

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Beach Lifeguards: Mixed Blessing

Hiring lifeguards at local beaches, as has been suggested by several parties following the recent double drowning at Ocean Isle Beach, isn't such a good idea.

As Mayor LaDane Bullington said recently, it would probably create as many problems as it solves.

Presently the safety of the children who play along our beaches is in the hands—and we hope, informed judgement—of the adults supervising their care, typically parents on the alert for any possible danger.

Hiring a lifeguard would shift responsibility for the swimmers' safety away from the people properly charged with it—adults who know the capabilities of their children and who can direct their attention to only those children in the water—to a hired person who must watch a broad expanse of beach.

That would be a disservice to these children and would place an unrealistic liability on the local beach towns and their hired personnel.

Just as boaters enter the water at their own educated risk, so do swimmers.

For the parents of young swimmers, proper supervision at the beach includes at least these basics: knowing the ability of those entering the water; setting and enforcing appropriate limits as to depth and distance from shore; swimming in an area where there are other swimmers and away from inlets; and most important, keeping a constant vigil on those in the water until they are safely ashore.

Along with lessons in how to float and tread water, it's also a good idea to plant, beforehand, a basic respect for the chameleon-like nature of the ocean, its changing tides and forceful currents, the dips and peaks along its bottom.

With their gradual slopes and sandy bottoms, Brunswick County's excellent beaches are ideal spots for family fun—provided you follow the same basic precautions as around the family swimming pool or swimming hole.

Wanted: Literacy Volunteers

More than one out of every three Brunswick County adults lack the basic reading and writing skills they need to lead productive and satisfying lives.

As illustrated so well in the movie, "The Story of Jesse Hallum" aired on Channel 11 Monday night, these individuals have trouble filling out job applications, understanding the label on a medicine bottle, comparison shopping or exercising the responsibilities of citizenship.

Many expend energies "getting by" that could be directed elsewhere with fantastic results.

North Carolina has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation; Brunswick County ranks below the state average.

Two local agencies, Brunswick Technical College and the Brunswick County Literacy Council, are partners in an effort to solve the local illiteracy problem, but they need your help.

Needed are volunteers willing to help recruit students, people who are about the people who can't read this editorial. Also needed are volunteers willing to be trained to teach students, either in small classes or one-on-one, and places in which to hold classes.

As Brunswick Technical College President Joe Carter said in a recent message, "A little learning is a dangerous thing." It costs money, pride, and sometimes lives. It hurts families and communities as well as individuals.

If you're interested in helping this worthwhile educational effort, call the college at 754-6900 or 457-6324.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

He's Not Alone

To the editor:
 Thank you for publishing Virgil E. Verheyden's letter in your June 20 issue.

It is reassuring to me to learn I am not alone in genuinely caring for growth and maintenance of the quality of life as a decent "family beach" at Holden Beach.

I support Mr. Verheyden's position on letting property owners at Holden Beach vote on some issues. The developers and real estate operators have too long dominated the decision-making of the town commission to satisfy their own selfish and/or business interests, with minimum regard for the interests of the non-resident property owners who are the vast majority on Holden Beach as well as at the other beaches in Brunswick County.

Your help in changing this matter is solicited.

Edwin G. Therlow
 Holden Beach

Group Awaits Final Decision On Bridge

They were on the edge of their seats, ready to start, ready to release built up tensions caused by the entire ordeal. Both sides wanted a show of hands, a final vote to decide right then and there, whether or not to build a new high-rise bridge to Sunset Beach.

N.C. Department of Transportation officials quickly reminded the group that they didn't care what the show of hands revealed. It should be tough to sort this one out, to dig through all the public comments for a judge's decision.

About 20 minutes before the public hearing on DOT's recommended bridge replacement plan was scheduled to begin last week, the fire department building was filling fast. Just one minute after the hearing opened, the two sides were already shouting at one another. Both sides began asking for a show of hands at the same time, and no one in the audience knew when or if to raise their arms.

I settled back into my front row seat, luckily obtained by arriving early, and thought about the long night that was ahead. It was Tuesday, deadline night, which meant I



Terry Pope

had to travel back to Shallotte and sort out the article, the comments, the debates, before heading to Holden Beach for bed.

But after the first confrontation (the attempt at revealing a vote by show of hands), the hearing jumped into pace. Moderator Bill Garrett called on those planning to speak, and who signed up at the door, to present their arguments. The order of speakers was nicely staggered, one for, one against, one for, one against, etc.

There were some very interesting points raised. For example, I'll bet very few DOT officials or other members of the audience who had studied the plans of the five bridge alternates even saw the problem resident Ginny Barber pointed out.

According to the bridge plan DOT has recommended, the high-rise bridge that would be constructed south of the present barge bridge would join the present causeway on the mainland side at a height of 6.5 feet above sea level. The causeway is now 6 feet above sea level and floods during excessive high tides, stong storms and hurricanes.

"How is an extra six inches going to make a difference?" Ms. Barber asked. It would be interesting to have a brand new, \$5.2 million bridge that still floods during winter storms.

Resident L.R. Richie called the recommended plan "an engineering eyesore," and said it "buries the town of Sunset Beach." Many of those who spoke last Tuesday could not understand why DOT could not use the present right-of-way for any replacement bridge.

They didn't understand why the bridge had to curve, they wanted to know what the speed limit on the bridge would be and why an intersection with traffic lights would have to be installed on N.C. 179 at the bridge entrance. One resident said there would be "more deaths and more mangled bodies" as a result of the

traffic light than as a result of the present barge bridge.

