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— but most importantly, a more fully realized understanding of “community.”

Grant says that while people generally think in terms of their trash being dumped at the end of a road, and not within a community, it's certainly now more difficult to think that way in Orange County.

### 'A smile on its face.'

How progressive are we as a community?

“This community is always patting itself on the back for being progressive,” *The Citizen* quoted Carrboro Alderman Joal Hall Broun as saying in an earlier installment of this series. But, she suggested “maybe we're not as progressive as we really think we are. Does what we say really comport with what we do?”

We pride ourselves, rightly, on our efforts in improving racial relations. But charges of environmental racism were leveled by Eubanks Road landfill and transfer station opponents.

Omega Wilson of Mebane's West End Revitalization Association talked to *The Citizen* about his organization's thus-far successful efforts to keep a highway bypass from dissecting an African-American neighborhood (and thereby destroying an historic church and cemetery) and of the racial tensions that were brought to the fore in that Alamance County community — a community some 25 minutes from downtown Chapel Hill.

“A lot of folks said, ‘Well, we thought that stuff was dead and gone,’” Wilson says. “And of course, it's not dead and gone. It's very alive and well. It just has a smile on its face sometimes.”

Regarding Jim Crow, Chapel Hill-based community-development advocate John Cooper says, “the legacy lives, and so you have to take all that into consideration.”

What role has race played in the treatment of the Rogers-Eubanks community over the past three decades plus?

As Broun said, “I think it was a combination of race and economics. It's hard to separate; I think they are tightly wound together.”

Neloa Jones of CEER agreed: “I think that class certainly is an issue, but I think there's an intersection of race and class. ... [H]ad we been an affluent African-American neighborhood, I don't think that they would be dumping it here — I don't think any of this would have been here to begin with.”

It's interesting, also, to look at the intersection of environmental

justice concerns with the concerns of advocates for what we more generally think of when we think of environmental issues — essentially, protecting the Earth.

“There's always been a tension between some groups who see things very narrowly as environmental issues and others that are trying to recognize the economic deprivation of an area,” says Bob Hall, director of the Durham-based Democracy North Carolina and editor of the book *Environmental Politics: Lessons from the Grassroots*.

On the other hand, former OWASA board chair and community activist Mark Marcoplos believes that over the years many local elected officials have taken a “tunnel-vision stance,” too narrowly focused on the environmental justice issue (e.g., 35 years of the landfill on Eubanks Road and then the prospect of a transfer station there) while losing sight of a long-term solution — more effective waste reduction, for example.

Robert Bullard, director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University, says that in raising environmental justice concerns, the most effective way of resonating the message throughout the broader community is to clearly enunciate the public health concerns — which the Rogers-Eubanks community has done quite well, describing, for example, traffic safety concerns associated with the transfer station — and to connect the dots between environmental and public health.

In terms of who comes on board from the broader community — well, that too has been a topic of sometimes heated discussion. There are those who believe the support provided to CEER and the Rogers-Eubanks community by more recently arrived residents in and around the community — mostly white and middle or upper-middle class — has been a cynical attempt to lash back at local government by those who were annexed against their will into the town of Carrboro.

Neloa Jones is not sure it's necessary to get to the very root of supporters' motivations: “I feel like if they're willing to give us that kind of support, we should

take it...

“I have no way of knowing whether their concern is genuine. [But] I think that when you go to a board of commissioners meeting and you drive to Hillsborough, or wherever you drive, and you make these presentations and you speak these words and you send these emails and you write these letters — I don't care if it's genuine or not if it's going to help the cause.

“Maybe I'm too naïve politically to know any better, but I don't really care [as long as] it's something that helps us.”

### Obligated to reconsider.

There's no question that the Rogers-Eubanks community has helped the broader community by raising the questions it has about how we deal with our solid waste.

County Commissioner Valerie Foushee acknowledges that the community members have certainly helped her:

“Board members are representatives of the people. And when the people say you need to take a look at this — or you need to look at this in this way, in addition to how you've viewed it previously — for me, I feel like I'm obliged to do that.

“Now, if I do that and my thinking changes, then I need to say my thinking changed....”

“If you find that the decision you made was not the best decision and you have the opportunity to change it, why wouldn't you?”

It's also important to keep in mind that a number of decisions were made over the years, some of which were made in the eleventh hour, when options were limited, that today's county commission has had no option but to deal with — for example, the decision not to site another landfill elsewhere in the county when the present one is full; or the failure to better articulate and implement a more aggressive waste-stream reduction.

Joal Hall Broun says, “It's just not the county commissioners that should bear the brunt of the decisions. Because there were a lot of players that came to play in these decisions.”

Getting to the next step means, for Foushee, “that the board has to take some responsibility in en-

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**-John Cooper**

sureing that what begins now is the right process and that we take the resources that are available to us to get this right. I hope that people understand that no neighborhood is going to accept a waste transfer station. And this is still going to be a tough process.

Commissioner Barry Jacobs has encouraged the town governments of Chapel Hill and Carrboro to take part in the decision-making process that lies ahead.

### Informing discretion.

Who will tell the people what's in their own best interests? The people, we've been reminded, will tell the people.

“If you think that regular citizens aren't intelligent enough, wise enough to make decisions that affect their well-being, the remedy is not to take the power of decision-making away from them but to inform their discretion,” says John Cooper.

Cooper agrees with those who insist there can be no more effective tool in the advancement of informed public policy than to make information available to those whose lives are in question, and to allow them to interpret it as it applies to the situation at hand, and to articulate the issues in a public forum.

