

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## County Workers Should Be First To Pay Taxes

County Manager David Clegg is right. In a recent memo to department heads he called on county employees to square their accounts with the county's property tax office.

It seems that about 43 percent—more than four of every 10—county employees have not paid their tax bills, or 57 percent have paid them. That's an extremely high non-payment rate when you consider that the county has already expressed concern about an 88.7 percent overall collection rate and the missing revenues that represents.

The county budget is based on a 95 percent collection rate. If all county property owners followed the example set by county employees, the county coffers—and those feeding at the county trough—would be in trouble.

Times may be getting harder. Paying taxes may seem like a low priority given the bills most households have to pay.

But county employees should consider themselves lucky to have the opportunity to pay taxes. Not only do they have full-time jobs, unlike an increasing number of county residents, most earn more than the median Brunswick County household salary of \$12,883 per year, with decent benefits to boot. In their quest for the good life for their families, many also manage to hold down part-time second jobs.

County employees should be waiting in line for the privilege of paying their property taxes.

Is it significant that this group of people is slow to pay taxes? Have they been slow in past years as well or is this a new development? If either case, the question someone should be asking is "Why?"

### 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.

## This Catalog Has Sense Of 'Humer'

Don't know how it is at your house, but Don and I get an incredible assortment of mail-order catalogs. But our latest find was purely serendipitous.

The 1991 edition of *The Anatomical Products Premier Gift Catalog* came in the mail to the office, addressed to somebody else. But with the cover promising such goodies as anatomical leotards and a Gray's Anatomy coloring book, we couldn't resist looking before taking it back to the post office for eventual delivery to the rightful owner.

This catalog is worth five or six of the ones waiting at the house. It's funny and fresh. I'd read it just to find out about Gregory.

Do you work odd hours, drive alone late at night or live alone? For you, Gregory could be the ideal companion. His muscle-bound fiberglass body and intimidating stare "are guaranteed to reduce crime" just by his mere presence. He weighs 11 pounds, and you can change his appearance with clothing, facial hair, make-up, glasses. Hand, wrist and elbow are moveable, as is his head. He comes with a 30-day guarantee, doesn't argue back and doesn't require feeding...

Gregory's just the beginning of the catalog's serious, silly and slightly shocking "stuff" that relates mostly to human anatomy, with a few dinosaurs thrown in for good measure.

Seriously, this catalog could be very useful to a classroom teacher, health educator, or health professional. For them and for everybody else it's also a lot of fun. There are a lot of "humorous" items, though all aren't in what your grandmother might consider great taste.

Check 'em out anyway:

- An anatomical model of the heart, crafted out of one pound of solid milk chocolate or a tooth in white chocolate, \$19.95.
- Bugs Bunny scrub suit tops for doctors who work with children, with smaller look-alikes for their kids. "What's Up, Doc?"
- Clever T-shirts and sweatshirts dubbed with titles such as "Bone Appetit" and "Bone To Be Wild," with appropriate skeletal art.
- Miniature replicas of body organs crafted into unusual lapel pins. For \$10, receive your choice—brain, eye, tooth, intestines, stomach, baby in utero...almost anything goes here.
- A cardboard walking skeleton puppet which, for \$2.50, comes alive with your two fingers as legs.

Want more? There's an incredible deal on a life-size heavy paper human skeleton kit—a steal at \$14.95. No glue required, but may take seven hours or so to assemble.

One of my co-workers was taken with the anatomical study leotards, but after looking at the price tag changed her mind. "I can draw them for that," she said. She's right.

But what about EarBear? He's the perfect gift for the loving mother of a child with an earache. Look into Teddy's left ear with the "professional-quality, physician-approved otoscope" and you can see both how a "normal" eardrum should look, and then how it looks with signs of middle ear infection or fluid build-up. Comes complete with guide booklet and EarBear reward stickers. A mere \$49.95.

You may want the EarBear...but you're more likely to buy the battery-operated mirror shown on the back cover, if you can choose between the one that laughs or the one that screams. The perfect gift for a practical joker to give or get.

