

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1990

When The Urge Strikes To Get Away...

Sometimes I simply get the itch to get out of town—for a day, for a weekend, just to claim some breathing space.

Just recently a near-ideal getaway guide crossed my desk. I resisted looking it over for about a week, then couldn't stand it any longer. You know how that goes.

These getaways are all within a day's travel distance, most closer than that. They're listed in the state's 1990 Calendar of Events. The calendar used to be a glossy slick semi-annual publication. This year's version, however, is a very practical tabloid size in black and white.

Skimming through its 35 pages brings home the truth of the state's old promotional theme, "Variety Vacationland." North Carolina truly offers something for everyone. Brunswick County offers its own share of the fun, of course, but what about us folks who need to get away but not too far?

Looking at just one month—April, you can take your pick, starting with Easter egg hunts galore.

Other offerings include the toney April 14 Stoneybrook Steeplechase at Southern Pines, the Chimney Rock Hill Climb, a high-speed auto race up a winding mountain road. Before and after the race, visitors have full access to the drivers and their cars. Across the state that same month there's a wide variety of stage productions, from *Porgy & Bess* in Charlotte and *Big River* in Boone, to *Cabaret* in Roxboro and *West Side Story* in Raleigh.

And you can't forget the Newport Pig Cookin' Contest or the N.C. Zoo's *Zoo Fling '90* in Asheboro. Musical performances, garden tours, hobby shows for items ranging from guns to boats—you'll find them somewhere in the Tar Heel State in July.

This calendar of events rivals the *Sears* or *Penney* catalog when it comes to wishbook status at my house. With a big red grease pencil I've marked up more dates and events than Don and I could EVER attend. (At least not all in the same year.) But if we work it right, we could combine a trip up to visit family with a night at the theater, or perhaps at that concert in Ciampi Hill. . .As you might guess, with a little bit of advance planning, anything is possible.

If you feel that same itch to get away, but not too far or for too long, you might want to check out the calendar. You can get your own copy from the N.C. Division of Travel and Tourism, Dept. of Economic and Community Development, 430 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, N.C. 27603. If you're in a hurry, why not call? From out of state the number's toll-free, (800) VISIT NC; inside the state, call 733-4171. Have a nice getaway, but don't forget to come home.

Susan Usher



The Refund To End All Refunds

Like a lot of people, I've always been very fond of refunds.

I haven't received very many refunds in my lifetime, but the ones I have received have always been accepted graciously.

I'm most fond of income tax refunds because receiving an income tax refund is one of the few times when money flows from the hands of the federal government to my hands, instead of the other way around.

The way I look at it, a tax refund is free money. It's money you never had to start with but somehow end up with, so it should be spent on something frivolous.

Sticking tax refunds in the bank may be OK for some people. But if you ask me, the money should be frittered away on things like acoustic guitars, surfboards and boomerangs. These are things that you can live just as well without, but still would like to have for one reason or another.

Receiving an income tax refund is sort of like finding a \$20 bill on the street. You always make sure nobody's looking when you pick it up and smoothly slip it into your pocket. And of course, you've got to spend it right away before the person who lost it realizes it's missing and hunts you down.

Like most other things in this world, refunds come in different sizes. You've got big refunds, or so I'm told, and then you've got little refunds.

The topic of this week's column is little refunds. More precisely, the littlest refund possible. The refund to end all refunds—one penny.

Ed Steele, a businessman and town commissioner at Ocean Isle Beach, was the recipient of this small potatoes refund.

He apparently received the check sometime last July but it didn't surface on his desk again until recently. Duke Power Company sent the refund check, which was good for exactly one red cent.

Steele said he's not sure why he received the refund, but it arrived in the mail shortly after he sold a home in Charlotte he had owned for 30 years. When the power company switched the service over to the new owner of the home, Steele apparently had one penny of credit.

"That's precision bookkeeping or it's a novelty or something," he said last week. "They did all that paperwork and spent 25 cents to send it to me."

Steele said he's going to frame the check instead of cashing it at the bank. That's probably a good idea. It'll make a great conversation piece for years to come, no doubt.

"It's a novelty," he continued. "It's one in a million, you know. It probably wouldn't happen again in a million lifetimes."