“What I can do that would be most invaluable,” says Cooper, imagining himself in the position of a public official or a policy advocate, “is to give the people all the information, tell them everything that I know, let them have every piece of information that's been collected, whatever they ask for. If they have questions that I don't have the data for, let's work together to figure out the answers.

“And what I've found is that you don't need a PhD to make a wise decision. You can take information and digest it and distill it. You may need some help in inter-

preting certain data. But once it's explained, people can interpret it, and they can use it and make wise decisions.”

Of the work of the Rogers-Eubanks community, Gary Grant says, “It goes to show you that once a community has access to information, they themselves can be about protecting themselves.”

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Branch of the NAACP recently has provided valuable guidance to the Rogers-Eubanks community. And the Democratic Party of Orange County has been a vocal and influential advocate.

Most critically, though, says Bob Hall, is that “it's got to be rooted in the community. They can draw on technical support or outside groups. But the heart and soul and the leadership has got to come from the community. That's huge. You can't sustain it otherwise.”

Rev. Robert Campbell has long been such a person within the Rogers-Eubanks community. Neloa Jones has emerged as an effective spokesperson. Numerous others have assumed particular roles.

The message is nailed down within the community and then disseminated, and the task is then, as Rev. Campbell says, to convince the broader public that the community in question is not only those who are affected by, for example, their proximity to a landfill, but also “those who are impacting the community.” Which is to say, all of us.

“It's part of the democratic process to say,” Broun says, “We want the same quality of life that our neighbors have a mile down the road. We have borne the brunt of being adjacent to waste facilities that have benefitted the entire community, and now it is our turn.” That's the democratic process — to be able to persuade your neighbors that you shouldn't have to bear the burden of this

anymore.”

### A 'paradigm shift.'

Cooper says he's optimistic about a “paradigm shift in the way the environmental justice movement is operating,” saying that communities are becoming more proactive — “they are in fact at the table when decisions are being made; they are in fact determining which questions are the right questions to ask.”

But, in the words of Ringo Starr, “it don't come easy.” You have to stay late — figuratively and literally.

Many who have attended commission and council meetings to speak out on the landfill and transfer station have objected that, for whatever reason, their item has very often come somewhat late on the agenda.

Valerie Foushee has said she would like the commission to be mindful of such timing issues. “Some people are trying to work, to make a living, and they don't have enough energy once you work a ten-hour day to come out and talk,” she says.

Moreover, she says that elected officials “need to be mindful of not just the people who come out and talk with you about an issue, but be mindful of the people who cannot come out and talk about an issue. We all, as elected officials and policymakers, need to remember that.

“I think that sometimes you think that because people didn't come out ... that they're not entitled to change the outcome.”

It's all part of the learning process. The discussion continues. Stick around.

In next week's issue of *The Citizen*: **Considering our options.**

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**-Joal Hall Broun**

## OBITUARIES

### William Geoffrey “Bud” Wysor, Jr.

William Geoffrey “Bud” Wysor, Jr., 81, died Thursday, January 3, after a long struggle with prostate and bone cancer, at his home in Chapel Hill.

He was born in Richmond, Virginia, the son of Ruth Puckett and W.G. Wysor, founder of Southern States Farm Supply Company.

He received his B.A. and M.D. from the University of Virginia, with post-graduate training at Yale University and the Medical College of Virginia. He married Ida Lee Lauck of Lexington, Virginia in 1953 and soon after entered private practice in South Boston, Virginia. They moved to Chapel Hill in 1957, where he served as Associate Professor of Medicine at the UNC School of Medicine until 1969. He then returned to

private practice with Durham Internal Medicine Associates, retiring in 1990.

He was a member of the AMA, Sigma Xi, the Raven Society, the Lawn Society at the University of Virginia, the North Carolina Medical Society, the Durham-Orange County Medical Society, and the Hope Valley Country Club. Honors included teaching awards from the UNC School of Medicine and from Escola Paulista de Medicina in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he served as a visiting professor.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Ida Lee Lauck Wysor; his children: Ruth Whitefield and her husband Bob of Chapel Hill; Karen Mears of Dallas, Georgia; Geoffrey Wysor and his wife Tammy of Greensboro; and Benjamin Wysor and his wife Jane of Elizabeth City; and six grandchildren. Also surviving are his sister Betty Pearman and her husband

Stuart of Dallas, Texas; and two nephews.

A private memorial service will be held Sunday, January 6 at the Church of the Holy Family, with Father Timothy Kimbrough officiating. A celebration of his life will take place in February. Memorials may be made to the church, or to the charity of your choice.

Arrangements by Cremation Society of the Carolinas.

### Craig Peter Yarnell

Craig Peter Yarnell, 49, passed away suddenly Sunday, January 6 at UNC Hospitals as a result of complications from the flu.

Craig is survived by his wife, Julie; a daughter, Caroline; three sons, Michael, Matthew, and Jona-

than; his father, E. Peter Yarnell; and four brothers, Kenny, David, Danny, and Frank. He is predeceased by his mother Lily Yarnell.

A memorial service is planned for Saturday, January 12, at 4:00pm at the Chapel Hill Bible Church.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the children's education fund, Yarnell Family, c/o Charles Harrison, 445 Erwin Rd., Durham, NC 27707. Contributions may also be made to the Philmont Staff Association, 17 Deer Run Rd., Cimarron, NM 87714-9638.

Arrangements made by the Cremation Society of the Carolinas. Online condolences can be made at [www.cremnc.com](http://www.cremnc.com).



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