

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

If you live east of U.S. 17 (Ocean Highway) in Brunswick County, sometimes you can forget just how rural the county really is. The highway acts as a natural divider for the heavily-populated coastal neighborhoods and the more rural farming and hunting communities such as Ash or Town Creek.

Residents in coastal Seaside say their neighborhood is being taken hostage by both stray dogs and dogs with slack owners who allow their pets free reign of the streets. County animal control employees remain handcuffed to help residents there because the neighborhood isn't within town limits where there are leash laws in effect.

For the second time in recent years, the Sea Trail Property Owners Association is lobbying Brunswick County commissioners for passage of a countywide leash law. The ordinance would force all dogs in the county to remain tied or fenced or the owners would face a fine and impoundment of their animals.

It sounds nice for a city, but Brunswick County isn't one big city. Allowing dogs to run loose to kill ducks and to threaten residents in Seaside shouldn't be ignored, but a countywide leash law would be doomed to failure from the very start.

Deer hunters would have to keep their dogs on a leash. To make exceptions for hunting dogs would be hilarious. Then every dog in the county would start working on a disguise.

All neighborhoods deserve the same thing that residents in Seaside have gone begging the county commissioners for, a way to make pet owners more responsible for their animals. Passing a county ordinance isn't going to suddenly transform all of the county's pet owners into Loren Greens.

Stray dogs can destroy neighborhoods. This is especially true in the densely-populated areas along the coast. However, a leash law would have to become a county law affecting residents who own huge farms in Makatoka and people who hunt on Brunswick County's prime deer grounds. It would never work.

If Seaside wishes to become part of a town, such as Sunset Beach, it would get the leash law it wants. Residents there need to picture the entire county rather than just around the block.

If a change is to be made, it must come from the dog owners' hearts.

Do Crime Reports Hurt Rather Than Help?

Let's use a hypothetical situation to outline the dilemma. You come home and find your house has been burglarized. The television, video recorder, microwave, jewelry, guns and loose change are gone.

A back door has been pried open and the lock has been damaged. Your cat runs to meet you with a puzzled look on his face. You report the crime to the sheriff's department and a deputy comes to your home to take a report. The case is added to a detective's list of things to investigate.

What kind of information would you want printed in the local newspaper's crime report if you were that victim? What information would you like to read about the incident if you lived or owned property in that neighborhood? What kinds of things would you like to see printed if you were the investigating officer?

Right away, there are at least three angles to the story. Add the news reporter's view that crime reports are public documents and you have a fourth opinion. So there exists a confusing situation for the news reporter whose job it is to report about crime in Brunswick County.

There are times when crime reports may invade privacy or hamper

Terry Pope



detectives in their investigation. But what are those limits?

Where do you draw the line? When does the reporting of heavy crime in certain neighborhoods turn into an open invitation for criminals to strike again? Do burglars read crime reports and map out where they are least likely to be noticed by neighbors? Or do crime reports just reflect the criminal activity that would have taken place there regardless of what is printed in the local papers?

It's a discussion that I've had with detectives at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department recently. I've expressed my views that some readers and residents follow the crime report closely. Some non-resident property owners are very faithful readers and are concerned about break-ins in particular neighborhoods where they own property. To report about a breaking and entering in "the Ocean Isle Beach

area" rather than specifically "Marlee Acres subdivision" doesn't fulfill that reader's purpose for reading the article.

I use that subdivision merely as an example. It just happened to be on my mind at the time because three homes were burglarized there last week, as noted in the crime report.

But having printed that information in the paper, does that mean more crime is likely to occur there as a result of the story or because of the old adage that a criminal will return to the scene of the crime, to strike again?

When I took over my predecessor's job of writing the crime reports when I joined the staff last September, it was a change from what I had been doing when I reported for the *Beacon* several years ago.

Since September, I have not listed the specific addresses of the homes burglarized, but at one point I was listing the person reporting the crime. It gave the reports a flavor of "officialness," if that's a word. Usually the victim reported the crime and that victim's name would appear in the paper, so it would not be too difficult to determine the specific location of the break-in.