Me, I probably would have cashed the check and done something foolish with the penny—like put it toward that piece of bubble gum I've had my eye on.

Doug Rutter



Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address. Under no circumstances will unsigned letters be printed. Letters should be legible. The Beacon reserves the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Treat Serious Calabash Matter Responsibly

To the editor:
 The flippant attitude expressed in Doug Rutter's Feb. 1 column is not appreciated.

To say the people of Carolina Shores and Calabash are feuding over consolidation of the two areas is a misrepresentation of the facts; it's a gross canard.

For example, if Carolina Shores wanted to "throw its weight around"

we would not have elected a man from Calabash mayor. However, to show our good will and extend the hand of friendship, Doug Simmons was elected by a substantial majority, which obviously came from Carolina Shores voters.

There is no intention now or ever to require the people living in Calabash to park their pickup trucks out of sight or prohibiting the

hanging of clothes lines wherever they wish.

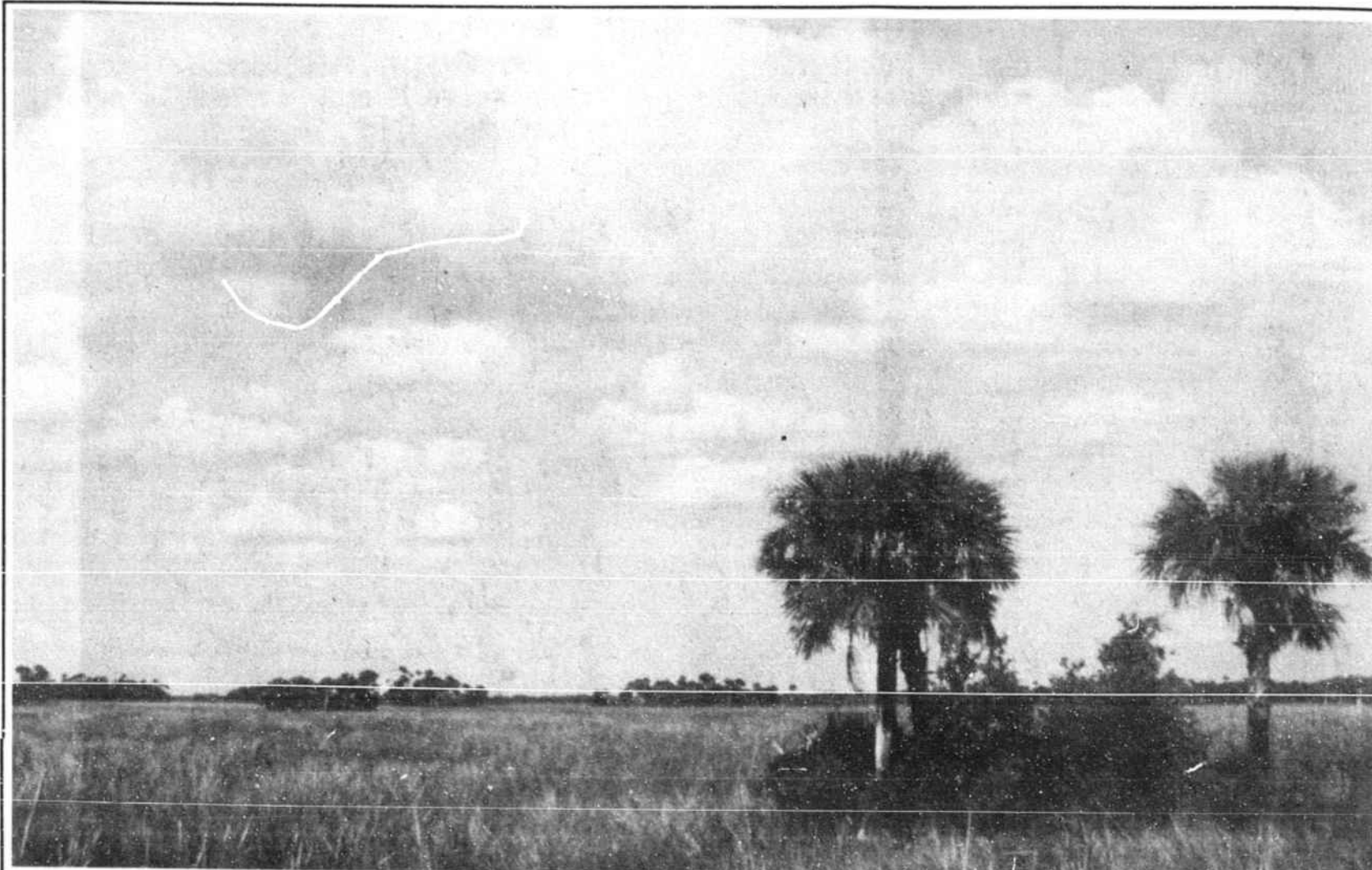
Your employees column infers there is something dishonest in Carolina Shores with 1,000 residents having five commissioners and Calabash having only two, with 200 residents. Evidently Rutter does not grasp this elementary democratic representation principle.