"Who instigated this whole project?" asked Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association Vice-Chairman Warren "Bud" Knapp. He ended with a quote I like that sounds like it came from a presidential transcript—"We must build, we must develop, but we must not destroy."

One resident said the "Golden Rule" at Sunset Beach seems to be, "The man with the most gold makes all the rules." Another property owner from Raleigh said he "did not want beer cans popping off the roof of my house from their long bridge."

"Sunset Beach is the kind of place you read about in books," another property owner solemnly added. "You'll find very, very few places left like this. Why can't there be a small island somewhere with a one-lane bridge where you can sit back and watch the world go by."

With that, another resident opposed to a new high-rise bridge gave in just a little when he suggested that DOT remove the one-lane barge and replace it with a two-lane barge.

I wonder what DOT will do with all of this valuable information?

Thoughts On The American Dream

BY BILL FAVER

The nation's birthday brings out the feelings of pride we have for the accomplishments of the "experiment of freedom." We



celebrate Independence Day with all the patriotic fervor within us and recall the "museum days of the past" which we have now made impossible to recapture. Even with the waves of nostalgia sweeping the country, our society today can never return to what some call the "glorious days of the past."

Even acknowledging the effects of time on remembering those good old days—we seem to forget the bad—they did appear to be good. Most of us in the South lived in a small community where almost everyone professed the same values, thought the same thoughts, and behaved in fairly predictable and acceptable ways.

Most of the social life was centered around the churches and the schools. Most of the community was white and Protestant. Of course, there were exceptions. Some folks were

Catholic and attended parochial schools but they were included. Some were Jewish and labeled as shrewd merchants but they were not "outsiders" to most of the people.

Black neighbors were welcomed playmates but did not attend the same schools and few people ever wondered why. Their mothers and fathers were faithful employees who never caused any "trouble."

And there was theft and murder and tax evasion and government scandal and family squabbles and neighbor disputes. There were poor people and rich people but most of us grew up feeling we could be the rich if we worked hard enough or we could be lazy and end up as the poor. It was a simple approach which did not work for most Protestant white Americans in our communities.

When we compare this "American Dream" to what we have today, there are many tremendous changes. I'll not enumerate them, for we all know most of them well. We have a "crucible of cultures" in every community today with differing values and lifestyles. We can no longer cater to one group of people, we must recognize all people. We must give each person a chance at the "American Dream."

After all, isn't this what we celebrate on July 4th?

We're Having A 'Firecracker' Fourth

Celebrating the Fourth of July is a family affair for the three Usher girls.

As teenagers and students, it passed the usual way for folks who cater to tourists—waiting on tables.

Then, one summer about 13 years ago, the telephone rang at the Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, with a message for Susan Usher to call her sister Jean.

I ran to the pay phone outside the main office and placed the call. It was late on the night of the 4th.

"We've got a little firecracker," the thin, excited voice in Indianapolis, Indiana, exclaimed. I didn't know what the heck she was talking about, though I knew she was more than nine months pregnant. (In fact, Jean had already been to the hospital once thinking she was ready to deliver. That could have been—but wasn't—one of the first times in her life Jean was on time for a major event. Instead, as we might have expected, her and Dave's "firecracker" arrived late.)

But boy, oh, boy, has that boy of hers provided an occasion to celebrate.



Susan Usher

Every year, during their annual trek home to Brunswick County, Tony the "firecracker" Barricklow, his mom, and his aunts Susan and Carol (Hardee) and the extended family celebrate his birthday in a big way. It's a day-long affair in Southport, beginning with a parade, followed by a birthday cake with candles and watermelon and then an evening of fireworks, compliments of the N.C. Fourth of July Festival Committee. Not many kids can claim that kind of birthday party—or share a birthday with the United States of America.

Tony loves it and so do we. Last year, though, he showed up with a jam box, which he played continuously as he bebopped through the

crowds. This year, he may suddenly be too old for all the fuss. I hope not, because he's the spark that fuses our celebration.

In recent years, the get-together is more fun than ever, because we share the day with some special friends of the family, Annette and Robert Kye of Winnabow.

Robert has adapted a flat-bed truck for a festival-going. A neighbor, John Henry, made a custom red-and-white awning for the "gypsy wagon," as we call it.

We park it along Howe Street and watch the parade in the shade. While lines of traffic pass by after the parade, we're sitting out on the lawn enjoying lunch.

Later, when things die down, we move the gypsy wagon—and our own parade of cars—closer to the waterfront, down along Bay Street. From this new location, we continue enjoying all the activity around Southport until shortly before dark.

About this time, the aroma of grilling hamburgers wafts across the waterfront, bringing would-be customers to our gay awning. Unfortunately, since we have no permits,

we can't sell these super-deluxe burgers. Occasionally, however, we give one away to a special friend.

As the evening unwinds, so do we, sipping colas, sprawling in lawn chairs, occasionally snoozing. But when it's time for the fireworks even the littlest among us—usually my niece, Kelly—perks up. One of my favorite snapshots shows little Kelly on her dad's knee, her eyes wide and a smile of delighted fascination across her face as they watch orange and gold chrysanthemums bloom in the sky above.

Quietly we pack away the remnants of dinner and fold the lawn chairs.

Another celebration, another special day for the family to remember in the years to come.

This year we hope will be even more special, because we're expecting our cousin Frances Ann Singletary Roney and her three boys from California to join us. The boys are teenagers and may have livelier things in mind, but we're hoping.

Stop at the red-and-white awning and say hello, how about it.

