

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## More Of The Same? Please, No, Not For Another Decade

Take a blast into the past or zoom into the future. This week's issue offers fuel for thought in both directions, especially given that it's an election year, an opportunity to make some changes.

Mull it over. You're probably tired of getting the same question every year, but indulge us one more time, please. What is your personal vision of the kind of place Brunswick County should be at the end of the next decade? What do you like or not like about it now? What will your role be in shaping the '90s?

To arrive at any answer regarding the future, we first have to look back, to put things into some kind of perspective.

What progress have we made as a community, as a county, over the past decade? What were the problems? How aggressively did we choose to address them? Which ones are still here and why? What kind of leaders did we choose? How did they perform? Were we satisfied?

For each of us the answers will be different, but certainly most of us would share some ideas and concerns in common. And these commonalities are what should shape the county's future direction. But that won't happen if we don't communicate what we want to the people who make decisions, if we don't get involved in the political process.

Politics, partisan or otherwise, has a bad name in Brunswick County, unfortunately for some legitimate reasons. But it is still the vehicle for getting things done, and should not be avoided by the average, upright person.

In helping write and/or edit our review of the past decade and look at the next, I've had a little time for reflection. Frankly, the experience has left me feeling uneasy and not a little embarrassed. But I should be really angry, and I'm not. Apathetic? Perhaps. Frustrated? Absolutely.

In returning to Brunswick County in 1981, it was with every intention of hanging around a year, shedding some homesickness and heading back into the "real world".

Well, almost a decade has passed. It's 1990 and I'm still here. Almost every week I ask myself why; the answer is never the same: Partly because I saw a role that seemed to suit me. Partly because I found a comfortable rut, got married and settled in. But also because I was attracted by the "boom town" excitement of a rapidly-growing county, an adrenalin-pusher something akin to the California gold rush or the post Civil War carpetbagger era.

But that "boom town" analogy is getting old, fast. And I've seen too many people trying to make a fast buck, hang the consequences, off people and places I care about.

It's high time Brunswick County left the zits, raging hormones and self-centeredness of adolescence behind and started growing up and accepting some responsibility for its own future.

A shared vision of the future? We don't have one here in Brunswick County. From our leaders on down, we're each going in separate directions. And while the ultimate goal—better lives for ourselves and our families—may be the same, we have entirely different ideas on how to get there.

This absence of a common vision is frustrating enough. But what frightens me most is the related absence of strong leadership. If you haven't defined what you're about, where you're going and how you're going to get there, it's kind of hard to lead somebody else. Ask any soldier.

It's as though our so-called leaders are suspended in a state of shock, with change occurring so rapidly they simply can't accept it, much less deal with it. They can only react—and much too slowly. Often they seem more concerned with winning friends and getting re-elected than with providing direction and decisions.

And so long as they keep talking about a problem, it seems, they don't really have to do anything about it. They can pretend they're "working" on it.

To worsen matters, in many cases—in the name of taking care of their own—these policy makers, decision makers, so-called leaders, have surrounded themselves with incompetents. Workers who simply can't handle the jobs they've been given, but are almost impossible to get rid of or reassign.

Worst of all, it's people like you and me who are allowing—permitting all this. Apparently we don't care enough to get really mad, to get angry enough to do something.

Oh, we may grouse a little over our cups at a local coffee shop but that's about it.

We deserve better and we can do more to see that we get it. We can speak up, write letters, organize people of like mind to pursue a common goal, even get involved in a campaign for local office.

I've decided what I'm going to do next year, circumstances allowing. Now it's up to you. Are you satisfied with what you do for Brunswick County, for yourselves and your families? What are you doing about it?

In making your New Year's resolutions, keep Brunswick County in mind. And if you don't decide to do anything else during the coming year, sit back for a while and watch what's going on. It may be enough to galvanize you into action.

Susan Usher



## A White Christmas—No Dreaming Necessary

Anybody who knows anything about me knew I wouldn't let southeastern North Carolina's record-breaking snowfall melt away without some type of editorial comment.

I make no bones about it. I'm a Yankee who lives for the opportunity to observe Southerners out of their element, so to speak. If 17 inches of snow doesn't put Southerners out of their element, I don't know what does.

The snowfall brought Brunswick County its first "White Christmas" in more than a century. It was beautiful for sure, but there's no denying the storm caused its share of problems.