Finally, this is a trying time for

both communities and your "smart alec" reporter seems to be going to extremes to incite disharmony.

It will be appreciated if in the future you instruct Mr. Rutter to treat serious matters responsibly and report the news as it is—not as he fancies it.

Kenneth Manning
 Carolina Shores, Calabash
 (Another letter, following page)



COASTAL WETLANDS are important habitat areas for many birds and animals.

Our Vanishing Wetlands

BY BILL FAVER

One of the most interesting portraits of the coastal environment shows vast areas of marshlands with spreading live oaks and puffy white clouds against a deep blue sky. Many of our artists try to catch the magic of such a scene on canvas. Writers describe it in great detail. Photographers search and search for the perfect picture and seem never satisfied with what they find.



FAVER

Scientists tell us we only have about 45 percent of the wetlands that were present in the new world at the time of the European settlements. Some of the losses have come about through storms,

shifting of streams, fires and other natural causes. However, most of what has been lost is the result of clearing, development, dredging and filling, and other man-made causes.

We've only recently realized how important the wetlands are. For many years they were looked upon as dumping places or places to be filled in. We are told George Washington, Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson had proposed draining the coastal wetlands such as the Great Dismal Swamp. With all the land available, even our founding fathers had designs on how the wetlands could best be used.

Today we are told that wetlands contribute some \$10 billion each year to the economy through outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, water sports, nature study and other outdoor interests. We know wetlands are important

breeding grounds for shellfish, fin fish and birds. In many areas the wetlands contribute to recharging the ground water, replenishing the aquifers from which we pump our water. During times of high tides and storms, wetlands along the coast play an important role as buffers against the storm surges.

One recent estimate is that 83 percent of the coastal wetlands remaining in our country are located in the southeastern United States. We are fortunate, indeed, that our wetlands have not fallen to the same fate as those along the coasts of some of the northern states and along the Florida coastline. We have state agencies and federal cooperation attempting to save the wetlands along the coasts of the Carolinas. We can do our part by understanding the importance of wetlands and letting it be known we are not in favor of "vanishing wetlands."

Rub-A-Dub-Dub, Landlubbers In A Motorized Tub

I kicked a tire on my boat trailer the other day, and it went flat. It's going to be a long boating season.

When my wife and I moved into a canal house on Ocean Isle about a year ago, we decided that life wouldn't be complete without a boat. After all, we had our own dock. We had enough room next to the horseshoe pits to park a trailer. We had even inherited a spare boat—a derelict, I think it's called—which still lies upside down in the yard, abandoned by a fellow who apparently found out about halfway through the job that re-fiberglassing a hull was no easy task.

But most of all, we wanted to take advantage of living in the South Brunswick Islands, with its scenic rivers and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) right down the canal from us. Living on an island and not owning a boat would be like living in a chalet at Sugar Mountain and not having a pair of skis and a lift ticket. Or like living in a country club fairway home and not knowing the difference between a divot and a divan.

So we bought a boat—a 1961 T-Craft runabout with a 65-horsepower Mercury engine. I know, I know. All of the boating books at the library advise that a first-time boat shopper should never buy a used vessel. But it was a pretty little red boat that had been reconditioned (hopefully not by the same guy who used to live in our house), the motor looked good and ran well, and we didn't have to become galley slaves of the bank to buy it.