Since then I've done some think-

ing, as you might can tell. I have since started to omit the names of the victims or persons reporting the crime, unless it is a business, school, government building or property. My conversations with sheriff's detectives have focused on whether being less specific about locations would help curb the crime in certain neighborhoods and thus help the detectives rather than hinder them in their jobs.

I'm not sure if we have good, solid answers to those questions. I have tried to picture myself as a reader in Hickory, about 300 miles away, awaiting a copy of the *Beacon* each Thursday. I own a summer home near Holden Beach that I've asked someone to keep an eye on while I'm away.

If there is a string of break-ins in the neighborhood where I own a home, I'll want to know about it. If the paper only says, "the Holden Beach area," then how many thousands of homes are in the Holden Beach area? There would be no way to determine how close to home the crime spree has really come to my little place in the sun.

However, if it was my job to catch the burglars that are hitting the same neighborhoods over and over again, I'd side with the detectives.

The dilemma continues.

I'm The Champ Of Video Football

Remember a few weeks ago when I wrote about my first experience with the Nintendo computer game system?

I told you how much fun I had playing the tennis game while visiting a friend in Pennsylvania. I was seriously thrilled about beating the computer at its own game.

Since coming back to North Carolina, I've been giving serious thought to investing in one of these Nintendo things. I've also considered renting one to make sure I really like it.

In the meantime, I've dug up my old Atari system with the intention of rekindling the computer game fire that once burned in me like a raging inferno. As a kid, you see, I was a serious video gamer.

I hadn't really used the old Atari system very much since high school. Back then, a buddy and I really used to go at it on rainy days. Atari ice hockey, car racing, baseball, football. You name it and we played it.

Anyway, I'd been storing the Atari system at my parents' house since those high school days. It had about eight years worth of dust on it when I pulled it out of the box the other day. I really wasn't sure it would work.

I won't keep you in suspense any longer. The system works just fine. The golf game doesn't function, but I have plenty of other games from which to choose.

My roommate, Kevin, has taken to this video game system like a duck to water. I beat him at most of the games, because I have more experience. But we've had some good tank and airplane battles.

My favorite game is football. Kevin hates it. I think I like it so much because I score on Kevin at will and he can do nothing against my defense.

Kevin gets very frustrated when we play football. He usually plays for about five minutes, then he throws the joystick and quits.

He says he didn't grow up playing computer games like I did. He also says I cheat. I think those are pretty lame excuses. Besides, how can you cheat in a video game?

One of these days I expect to come home from work and see the remains of the football cartridge melted on top of the kerosene heater. Kevin will be sitting there with a smug look on his face.

Don't get the wrong idea from all of this. Kevin and I aren't addicted to these video games. In fact, we turned off the Atari just long enough to watch Super Bowl XXV.

It was a pretty good football game. But the last thing I wanted to see was a Giants victory. They beat the Bills by one point thanks to a missed field goal.

I didn't really care about the Super Bowl this year. After my Eagles bowed out in the first round of the NFC playoffs, I sort of lost interest.