Let's talk first about the DOT. To say they were unequipped for the storm would be a major understatement.

The local DOT office had three snowplows to take care of the entire county. They rented some trucks and borrowed some others, but considering what they had to work with and the size of the storm, they did well just to get their own parking lot clear.

Doug Rutter



As it turned out, the orange-vested men and women did a great job on the bridges. In fact, Holden Beach Bridge offered the best driving surface of all Christmas morning as I inched my way toward Calabash for dinner at the folks' house.

Growing up in Pennsylvania, all of the kids in the neighborhood used to hate people who operated snowplows. When the plows came through, you knew you'd be going back to school the next day. I'm ashamed to admit it, but we used to ambush them with snowballs and set up huge walls of snow across the street to see if we could keep them from getting through.

Living in the South, though, I have learned to respect the people who drive snowplows. I no longer bombard them with snowballs, although I do get an annoying twitch in my right arm each time a snowplow comes into view.

In general, the DOT crews did a good job clearing the roads following the snowfall. But on a personal note, how about the luck of Lee Currie. He took over the top DOT post in the county about a week before the storm blew through. Like they say in show business, timing is everything.

But enough about the record-breaking snowfall. Let's talk about those record-breaking cold temperatures.

It was zero degrees Christmas Day. That set an all-time record for low temperatures. In other words, that's the coldest it's ever been in our little neck of the woods since the National Weather Service started keeping statistics in 1871.

It's hard for me to remember the last time I felt air that cold. But I do remember weather even colder in

Pennsylvania. I was still in high school and had gone out with some pals for a Sunday afternoon of ice skating at the local pond.

Pond hockey is big in the North. You can't hardly drive past a pond in the winter without seeing some kids playing hockey, but we were the only ones out that afternoon. That tells you how cold it was.

If I can recall—and I don't think I'll ever forget that day—it was well below freezing with the wind chill factor. It was so cold, we could hardly tie our skates without our hands turning blue. Needless to say, we didn't last long.

By the way, I did get to play in Brunswick County's record-breaking snow. I was caught without my trusty Flexible Flyer sled. But in the South, you have to keep an open mind and improvise.

With an automobile providing the towing power, a few of us adventuresome locals scooted around a Shalotte parking lot on a boogie board. You know what they say—necessity is the mother of invention.

### LETTERS:

## Don't Take Volunteers For Granted

To the editor:  
 My wife and I bought a place near Holden Beach several years ago which we love so much and hope to retire to in a few more years.

This year my brother who lives in Florida came up to Danville, Virginia, to spend his Christmas holidays with us.

The temperature in Danville began to drop into the teens, so early morning on Dec. 22 we loaded up and headed for sunny Holden Beach.

Needless to say, what started coming down that same night was what we had left Danville to get out of. It did not stop, so Sunday morning we started to head back to Danville after looking at my van which had snow up to the hood.

After a couple of hours of pushing and pulling the van, we had gone about a mile, rounding the curve above Janes Seafood House, we were halted by a four-foot mound of snow and ice which I had been pushing from Barefoot Bay.

