find safe, permanent homes, where they can finally live their lives.

You, too, can bring help and hope to a child in court. Become a Guardian Ad Litem in Iredell County. Call Sherri Lott, District Administrator, at the local office: (704) 878-4208.

For information or a referral to a local program anywhere in North Carolina, call 1-800-982-4041. Or you can reach Jean Harwell at 910-278-4417.

chips a few times a year. Regardless, the chip supposedly consists of millions of tiny interconnected transistors which perform the amazing function of opening and closing. That's it. That is the miracle of artificial intelligence — tiny gates that open and close really fast.

Intel's new transistors function at 1,000 times the speed of current transistors, and are much smaller. One complete transistor is reported to be just 20 nanometers wide. A nanometer is about 1/10,000 the width of a human hair. So in my estimation, the scientists who invented this must be world-class squinters. One component of the transistor is a mere 3 atoms wide. An atom is like a paramecium, except an atom has electrons instead of all those disgusting little cilia hairs all over it. Why doesn't someone tell the paramecium that it looks like a miniature Wooki and buy it a razor?

IBM's big development was perfecting a method for stretching, or "straining" silicon. This technology takes advantage of the tendency for atoms inside compounds to align with other atoms due to peer pressure. It just so happens that electrons can flow with less resistance when atoms are aligned. So IBM, in a move that still has ethicists spinning, started rumors and offered cigarettes and rides in fancy cars to impressionable atoms. It was not long until they were aligned and electrons were really scooting. Without any reengineering, the chips performed 35 percent faster, but were also found to be more likely to drop out of school.

All of these advances help to sustain Moore's Law, the 1965 prediction of Intel founder Gordon Moore which states that chip speed will double every 18 months. Of course, he also predicted that either the album "A Sentimental Date with Perry Como" or the 1965 AMC Marlin would be heralded as the 8th wonder of the world.

Lake Norman-area resident Corey Walcott's column appears every other Wednesday on the Tribune's Viewpoint page.

Shake, rattle and roll

Echoes of the Past

Editor's note: This is part 98 in a continuing series on the "Recollections of Mooreville in the 1880's," as chronicled during the 1930's by the Rev. J.I. Goodman of Fleming, Colo. in a weekly column in the old Mooreville Enterprise newspaper. This series is compiled and edited by Iredell historian O.C. Stonestreet III.

September 5, 1935

Last Saturday was the last day of August, memorable for a terrible disaster in our Southland. How many of you recall it? The Charleston Earthquake of August 31, 1886. Echoes of that event doubtless come to most of us who were living in your community at that time. It made a permanent impression on the mind of one young man who was visiting a family of dear friends near Mooreville that night.

The early evening was still and bright with moonlight, when, we retired from the supper table to the parlor. (There were parlors in those days.)

About nine o'clock we heard what sounded like a terrific wind; the home shook noticeably. We rushed for the outside, expecting a storm. All was bright and still. Not all. When I stepped into the yard, the quaking of the earth was plainly perceptible. Although no earthquake had come into my experience, this was recognized as one. For several nights occasional shocks were discernable.

Wednesday night was the first one, while Friday had two distinct ones a few minutes apart, about 10 o'clock p.m.

The city of Charleston was the worst sufferer. Houses were toppled over or badly wrecked; few large buildings escaped damage. Fires broke out in scattered areas; while salt ocean water was flooding the city. Summerville, about twenty miles inland, was flooded by hot water coming out of the ground through crevices. The loss of life was small, while property damage was estimated in the millions.

Five years later when this writer became a resident of Charleston, its inhabitants were still full of emotional fright whenever the earthquake was mentioned. Who could blame them?

During the summer of 1876 the Mooreville air resounded with the noise of hammer and hum of saw as workmen were building an academy for Professors Leazar and Frontis, which was the town's first school structure. Early in September our little town was in a hubbub over the opening of the school, which had much to do with the further growth of the village.

Iredell, Rowan, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg and Catawba counties patronized the school liberally. Both of these men were recognized as teachers who had been successful, and whose influence had been felt throughout that region. Miss Emma

Williams, now Mrs. G.V. Voils, was engaged as an assistant.