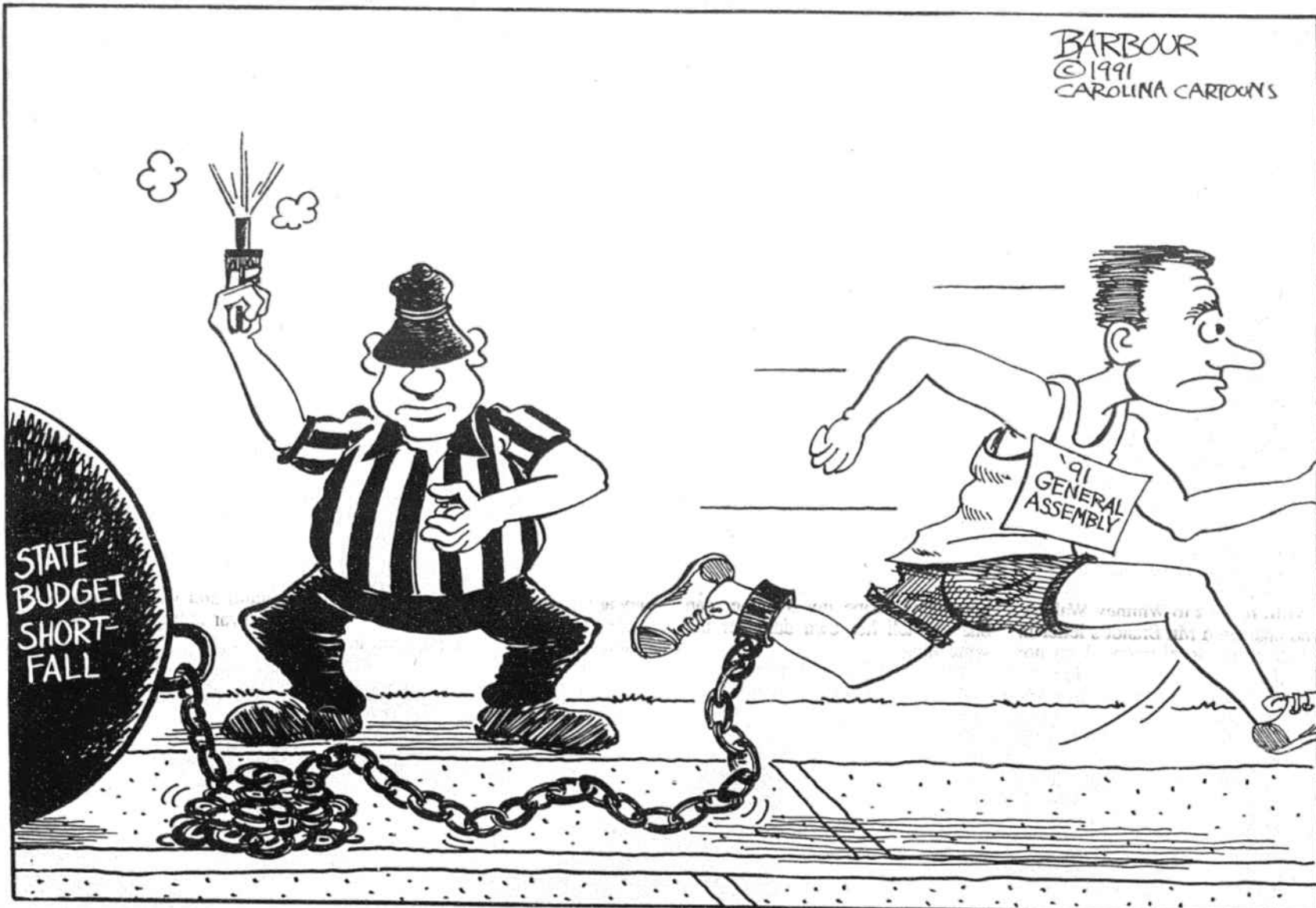
I was rooting for the Bills because the Eagles and Giants are arch rivals. They hate each other, and therefore, I hate the Giants. But that's not the real reason I wanted to see the Giants get blown out in the Super Bowl.

You see, Kevin is a Giants fan. Not only did he rub it in my face Super Bowl Sunday, he will be rubbing it in my face for the next 12 months.

Every time the Giants play next year, he will be pointing out that they are the defending Super Bowl champs.

That's OK. I can still whip him in Atari football.

Doug Rutter



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support The Troops; Support The President

To the editor:

Some say war is hell. Others say war is politics. I say war is one hell of a way to make a political statement, but when war is joined, how the warriors are supported is the real political statement.

With the present conflict in the Mid-East, our citizens appear confused. A majority say, "I support." A significant minority say, "I support, but..." A small minority declare non-support.

