

26 January, 2006

John Ogburn  
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John,

In the past few months, as a water customer, I have received multiple requests from the “Asheboro 20/20” project to provide input about our city’s plans for the future. So I decided to attend the meeting at Sunset Theater on January 19. I listened to Randolph Hospital CEO, Bob Morrison (chosen by the Asheboro City Council to lead this project), speak of the importance of a community “vision”. As you know, I said some things at that meeting. I am going to say a lot more . . . in whatever forum I can find.

I heard Bob Morrison give the very same speech back in 1995, when I, as a young physician – a young professional – was recruited home to Asheboro. At the time, I bought the “vision” hook, line and sinker – and became its workhorse in Pediatrics. At the meeting Thursday night, after I said what I had to say, the moderator said that my “passion” was appreciated. But the FACT of the matter is that the leaders of Asheboro most certainly DO NOT appreciate “passion”. For if that were true, I NEVER would have been threatened for voicing legitimate concerns (**no one has ever argued that they were not legitimate**) about quality of Pediatric care issues at Randolph Hospital. If “passion” were appreciated, Bob Morrison’s minions would never have told me shut up – or else. If “passion” were valued, I NEVER would have been fired after I did my job in EXACTLY THE RIGHT WAY (in the face of those threats) – when someone else did not. If “passion” were valued, reporting the life-threatening unprofessional conduct of that “someone else” to medical peer review would have been expected and encouraged rather than penalized. Instead, thanks to Bob Morrison’s “vision”, I was cut off at the knees . . . and went from being a highly-respected member of the medical staff one day, to persona non grata the next . . . literally driven from my own hometown . . . while colleagues I had helped and respected/trusted turned their backs and let Bob and his “team” do what ever they wanted with total impunity. I slowly and painfully fell through every crack in every mechanism of so-called “oversight” . . . local, state, and federal. During the fall, I watched dear friends and excellent doctors leave in droves. Bob Morrison’s “vision” was to fire the doctor who risked all to save a life – and to shield those who screwed up. It’s been nearly eight years and I still cannot wrap my head around it all. How does Bob Morrison still have a job here and I don’t?

The Asheboro City Council has a dog in this fight now – because Council members obviously **totally ignored** what I told them in 2004, when they chose “Chairman Bob” Morrison to steer our future. Someone that night in 2004 (I think it was Mack Priest) asked if my story was going to be made public. What did he think I was trying to do? Of course, for something to become public, the Courier Tribune’s reporter has to pick up her pen.

I suppose everyone’s rationalization now is that technically, I “won” the round of lawsuits and I don’t have any right to complain. No one seems to “get” that, in the wake of a destroyed nearly three-year old practice and another three years deeply mired in litigation, the hospital (pleading near-bankruptcy) settled my case against RMA for less than one-year’s salary. Afterwards, no one at the hospital ever questioned why Bob Morrison, Steve Eblin and their legal eagles, **pursuing a personal vendetta on the public’s dime**, literally ran from their bogus (and deeply humiliating to me & my family) “libel” lawsuit. Much later, my family and I discovered that **Bob**

**& Steve LIED . . . and LIED . . . and LIED** some more . . . concealing public records to save the hospital some money at settlement . . . even as their own “non-profit” salaries skyrocketed. So practically speaking, Bob won . . . **BY CHEATING**. Excuse me. **But that’s illegal. It IS perjury. It IS fraud. And it IS contempt – not just for me, but for anyone who has ever paid taxes, sought medical care at Randolph Hospital, or stepped into a Randolph County courtroom looking for “justice”**. What have the very “honorable” members of Randolph Hospital’s Board of Directors done about it? The Greensboro City Council, embroiled in controversy over the actions of its Police Chief, issued a statement yesterday saying that the City Manager’s actions against Chief Wray were fully justified because he “chose to withhold critical information from his superiors and the City Council”. Hello?

This mill-town, good-ole-boy stuff that I’ve heard so many of my elders gripe about . . . and that I have experienced first hand . . . dished out from the likes of Randolph Hospital’s Board of Directors and David Renfro’s Courier Tribune and (lately/most inexcusably) the Randolph County District Attorney’s office, is way beyond old. As for city government, I went to school with you . . . and Kyle Lamb and Jane Hughes (God bless her). You all know me. And you KNOW I was done wrong.