The town drew into its citizenship a number of splendid families desirous of the advantages of this school. Others came as boarding pupils.

Professor Leazar had been teaching at Coddle Creek, from which many of his pupils accompanied him, this writer being one, from which date he became a resident of Mooreville, for about fifteen years. Fifty-nine years have elapsed since then — nearly two generations of humanity.

Doubtless only a small remnant of those who entered the school then are living witnesses of what transpired during that period. I have been trying to recall them but my knowledge of their future lives or present existence is limited by half a century of absence from school day stamping grounds. Just now and then comes to mind James Lee Harris, Rufus McPherson, Rufus and Latta Houston, Dora McKee, Lou Culp, Sallie Deaton Brantley, Edna Frontis, Katinka McCorkle and Rufus Clark. Would that we who remain might meet again!

Our instructors of that first town school all tried to set examples of how we ought to live. But, you say, sometimes they failed ingloriously. Granted. So do you and I.

Mooreville Academy had a splendid patronage throughout its continuance, circumstances considered, though small compared with your city schools of today. Good and sufficient reasons plain to all, and its cost to the community was but a trifle when compared to the present system. I merely desire to emphasize the poignant truth that our school did much for the building of the citizenry and civic community as well as for the development of our young people.

The Mooreville of today owes a debt, not estimable nor payable, to Augustus Leazar and Stephen Frontis, native-born sons of Iredell County.

Both came from the Prospect community, in which church both were trained throughout youth, then they were educated at Davidson College, our own home institution; both spent long and useful lives within five miles of their birthplaces. Both men always were active in civic affairs, both were ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church, both were content with a small recompense for their labors, never seeking wealth nor coveting praise, and they were content to live as an integral part of our common yeomanry, whereas their educational ability and excellent manhood would have entitled them to high

See ECHOES, page 11A

Is N.C.'s property valuation system really that bad?

By MICHAEL WALDEN

RALPH — Several N.C. counties this year have undertaken real property (real estate) revaluations. When this happens, there are waves of protests from property owners suffering from the "sticker shock" that comes from big jumps in their property values.

What troubles property owners is that big increases in their property values can lead to big increases in property taxes. Several questions arise from this issue. First, why can N.C. owners of real property see big jumps in their property values when revaluations occur? Second, do increases in property values automatically lead to big increases in property taxes? Third, is there a better system for collecting property taxes that would avoid the sticker shock in property values?

The fundamental economic reason why real property values rise over time is because, in a growing economy, the demand for real property increases while the supply of real property remains relatively fixed. Recall humorist Will Rogers' recommendation to buy land because they're not making it anymore.

However, there's a further complication with the way real property is revalued in North Carolina. This is that real property is only revalued every eight years in our state. This is the longest period of time between revaluations of any state in the nation. This means that even a modest annual increase in real property values can result in a major cumulative jump in value over eight years. For example, an annual 5 percent increase in real property values compounded over eight years results in a cumulative increase of 48 percent.

This system is akin to using

the same income for the next eight years for income-tax purposes. Only after eight years would a person's new income be taxed. And then he'd face "income sticker shock" because his new income, in most cases, would be much higher.

But doesn't this system work to the advantage of real property owners if the tax value of property is held constant for eight years while the true market value of the property is likely rising?

Not necessarily, for the simple reason that county commissioners can adjust the real property tax rate over the eight year cycle. To see what typical adjustments are made, I examined annual changes in property tax rates in all 100 N.C. counties from 1980 to 1995.

I found a very common and interesting pattern. Between the eight-year revaluations, property tax rates increased an average of 2 percent per year. During the year when real property is revalued, property tax rates were reduced.

Importantly, however, I found that the reductions in property tax rates during the revaluation years were less than the cumulative increase in the tax rate during the previous eight years. When property values are adjusted up every eight years, property tax rates aren't fully lowered to their level of eight years earlier.

Assuming local governments in North Carolina will continue using the property tax, the question is whether the system can be improved to avoid the sharp rise in property values every eight years and the resultant ups and downs in property tax rates.