There's more, but you'll have to see it for yourself. You should see this catalog at least once in your lifetime, if never again, just to satisfy the practical joker tucked away beneath your skin.

Sometimes other people's mail is just better than your own. This was one of those days. Happy reading.

Susan Usher



# Years Of Living Dangerously In Leland

At times it's embarrassing to tell people that I live in Leland. Actually, I live in the Maco community and have a Leland mailing address.

This is a column about an ugly situation that exists in an area where my family has lived a lifetime. I'm going to call it as I see it, and I'm sure it's going to make some people angry.

There are good points about the community that may not appear in print here, but this column isn't to praise. It's an attempt to explain my embarrassment and why I feel threatened each time I leave home. Each morning as I pull that door shut behind me I ask myself, is this going to be the day? I have a list of serial numbers of my meager possessions hidden in two places, from fear deputies will need that information when they file that breaking and entering and larceny report.

I come from a community that goes way back, where people once never locked their doors. Now, people are getting chased down and struck by pickup trucks in fast-food parking lots, water pumps are stolen from outside of homes while the residents are inside watching television, cars are hit by gunfire on busy highways, cinderblocks are thrown through the glass doors of businesses so that someone can steal jeans and sweaters, drink machines are

beat to death so they will yield a few quarters, drive-by shootings occur at nightclubs, high school ballgames subject cars to vandalism and theft in lighted parking lots, a burglar loads valuables into the back of a resident's pickup truck and then drives away with the pickup and nearly everything the family owns (in daylight), dozens of tombstones are kicked over and broken in a church cemetery...and the list goes on and on.

You name it, I have seen it on crime reports filed by deputies at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department. The stack of reports filed each week from the Leland area is astounding.

A fellow basketball official, with whom I have called a number of high school games and who teaches and lives in Wilmington, asked me just the other day, "Where do you live?"

"Over in Leland."

Terry Pope



"They seem to have a lot of people who get in trouble with the law over there. I read in the paper all the time where Leland people are being arrested in Wilmington."

Members of the Small Business Association in Leland recently approached Brunswick County commissioners to ask that something be done to beef up the patrol coverage in the northern end of the county. Businesswoman Kay Todd, whose video store has been burglarized three times within seven months, also spoke to the Leland Town Council last Thursday to ask for police help.

You see, Leland doesn't have a police department, and even if it did that police force wouldn't be able to help those outside the town limits. If the National Guard wasn't being called up to support troops in Saudi Arabia, that might be an answer to the crime wave.

The bottom line is, Leland residents are going to have to help themselves, too. Residents will have to band together. If a neighbor sees something, then he or she needs the guts to stand up to the criminals. A typical investigation often sounds like this:

"You might want to ask John Doe about it."

Detective asks, "Did you see him do anything?"