The questionnaires that the 20/20 team sent out did not query specifically about healthcare facilities in the community. Is it because Bob was afraid of what citizens might say? I attended tonight’s meeting at Central Gym. The very first topic that went on the board was Randolph Hospital – and one suggestion was actually to shut the place down and start all over. I held my tongue as Bob talked about the medical staff and why physicians come & go. It needs to be noted that the only doctor in the room during at least two of your meetings was the home-grown Pediatrician whose practice and reputation Bob destroyed (the one who has a hole in her skull put in the wrong place by one of Bob’s surgeons) – and she drove three hours to & from in order to attend the meeting.

In order for Asheboro to see “20/20” into the future, city leaders are going to have to take off the blinders about the past. On the advice of our leaders (who always knew best), Asheboro shamelessly pandered to the mills & developers/realtors. One of the big topics at your meetings has been illegal immigration. Our schools and medical system were inundated with immigrants – many of them illegal – that the city was ill-equipped to serve. Who in the business community really cared, as long as the responsibility for providing educational and medical assistance for these people and their families could be dumped on the state . . . and doctors & teachers could be blamed when the system began to crack? Now the state is out of Medicaid money (a whole nuther story), and those same leaders tell us that our little town is “dying”. Now the mills are closing and we’re a major north-south drug pipeline. Now some of our older streets & neighborhoods are becoming crime-ridden slums – with drug deals going down in broad daylight and prostitutes boldly walking the streets. But hey, let’s put ABC stores on every corner so we can “protect” our children! We can’t expand the tax base because the city “can’t” put sewer lines in the pricier neighborhoods (this wasn’t taken under consideration when the houses were built?), and the roads in some of those neighborhoods are below state specifications because the city/county imposed no standards whatsoever upon the developers during planning. In the name of progress, nearly every historical landmark in this town is gone – right down to the granite sidewalks (which, as I found out on a vacation in 2004, are carefully preserved in New England). Asheboro’s economic gurus said yes to the Walmart Superstore. Now the beautiful woods where I played as a child (there’s a reason the road was called Inwood) is a parking lot, NC 64 is a congested and dangerous mess, and the Harris Teeter, Winn Dixie, Waldenbooks, Hallmark Store and Barrington’s (to name a few) are gone.

Our newspaper, one of the glues that holds a community together, shamelessly panders to the publisher's wife and friends and political/economic agenda. The Courier's website is antiquated and it's pretty clear that the LAST thing David Renfro wants to experiment with is a community blog. He might find out what people really think. Mine is not the only story that has been completely shut out. The "educated workforce" (the young professionals you want to recruit . . . with ideas & opinions of their own) has no use for that kind of selective journalism.

Bob Morrison tells us that we have to "reach out" to the Black and Hispanic communities. No duh. WE DO. But Bob is the LAST person who should be lecturing anyone on that subject. When I asked, ten years ago, about marketing RMA to the East side, he and Steve Eblin did not want to directly advertise RMA's services to those traditionally "underserved" communities (even though that's exactly why RMA was created – at least that's what "the team" told the established private practices). After all, the Health Department was still there and it had to keep its base to keep its funding. Growing RMA's "business" was all about white-bread "customers" with insurance – the reason Steve Eblin could not let me go out on my own – and take my patient base with me. It was the reason Bob Morrison had to destroy every dream I ever had – and splatter me all over the wall – right in front of my parents. Well, Daddy's dead now. He never left my corner. And he taught me to stand up to bullies.

Given the way that I as a home-grown "valued employee" was treated, is there really any wonder why workers in Randolph County are welcoming unions with open arms . . . or that young people born & raised here cannot wait to leave Asheboro, and swear they will never come back (if you want to talk to some from our generation, I can call them up)? I expect that the much ballyhooed sixteen percent response rate on the 20/20 questionnaire was not because citizens are overjoyed with the previous ten years of "vision" we've been spoon-fed by the powers that be.

I met some very angry, frustrated people at the Sunset meeting. What I did not see was a reporter from the Courier Tribune. You've had four "open forms" and the newspaper did not see fit to even show up for three of them. Tell me again that Asheboro's leaders are listening – or they really want input/discussion from the community. So far I've seen nothing to disprove the observations of another professional who attended the Sunset Theater meeting. The Asheboro 20/20 project appears so far to be an exercise in going through the motions – so the leaders who have had their way and their say all along can tell us they got community input . . . when they do whatever they want to do anyway. I just don't think the community where you and I grew up is going to stand for it much longer.

You said, at the Central Gym meeting tonight, that integrity was a "value". I say to you and the Asheboro City Council . . . and especially to Bob Morrison . . . **PROVE IT.**

Sincerely,

Mary H. Johnson, M.D., FAAP