One option is to shorten the time between real property revaluations. This would keep the tax value of real property more in line with the market

value and would lessen the incentive for county commissioners to change property tax rates. But a disadvantage of more frequent revaluations is expense.

There are significant costs to counties of complete real property revaluations, and these costs tend to be a bigger share of the county budget in lower income counties.

An approach followed by many states is to annually change real property values by some external index like the Consumer Price Index. Or, limited sample revaluations are done each year and the results are used to adjust all real property values.

Of course, a problem with both of these methods is there's no assurance the values of all properties will change at the rate of the external index or of the sample properties. Although adjustments could be made when complete revaluations were done, there is the thorny issue of how property owners who were overcharged in previous years would be compensated.

This brings us back to the current system. Although it does have flaws, the current system also has a major advantage. With real property values fixed for eight-year intervals in most situations county commissioners must increase tax rates to collect more revenues. This forces county commissioners to convince property owners why more property tax revenues are needed and why the current system isn't providing them. That is, commissioners must increase property tax rates in the open by persuasion rather than by stealth. Isn't this exactly what we taxpayers want?

Mike Walden is a professor of economics at N.C. State University.

Echoes of the past

Continued from page 10A

honor.

Their were useful lives, dedicated to the service of humanity which will bear fruit after all their pupils have followed them hence. A monument to their memories should adorn your city.

Another echo of September comes to this scribe, important to him though insignificant to many who read thereof, his natal day, September 12th. The day of his entrance to earth on the Jacob F. Goodman farm, now known as Barium Springs, a spot still dear to memory even though only a small part of his existence was spent there, because of the removal of his family to Spring Grove, which was home for a while, then your village — not city — which came later.

The associations for the first twenty years of life did much towards molding his character. Providence has led to considerable wanderings and changes in associations. Life has

been roseate and desirable, full of variations, some successes, many failures, friends and foes, praise and censure, for his failures, only himself is to blame; for whatever of good he has been able to do, all praise is due and awarded to the God of his fathers.

J. I. Goodman
Fleming, Colo.

Note: This is one of the best of the few first-hand accounts of what became known as the "Great Charleston Earthquake of 1886."

Rev. Goodman makes two small errors here when he says that Augustus Leazar was a "native-born son of Iredell." Mr. Leazar was born in Rowan County. Also, Leazar & Frontis' Mooreville Academy was not our first schoolhouse; the antebellum North Bend School was located within what would be the town's original corporate limits.

— O. C. Stonestreet III

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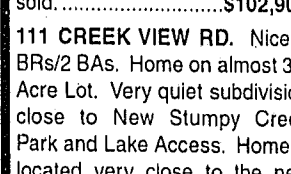
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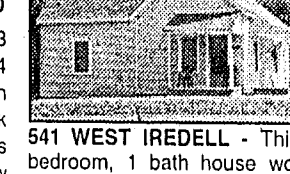
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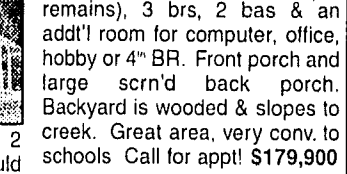
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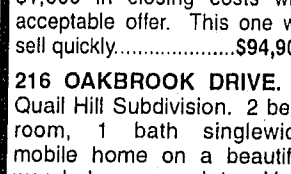
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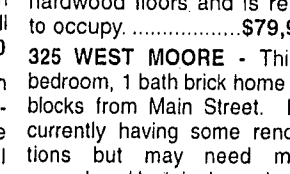
131 FOXGLOVE - Charming 2 bedroom, 2 bath home on cul-de-sac in popular Cedarcroft. Sep. kitchen, dining area, 1 bath brick with walkout basement is close to golf course and near downtown. Some hardwood floors and is ready to occupy.\$79,900



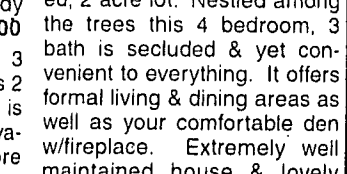
325 WEST MOORE - This 3 bedroom, 1 bath brick home is 2 blocks from Main Street. It is currently having some renovations but may need more upgrades. Upstairs has a bonus room, large fenced-in yard, 1 car garage and sunroom. \$118,900



