

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Patriotism For A New Age

In this week of national pride, as we celebrate the founding of America, let's examine that love of country usually associated with waving flags, sentimentality and military parades. Could we perhaps consider revising it?

It is, of course, dangerous to suggest there is anything wrong with the blind, uncritical attachment to America that usually goes by the name of "patriotism." However, it would be even more dangerous to continue it. George Washington himself once warned his countrymen about "patriotism of passion" as opposed to "patriotism of principle." It is the patriotism of passion that cries out for revision.

Actually, a new kind of patriotism is long overdue for all nations. If planet earth is to survive, it seems crucial that all its peoples re-think their loyalties, because we are in a new age. It's not the world of the 18th century, or even that of post-World War II, when countries practiced an extreme form of nationalism. In this nuclear age, the world faces extinction unless we all begin to think of ourselves first and foremost as world citizens, and consider the welfare of all.

Those are fighting words to many Americans. The notion that anything should dilute our devotion to the land of our birth is considered little short of treasonous. But it is that single-minded, emotional kind of devotion that has helped create the climate for wars. It is that "patriotism of passion" that sets up enemies and builds a paranoia about them.

With the dropping of the bomb that annihilated hundreds of thousands of Japanese (but that's o.k., it saved American lives), the nature of war changed so fundamentally it has become unthinkable. Unfortunately, our attitudes about war and foreign policy have not changed in the same way. It is obvious from public reaction to the invasion of Grenada and the bombing of Libya that most Americans still take pride in showing military muscle. This pride they call patriotism.

A "strong again" America will be mentioned in many Fourth of July speeches; tears will flow for the brave men who have died on battlefields; cheers will go up for past victories and present arsenals. It is hard to fault the love of country that lies behind this militarism, but it is a short-sighted, self-serving love we can no longer afford. Today's world demands a transcending loyalty and a greater love: a commitment to humanity, wherever it is.

Nations behave the way they do in the world community for reasons. Some, such as the need for land or food, are justifiable; others, such as greed or an appetite for conquest are immoral. America need not approve all the motivations behind the actions of other countries, but she needs to understand them.

Those that are valid should call her to give help, just as neighbors used to help each other with "barn-raising" on the American frontier. The hungry, of whatever nationality, should be fed; the homeless should be housed.

Immoral behavior on the part of world neighbors should be dealt with in a court of law. A world court already exists, and is presently chastising our own government for violations of international law, a discipline the administration refuses to accept. Until all nations, including America, are ready to submit to regulation, the concept of world citizenship is only a dream.

But the dream is not simply a Pollyanna, one-world ideal. There is a selfish and pragmatic reason for this new patriotism: it could help avoid a global war. Instead of building walls of suspicion and missiles of destruction, instead of glorying in national superiority, we could ultimately come to be partners with every other nation. Together we could tackle problems of overpopulation and hunger, together promote literacy, together exercise better stewardship of the earth.

That goal is admittedly in the distance, and getting there requires a good deal of courage, faith and vision. But the first step is taken in the minds of individual patriots.

May this Fourth of July be an occasion for us to face honestly those things we are not proud of in our country, while we rejoice in what is good; an occasion to feel so keenly the suffering of people in South Africa and Central America and elsewhere, we will take action against it; an occasion to expand our "love of the fatherland" beyond the Atlantic and Pacific to embrace the world as our home.

This would not be an act of treason, but an affirmation of the values held by those who crafted our Declaration of Independence. Franklin and Jefferson would say such an attitude fulfills the promise expressed in these words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

All men didn't mean just Americans in 1776. It should not be so narrowly defined today.

Have An Old-Fashioned Fourth!

Can there be anyone in Brunswick County who has never yet sampled the Fourth of July Festival in Southport? In the midst of so much canned entertainment, I recommend at least one day of this kind of fun, with its crowds, heat, and band music.

I have never subscribed to the "good old days" philosophy that all the fine things are in the past and should be preserved at all costs. I enjoy most contemporary forms of recreation. But there is something special about Fourth of July festivities that almost require watermelon and fireworks and a parade.

This is what you get in Southport, a celebration with a distinctly old-fashioned flavor. Several years of at-



Marjorie Megivern

tending these events have convinced me they know how to preserve the best of the past. The parade is a "people" kind of affair, with no elaborate, expensive floats, but small, simply constructed ones, and lots of pretty girls, clowns, high school bands, and cloggers. It's lively and colorful and doesn't go on too long, either.

