

# Why Not?

By Jim Turner

It is hard to believe 2018 is finally nearing its end and taking with it one of the worst storm seasons to affect our island in many years. As I am writing this, the evidence of personal tragedy still huddles in heaps of debris along our coastal highway. For weeks, the endless piles of vegetation on the north side and the home furnishings and construction rubbish on the south side created an almost unbroken chain. Most of it has been removed by now, but the memories of Florence and her devastation will remain with us for years to come. For some of us those memories will come with questions.

Survivor's guilt is a very real psychological condition and is not to be taken lightly or scoffed at. This beast most commonly occurs after a large-scale tragedy such as battlefield deaths, airplane crashes or natural disasters. It is a post-traumatic reaction to the violence and to feelings of helplessness the tragedy brings. I will not begin a discussion of survivor's guilt here because I believe we will benefit from a serious, in-depth examination and, hopefully, it is a topic another contributor will investigate fully at another time. It certainly will require more attention than my space and talent can offer. I refer to it now only because recent events have jarred some confused memories for me, and I delve a bit into why.

For example, I have never understood why so many friends and acquaintances selected to serve in Southeast Asia returned home with devastating injuries, both physical ones and psychological ones. I served in the Army from 1968 to 1970, yet I was not among those victims. Why not? Why them and not me? More recently is my confusion about the storms. Why did Florence create havoc to so much property all around me and only created a great nuisance and spoiled food at our house? Why is that?

This "Why me?" question has bothered me for a large portion of my life. As I remember some of the more interesting adventures I explored as a kid, it still surprises me that I even survived childhood and adolescence. When I was in elementary school I was a bit adventuresome. That is a profound understatement. I was not a bad kid—I was just curious in a risky sort of way.

I vividly recall now that small outbuilding that stood very close to our house and was about the same height as the back porch roof. It was special to me because it was a perfect place to learn how to fly if somebody had an interest in learning to do that. Everybody knew back then that wings were not required for flying. Birds needed wings because they couldn't tie on the magic capes worn by Superman and other super heroes. You needed fingers, an old towel or big colored rag and some place to get off to an elevated running start. Once you ran forward with a head of steam, all you needed to do was to leap with hands outstretched and off you would soar into the sky. Everybody knew that, right?

Behind that small outbuilding was a collection of assorted boxes and other stuff that, when shuffled and piled just so, could create a pretty good makeshift ladder. Brave soul that I was, the shaky ladder substitute didn't present a problem at all. So I tossed the magic cape onto the tin roof and scrambled up behind it. I collected the flying aid, fitted it securely to my skinny neck and stepped over onto the long porch roof where I could get a good running start.

I think my mother must have had a direct line to the Henderson Cab Company, and the drivers all knew the quickest route from our house to the hospital. It was her 1952 version of 911. They had made the trip a few times before. The doctor's examination revealed no broken bones, just some bruises to my body and to my ego. I believed my flight would have succeeded except for my execution. I failed to keep my head up and didn't get the correct amount of lift. At least that was what I was going to tell my dad when he got home. I promised to not jump off the roof again, and he promised to let me continue to live as long as I kept my end of the bargain.

The little outbuilding was a veritable treasure trove of fun stuff that just begged to be investigated. Since flying was off the table for a while, I decided to spend more time inside the building instead of on it. My father had more tools and other fun things than Carter had liver pills, and most of the things in his collection would be considered safe for a 10-year-old to touch. Everything, that is, except the bullets. He didn't own a gun that I was aware of, but for some reason he had collected several bullets. I discovered

these bad boys one day, and the light bulb in my head flickered ever so slightly. I stuffed the bullets in my pocket and continued to explore.

Many of you will remember the days before electric drills and have likely actually put your hands on the predecessor to the drill, the venerable brace and bit. When I found that tool, the light began to burn a little brighter, and an adventure morphed for real. What if, I asked myself, I took this brace and bit and drilled a small hole in the side of one of those big trees in our front yard? And what if I were to fit one of these bullets into the hole? I'm imagining a hole the size of the really big bullet. Then, what if I actually shot the bullet inside the hole in the tree? What would happen?

Planning and preparing something is okay, but the real fun is in the execution of the plan. I had the bullet, the big one. I had the brace and bit for the hole in the tree so all I needed now was a firing pin. What are hammers for? And screwdrivers are multipurpose tools. Forgive me, Lord, for I knew not what I was doing. Once again, I flirted with death or mutilation. But, man, I was excited. So I drilled a hole in the tree about the diameter and depth of the bullet. I took the handy screwdriver and rested its business end on the firing cap, drew back the hammer and let her fly. The tree did not die. Nor did I, but I screamed like bloody \*%^. The shrapnel from the casing and the burns from the gun powder were somewhat less enjoyable than all the preparation. Our cab soon arrived and deposited me and my mother at the hospital emergency room. Once again, I suffered only minor injuries. My mother and father, though, were nearly called to glory when they fully realized what I had done.

So why was I spared, in my youth, my young adulthood and even now? Over the years my daughter, and now her children, have asked me why about a million times and answers are not always easy to find. Except once a few years ago when one of my grandchildren asked me why God made possums so danged ugly. "That's an easy one," I replied. "That's so we won't be upset when we see them smashed on the highway."

## PKS Watershed Restoration Plan

By Sarah Williams

### Homeowners can be part of the solution to storm water runoff

Pine Knoll Shores is partnering with the North Carolina Coastal Federation, Eastern Carolina Council and UNC-Wilmington's Environmental Science Department to prepare a watershed restoration plan to deal with polluted storm water runoff. The plan proposes strategies to reduce the volume of storm water runoff and improve water quality. Reducing runoff will also help address minor flooding issues.

The key goals of the plan are to:

- Turn back the clock on water pollution
- Reduce instances of flooding
- Align future capital improvements with storm water retrofits
- Increase community awareness and participation in projects.

The draft plan includes strategies to reduce polluted runoff. These include cost-effective retrofits that direct storm water to infiltrate into the ground or collect it for later use.

Having a plan will better position the town to receive grant funding for storm water reduction projects. The town plans to pursue projects to reduce runoff at public sites.

Homeowners can be a part of the solution by trying these easy DIY projects to reduce storm water coming from their property:

- Attach a plastic tube to your gutter downspout and direct roof runoff into the yard rather than the driveway to reduce runoff by about 50%
- Capture rain in a rain barrel and save money by using it to water gardens and flowers
- Build a rain garden to collect rain and let it slowly soak into the ground
- Install native plants that take less effort to grow and less money to maintain
- Install permeable pavers or pavement on sections of the driveway to allow storm water to soak through to the ground.

For more tips and resources for reducing storm water pollution, pick up a free copy of "Smart Yards" at town hall or visit [nccoast.org/stormwater](http://nccoast.org/stormwater).