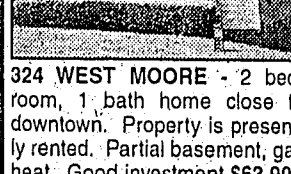
216 OAKBROOK DRIVE, in Quail Hill Subdivision. 2 bedroom, 1 bath singlewide mobile home on a beautiful wooded acre + lot. Very secluded. Mobile home has a deck, brick underpinning and some remodeling already completed.\$45,900



1222 SOUTH MAGNOLIA - Beautiful home in a beautiful n'hood, close to M/Ville Schools, quiet circle street, lg. wooded lot w/empty lots on side and rear. Manicured lawn looks like a football field. Greatroom with fireplace, 3 bedrooms, 3 full baths, rec room/office w/ fireplace. This home will sell fast. Call for appointment now.\$179,900



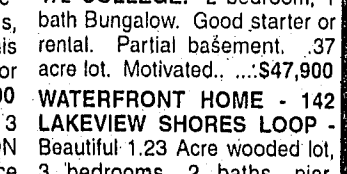
472 COLLEGE. 2 bedroom, 1 bath Bungalow. Good starter or rental. Partial basement. .37 acre lot. Motivated.\$47,900



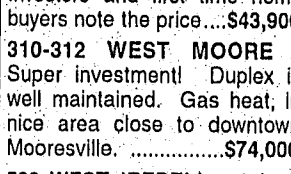
263 CEDARCROFT DRIVE - 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, Klt/Bkfst, DN w/ fireplace, single garage, nice deck, back property line wooded.REDUCED \$109,900



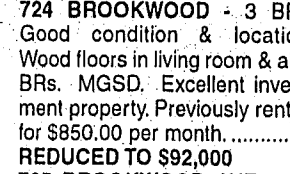
2019 CLINE STREET, STATESVILLE - 2 bedroom, 1 bath home with large yard and in-ground pool. Lots of fruit trees and shade everywhere. Call for an appointment to see this great starter home.REDUCED \$70,490



321 EAST CENTER AVENUE. Victorian style house built in early 1900's. 3 bedroom, 1 1/2 baths, gas heat, central air, vinyl siding, replacement windows on lg. lot. Property is very close to downtown, library, shopping & restaurants. Zoned OI.REDUCED \$120,000



724 BROOKWOOD - 3 BRs. Good condition & location. Wood floors in living room & all 3 BRs. MGSD. Excellent investment property. Previously rented for \$850.00 per month.REDUCED TO \$92,000



705 BROOKWOOD AVE. - 3 BRs, 2 BA split level. Kitchen/Breakfast, large den with wood stove insert, hardwood floors in LR and bedrooms, rec room, detached garage/workshop.\$139,900



310 CARPENTER AVE. - this uplisted office is vacant & ready. Has reception area & 5 offices. Loc. very close to the new proposed Co. Offices. Sellers may consider a lease sale price.\$149,000

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PLAZA DRIVE - 6.45 acres. Zoned HB. \$425,000. NEW! HORSE FARM! Income producing 7.31 acres, 9 stall barn, 4 bedroom, 3 bath brick ranch on Brawley School Road.\$600,000

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400 EAST STATESVILLE AVENUE, suite 200, 2100 sq. ft. office condo for sale or lease. Waiting room, reception/office area etc., can be easily re-configured. Centrally located. Call for details.\$325,000

427 E. STATESVILLE AVENUE - Across street from proposed new county offices. 10,000+ square feet Zoned OI. Excellent access & visibility.\$240,000

165 MCKENZIE ROAD - 11,077 sq. ft. uplisted for Race Team. Available Now! Includes newer spraybooth & 2 1/2 HP compressors. Full alarm sys. & video monitors. Entire bldg. is heated & cooled. 892 sq. ft. of offices & a 25x100 covered canopy. \$725,000. Call us today for the details. 2.42 acres.

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