As a member of the majority, I support this country's actions in total. I understand the minority who do not support any part of the movement. I do not understand those who say they support the troops but not the President. This statement is oxymoronic because the President is a member of the troops.

To offer support to those young men and women in uniform we have to enlist for the duration—we can't wait to be drafted. If we are not willing to offer full support, we must be willing to desert another generation.

There is a cry going up across the nation from those who need support. In most cases the responses make me proud to be an American. For instance, my initial reaction to the war was somewhat a surprise. "Hey, those kids don't know how to fight—I should be there."

In talking to the older veterans of our community, it appears to be a normal reaction. In retrospect we know in this day and time we would be a hindrance, not a help. But the support for our young comrades and shipmates is unquestioned.

Flags and ribbons adorn the countryside—that is a great way to offer visual support.

Support groups for families are being formed in churches, firehalls and armories—stand tall in support.

Special salutes to the military are being organized at city hall, community colleges and school rooms—

stand tall in support.

Churches are opening their doors with days, evenings, and even week-long prayer meetings and vigils. That my friends is real support.

There is another cry going up across the nation from those confused about how to offer support. That is easy—be supportive in conversation and actions. There are many homes not offering a flag or ribbons. If that is not your forte, when and where does the support group meet? Did you attend the salute at city hall or the college? Where were you during Wednesday night prayer meeting?

Leave your politics at home while those kids are offering their lives, and be careful what you say or do while they stand in harm's way.

Many say that Saddam Hussien is a crazy man. He is crazy like a fox! If you want to make the six o'clock news in Iraq, burn a flag in public or shout, "Hell no I won't go" or "We offer our church as a haven for protesters." That's the way to make Saddam's day.

Let those youngsters make Saddam's day. They are offering a third cry, "We are going to kick some butt!" That is probably five parts bravado and five parts military machismo, but I like it—it is all American.

One last question, friends: does your butt need kicking? If so, shame on you. The Vietnam generation is enough to desert for personal politics.

War is hell. I tried it twice and don't like it. But those youngsters in the military are my children. How can I not support them? In their case, "it is my country right or wrong." They are the United States of America in all its glory. I am proud to say, "God Bless America, and Lord, if it is your will, I pray that not another drop of blood be shed because all that was ever need-

ed was shed at Golgotha's Hill, another man-made field of political destruction.

Jess Parker
 Veteran Service Officer
 Supply

Community Support Disappointing

To the editor:

I am very disappointed and hurt by the overall lack of community support shown for our hometown troops serving in the Persian Gulf.

Unlike others, it really hits home for me. I have a brother, 2nd Lt. Gordon Matthew Gore, 24th Infantry Division, who has been there since Aug. 27, 1990.

It's really hard for my family, his wife and her family to get through the day, but we have faith in God that he will return home safely to us.

I want to stress overall support, because the National Guard Armory, for one is doing a fantastic job as far as support is concerned. I don't think I'm asking for too much, considering what our troops are doing for us.

It would be nice to see yellow or red, white and blue ribbons down Main Street, see area businesses support through the use of ads in our local paper, or just a sign, "God Bless Our Troops" displayed somehow.

It would be great for local churches to have their doors open at certain times, besides Sundays, for people who just want to light a candle or say a prayer.

It would also be nice to see the local public schools systems also display messages or ribbons. You don't realize how good it makes me feel to see a ribbon or a message

displayed for our hometown troops.

I'm proud to be a long-time resident of Brunswick County, and I would like Matthew, along with our other local troops, to know that we support them and love them with all our hearts.

Becky G. White
 Myrtle Beach

Make Them Hide These 'Treasures'

To the editor:

The last two weeks there has been a lot of talk concerning the "green boxes." The ones we take our trash to look like a hospital operating room compared to the two permanent "flea markets" on 130 east going to Holden Beach.

It seems to us like a great improvement would be to have these folks place their "treasures" behind their buildings.

Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Tibbetts
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 (Letters Continue Following Page)

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