As I've related in previous columns, we quickly discovered that boating on the ICW—even in a brand spanking new boat—is neither for the faint of heart nor for folks who don't know their fore from their aft. I won't go into all of my horror stories again about



Rahn Adams

crossing the four-foot-high wakes of speeding cabin cruisers and trying to dock at a crowded marina when I even have trouble parallel-parking my car.

Boating Tip Number One: Boats don't have brake pedals, no matter how violently your right leg twitches as your tiny vessel drifts toward a docked pleasure craft that is worth more than the house you used to own, your two cars, the engagement ring your wife is wearing and the payoff on your life insurance policy all put together. Also, cutting the wheel sharply does little good after you've cut the motor. Take my word for it.

Our boat, which I initially dubbed *Dingboat*, looked really cool moored to our dock. It gave our place that certain ambience of being a coastal hideaway where we expatriated landlubbers could jump in the boat at a moment's notice and go island-hopping when the pressures of the workaday world got to be too burdensome. The problem was, though, that whenever we had enough time to go boating, so did every other fool (notice I'm including myself) who would have a hard time earning a learner's permit if boating licenses were required.

Boating Tip Number Two: Given the fact that the phrase, "every man for himself," has its origins at sea, you should realize that the ICW isn't a driving-school practice range. On the waterway, you must have the knowledge,

experience and ability to look out for yourself. It's life-or-death defensive boating out there.

After all, it's kind of unreasonable to expect the skippers of those cabin cruisers I mentioned earlier to let go of their beer cans long enough to throttle down. If they did that, they wouldn't have the immense pleasure of seeing me get drenched by their wakes and watching my boat bob like a cork in a Jacuzzi. And they might spill some beer.

Needless to say, my wife and I didn't bother taking our boat out much between the Fourth of July and Labor Day. And then came Hurricane Hugo. The boat has been lashed down under the house ever since then. I went to such lengths to make sure Hugo didn't carry off the boat that after the storm I hated to undo such a work of knot-tying art. I dreaded going through that traumatic experience again...not weathering the hurricane—taking the boat out of the water. I made the marina guy's day.

Boating Tip Number Three: Never keep your boat tied up at your dock long enough to let green scum, barnacles and various other types of marine organisms attach themselves to the hull from the waterline down. Not only does a boat in that condition let those salty-dog types at the marina know you're a beginner, certain smart-alecky boaters have the nerve to pull up next to you and ask if you plan to enter your scum-skirted boat in a parade.

A couple of weekends ago, we finally got around to scraping the barnacles off the boat. Well, actually, my wife scraped the barnacles while I pitched horseshoes in the side yard. I would have helped, but we only had one barnacle scraper. She said I need not ask what she's going to buy me for my birthday in August.

Now that the dirty work is done, we're ready to fix up the boat this

winter so that we can hit the water this spring. We need to put down new carpet, buy a new marine battery, finish installing a bilge pump, repaint the hull with that expensive anti-fouling paint that didn't work last year, get the motor serviced, buy a new fire extinguisher and flares, replace both trailer tires, rewire the trailer's taillights and repaint the trailer—all of which reminds me of...

Boating Tip Number Four: The definition of "boat" is "a hole in the water surrounded by fiberglass, aluminum or wood into which one pours money." We've already spent so much money barely maintaining our old boat that I plan to rename it *The Black Hull*.

Oh, yeah. I almost forgot to mention the most important thing we're going to do to get ready for boating season: take a boating safety course. Two local boating organizations have classes scheduled to begin soon—the U.S. Power Squadron, Feb. 10, at 9:30 a.m., at the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation office in Shallotte; and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Feb. 19, at 7 p.m., at the Shallotte Senior Citizens Center.

When I called Clete Waldmiller to sign us up for the Power Squadron's Saturday morning class, he said to be sure and emphasize that you don't have to own a boat to take the course, and that a knowledgeable passenger can be an important asset if the skipper is incapacitated in some way. Makes sense to me, considering all of the semi-incapacitated cabin cruiser captains I've encountered.

Boating Tip Number Five: Make sure your knowledgeable first mate pays special attention in class when the instructor goes over boat upkeep and maintenance. That way, at least one local skipper won't ruin his horseshoe-pitching touch with his brand new barnacle scraper next winter.