That's not all! Franklin Square Park, right downtown where the

parade passes, is full of interesting crafts and works of art. You can spend hours just browsing and admiring, then spend not too much money on some serious shopping.

There are families picnicking all along the waterfront, clustered around small stages where cloggers are kicking up their heels and guitar players are strumming. Last year, ice cream cones were scooped up and distributed as free gifts of the city. Hot dogs, of course, are sold, along with soda pop.

Fireworks are the climactic, appropriate conclusion of an Independence Day celebration. If Southport doesn't solve its insurance problem this year and has to eliminate that spectacular fireworks display, I may picket city hall. It should be illegal to hold a 4th of July

festivity without fireworks.

There are a lot of other activities, plenty to do and eat and see, but I guess I love the festival for a reason beyond all these. The small-town setting, the giant trees shading the park, the friendly crowds, incline me to relax and stroll instead of run, to linger and chat with acquaintances, to smile a lot, even laugh. There's a feeling of folksiness and the comfort of being with other people in a holiday mood that is hard to describe, even harder to find anywhere else.

That's why I'm going to dress in something cool and head for Southport Friday morning with a light heart and expectations of a gala day.

What a nice way to celebrate a birthday we all share!

Life In The Sand Dunes Deserves Understanding

One of the harshest of seashore environments is that of the sand dunes. The shifting sand and constant wind that help create the dunes are features that make it difficult for plants and animals to survive.

The summer heat and the elevated areas make a hot, dry surface with loose sand particles swept back and forth every day. The constant barrage of salt spray kills back tender new growth on plants, especially during storms. Soil is low in fertility as little decaying plant and animal



Bill Faver

material is available to enrich the soil.

Plants that are able to survive in the dunes must have blades that are flexible enough to be whipped about by the wind and must have means to

prevent loss of water from the plant tissues. Some leaves curl inward to prevent loss of moisture while others have waxy surfaces to decrease evaporation. Plants also must have root systems that go deep to reach the water table below the dunes.

Some common dune plants are sea oats, sea rocket, sea elder, American beach grass, panic grass, and erion. Some of these are pioneers as they are the first plants to begin growing on a new dune. The sea rocket grows in clumps with lots of stalks, has fleshy leaves with sharply toothed

edges, and flowers that resemble rockets. Sea oats are important plants that cover the frontal dunes and are protected as dune building plants on our beaches. Leaves curl to prevent loss of water and roots reach deep down into the dune to hold and stabilize the sand as they seek the water table. American beach grass is an introduced plant in our area but is used well for dune building. Dune plants may appear in large numbers though there may be only a few species in an area.

Not many animals live in the dunes because of the sparseness of plants for food and the harsh environment. Those who do live in the dunes usually dig burrows in order to escape the elements or live elsewhere and come to the dunes at night in search of food. Ghost crabs dig into the frontal dunes and mole crickets, earwigs, ants, and wasps may live among the plants on the dunes. Cottontail rabbits, meadow mice, raccoons, opossums, quail, and a number of song birds may move in and out of the dunes during the day or night.

Though life in the sand dunes may seem almost impossible, the few species of plants and animals found there are usually very successful. Like most habitat areas, the sand dunes are constantly changing and the plants and animals come and go as the sands shift and the wind and storms take their toll. These plants and animals help provide the important protection of sand dunes—the only barrier between the sea and oceanfront development. Life in the sand dunes deserves our understanding and our protection.



SEA OATS on the dunes provide protection for the only barrier between the sea and oceanfront development.

Stick To Your Guns, Watermelon Salters

Sultry July and stick watermelon. The two just seem to go together.

But add a salt shaker and the debate begins: Is watermelon better with or without salt?

At some point in the past, I suspect, watermelon salters were as common in the South as the sun-ripened melons themselves. Nowadays, the situation appears to be in a state of flux—like most everything else here in the South.

At a national conference in Memphis for literacy volunteers, the salad bar at both lunch and supper prominently featured watermelon: in chunks, cubes and slices; on its own and tossed with other types of melon. Truly, we were in the South.