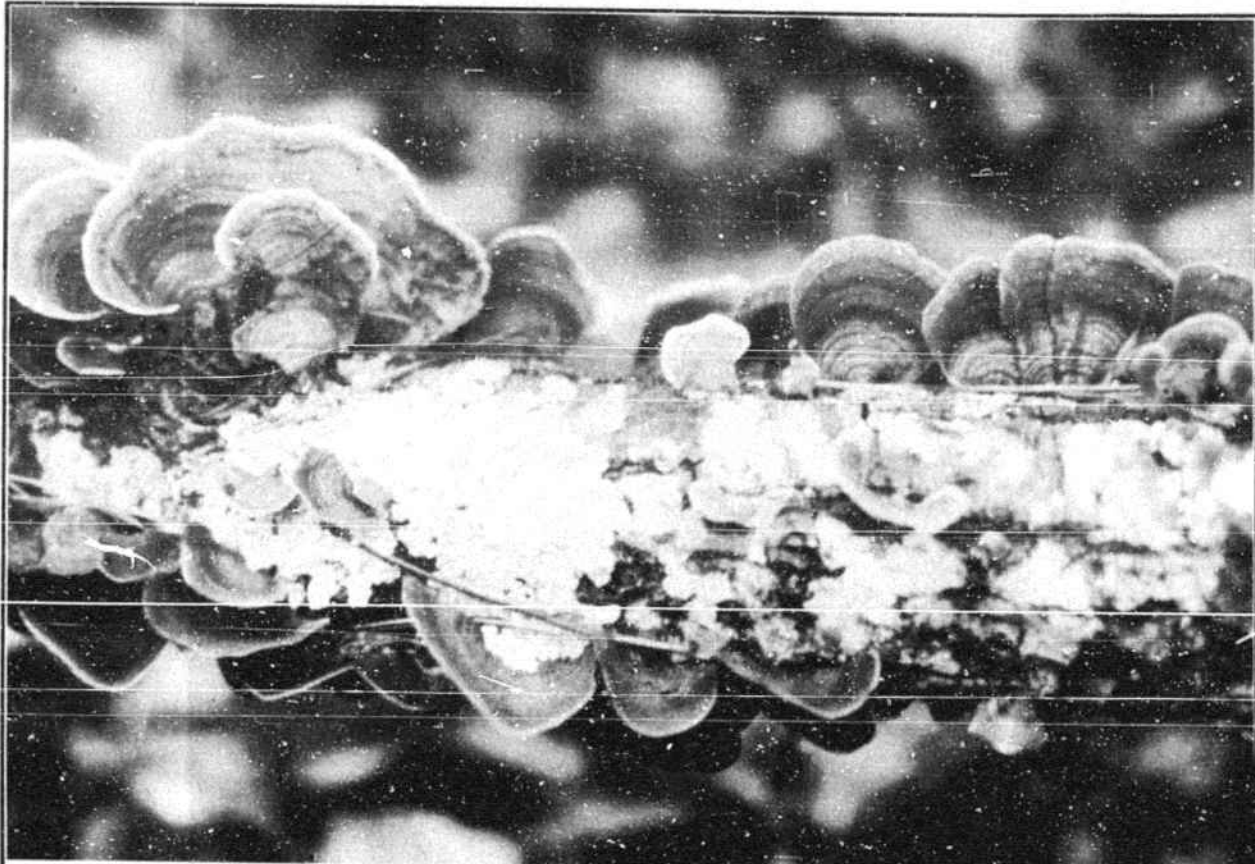
We could go no farther. Not knowing what I was going to do, everyone in the van cold and wet, I looked out the rear-view mirror and saw volunteers from Tri-Beach Fire Department and Coastline Rescue Squad.

These young men had been out all night helping people like us who were stranded. They not only pulled us out of the snow and ice, but they helped us get our van off the road, helped us with our luggage and gave us a ride to my sister-in-law's place about two miles away.

We hear so much negative things in life, and to have these young men out in the cold and wet without any pay helping people in stress, I feel there is really a Santa Claus. We take so many things for granted.

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Hodnett  
 Danville, Virginia

Letters Continue Following Page



PEOPLE WHO SET ASIDE LAND to remain in its natural state make it possible to find some of the marvels of nature. PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

## Hoorah For The Givers!

BY BILL FAVER

Some prognosticators tell us the new decade will be much like the last one in that we will continue to look out for ourselves and try to accumulate even more. We've always tried to take care of ourselves and even without tax advantages many of our ancestors were givers as well. We do have givers today, too, and many of them are quite generous.

At least one generous family down in South Carolina continues the good tradition of the givers. These folks have deeded a sizeable piece of land to the South Carolina Nature Conservancy. They paid around \$19,000 for the land that was sought by developers for more than \$10 million.

When asked about the donation, this giver said, "What would I do with \$10 million? A man can only drink so much liquor and he can only wear one pair of pants at a time!" He went on to say if he sold the land,

he would have no place to walk and enjoy being in the natural environment.

I've talked recently with a lady who is trying to give her 100-acre dairy farm to some group who will pledge to maintain it as "green space." She wants it to be useful to man and nature, but she does not want it to become just another housing development. I'm sure she will find some group who will help make her wishes come true.

There are many instruments available for the givers who want to "save" their land from development. There are conservation easements, land trusts, nature centers, parks and recreational uses. Wouldn't it be great if we could come up with a Brunswick County Land Trust to accept gifts of land that cannot be developed on our beaches?

I'd venture that they would also receive gifts from folks who want to keep their land in its natural state. We would be assured of continuing to have green space and unspoiled nature in our county. Hoorah for the givers!