Sented on a bench at a long wooden dining table, I found myself automatically reaching for the salt shaker as I cut into a thick slab of red melon, gripping with juices and sporting hundreds of black, wet seeds. Elsewhere at the table, I noticed, several individuals dove directly into the melon, skipping any and all preliminaries, while others reached for the shaker.

Representatives of 47 states, the



Susan Usher

District of Columbia, Canada and Mexico numbered among the 1,100 conference-goers.

The woman across the table from me happened to be the only person from Connecticut. She'd never heard of salting watermelon: "You put SALT on your watermelon? UGH!"

But two people past her on the right, a Texan from Amarillo stoutly defended the habit, saying he'd given up salted melon only for the sake of his high blood pressure.

"It spruces up the taste," he declared, as the Yankee from Connecticut grimaced.

As the debate warmed up, the nine at the table divided along basically sectional lines. Those below the Mason-Dixon generally either salted

their melons or had at some time in the past and considered it a generally accepted practice that boosted the flavor.

We sometime- and always- salters were outnumbered, of course, by the northerners, easterners and West Coasters.

One thing was clear: Many of us no longer routinely salt watermelon or anything else. We're convinced it causes blood pressure problems, hypertension and maybe even cancer.

But back to the main questions: Does salt improve the taste of watermelon? Are we Southerners losing our taste for salted watermelon along with our natural love of grits and gravy?

Home again, my curiosity piqued, I checked around the Beacon office. Office Manager Mary Potts doesn't; her husband Mike does. "He says it makes it sweeter," she said. Typesetter Tammie Galloway doesn't; her husband Danny does. Advertising Rep. CeCe Gore does; Associate Editor Marjorie Megivern doesn't any more. (She used to salt watermelon as a child in Oklahoma,

but doesn't use salt on much of anything these days.) And, of course, my boss, Eddie Sweatt, does. (He salts everything.)

While doing the fishing report, I asked a few other folks. Pete Singletary at Holden Beach doesn't. "I like it the way it is," he said. "I like it sweet."

Joyce Land at Shiloh Point routinely salts her watermelon, as does her boss, Daught Tripp. "Everybody I know puts salt on theirs," she said.

Last summer, Daught, who loves his watermelon, finished off a 23-pounder in two sittings, she said. Every bit of it was salted.

Watermelon salters across the South—or wherever time and distance have taken them—may soon become only a bit of folklore, a mere footnote in Junior League recipe books.

Many of the fine old traditions of the South are gradually fading away. Folks like Joyce, Daught and even Eddie deserve credit for doing what they can to preserve at least one of the old standards.

It's This Way In Small Southern Towns

For years sociologists have admitted that the small towns are the real heart of America. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami are certainly important centers of commerce, but most of the men and women who head corporations in the cities came from small towns.

Small southern towns have their own distinctive identity. Physically, they usually are divided by the railroad tracks with slanted parking spaces on each side. Although shopping centers are becoming more evident, most small southern towns still have a viable "downtown" business district.

The types of stores may vary somewhat depending on the area but usually there are two or three depart-

ment stores, a few men's and women's clothing stores, a drug store, at least one furniture store and a bank. In recent years there has been an addition of video tape stores and fitness centers.

But the characteristic which binds most small towns together is the attitude of the people who live there. For instance, if you ask where someone lives in a small town you may

hear, "Oh, yeah, he stays in the old Simpson place" or the "Johnson house". Mr. Simpson or Mr. Johnson may have been dead for 50 years and the current inhabitant may have remodeled the house but it will always be referred to by the name of the original inhabitant.

A man may be the most outstanding person in his profession, be known around the country as a leader and recognized on the cover of magazines and newspapers, but in his small hometown he is still "Joe's boy."

In small southern towns combines always have the right of way.

In small southern towns you get a sympathy card from each member of your Sunday school class if you were

out of town last Sunday.

In small towns, mama knows you got a paddling at school before you get home.

There are always more churches than nightclubs in a small town.

In a small town, a nightclub is any room with a juke box, a counter, and a six pack.

In small towns, time is marked, not by calendar days, but by events: "Let's see, that was a week and a day after Joe Canter's cow had twins." Or, "The preacher came here about two years ago right after we got the by-pass around town."

In small towns, people know who you are, what you're doing...and care about you. Whether you want them to or not.

Bill Thompson