FAVER

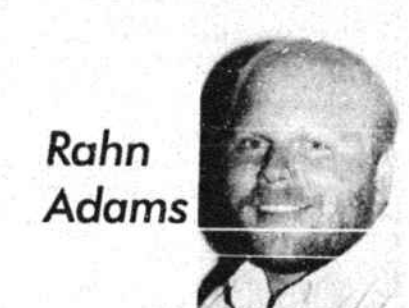
## When It's Too Late To Say 'Thanks'

The Beacon newsroom breathed a sigh of relief last week when we were told that there had been no major house fires in Brunswick County over the cold and snowy Christmas weekend. In the news business, you soon learn that a bad Christmas fire usually is as reliable as fireworks on the Fourth of July.

But Fire Marshal Cecil Logan's good news last Tuesday—the day after Christmas—was perhaps the only bright spot in an otherwise gloomy day for me. And this wasn't your ordinary post-holiday depression.

The water at my house was shut off due to a broken pipe that had drenched me to the skin in the sub-freezing temperatures of the night before. Human beings can live comfortably without a lot of things, but water isn't one of them. And I'm not talking about drinking water. At least I was warm—mainly from periodically clenching my teeth and hopping up and down on one foot. It's no fun to hear a busy signal when nature calls.

My car had to be shoveled out of the snowdrift in my driveway that morning, just to get it on Ocean Isle's unplowed streets, where the row of snow and ice between the pair of wheel ruts was higher than my car's ground clearance. I don't know why I had been worried about crossing the island's high-rise bridge; it was the only stretch of road south of U.S. 17 that was clear. But I could have handled those



Rahn Adams

inconveniences that morning. What I had a considerably harder time handling was word that I had just lost a good friend back home in Morganton. In a Christmas night house fire. My wife, who had taken the phone call, broke the news to me as I was digging out the car. It's a wonder that my shovel handle didn't shatter when I slammed the blade into the frozen earth.

Everyone called her Bootsie. I once asked her how she got that nickname, and she just smiled and replied, "Because my real name is Belle." I said she was my friend. Well, kind of. Actually, she used to be my boss. She and her husband, Ed, owned the hardware store where I worked during my college years and again later when I was between news jobs.

I was good friends with their youngest son, Bobby, who almost gave me most of the camera equipment I use now. I asked him how much he wanted for his camera, three lenses and flash attachment, and he said, "Oh, I don't know. A hundred bucks." I gave him \$150

and still felt as though I was robbing him blind.

Ed had inherited the hardware store from his father and was president of the small company, but there was no doubt that Bootsie ran the place, at least when I worked there. If you had a problem or were the cause of one, you talked to Bootsie, and she took care of the situation one way or another.

Bootsie enjoyed helping college students by giving them jobs at the store over their summer and Christmas breaks, even when the extra employees didn't do anything except add to the payroll. As corny as it sounds, we were "family." Whenever we made the dean's list, she always made it a point to tell us how proud she was to see our names in the newspaper.

I was employed full-time at the hardware when my wife and I got married seven years ago. At the time, I was pulling double duty, working from 3:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., as morning newsman for the local radio station. My store work didn't suffer too badly, but I remember spending most lunch hours and afternoon breaks asleep in the employee lounge.

Bootsie never said a word about the way I was juggling both jobs—except to tell me once that she enjoyed listening to me on the radio before work and that I had a good name for a newsman. That may sound funny, but it sure did make me feel good to know that she

thought enough of me to express her support in that simple way.

And when I went to work full-time at the radio station, Bootsie took me aside on my last day at the store and said, "Just remember, Rahn. If you ever need a job, you've got one here for however long you need one." Over the past seven years, I was tempted at times to take her up on the offer, but luckily I never had to.

My wife and I were back in Morganton for the Christmas holidays, and for the first visit since we moved away over two years ago, I didn't stop by the hardware store to see all my old friends there. I figured they would be too busy in the Christmas rush to stop wrapping presents and talk over old and new times with me. I wish I had stopped by anyway.

Since the hometown newspaper hasn't arrived yet, the only details I know now about the fire are that the blaze apparently started in the living room couch. The public safety officers who responded found Ed outside in the yard; he's in critical condition now at the Chapel Hill burn center. Bootsie wasn't breathing when firemen found her in bed upstairs. Smoke inhalation, I guess.

I sent some flowers to the funeral home last Tuesday. That was the only way I could think of then to express my thanks for her help and support. Too simple an expression. A day too late.