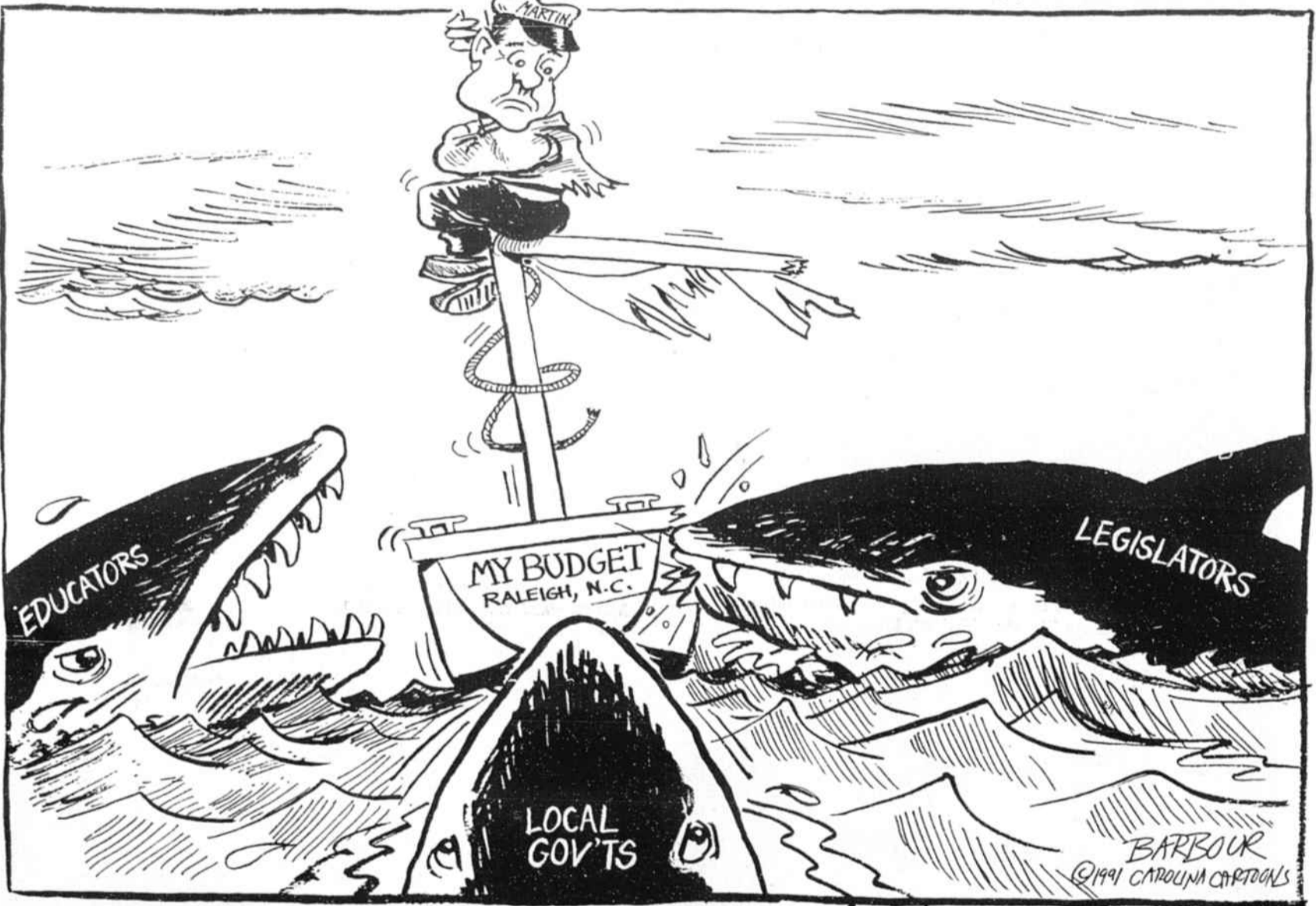
"I'm not saying I saw anything, but you might want to ask around."

Thanks for no help at all. To speak bad about one's own neighborhood isn't a very neighborly thing to do, but as I said before, I want to call it like I see it. Leland is growing, new businesses are locating there each day. The shopping centers are expanding.

But along with that growth comes an influx of people that I don't want to see. Wilmington residents have good reason to picture Leland as a haven of felons and parolees, given the embarrassingly high number of crimes that occur there.

I wish there was a quick solution, but I'm not feeling very positive that there will be, no matter what the town or county decides to do about a police force. I just don't know what it will take for Leland to become that "shining city on the hill," to borrow some words from Ronald Reagan.

I can only hope that in the end, the good people will outnumber the bad guys. It is a brave gesture for prominent businesswomen, like Kay Todd, to go public with their fears about crimes that affect everyone in the community, to air the dirty linen out for the world to see, to cling to that sliver of hope that Leland will be returned to the good guys in the end.



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## The Night The Lights Went Out At Holden Beach

To the editor:

Tonight as I looked out my front door toward the marsh across the street, I thought of the countless times I've enjoyed seeing the reflection of our security light on the high-tide water—almost as lovely as moonlight. But not tonight.

Tonight I can only see darkness beyond my door. My neighbors' houses are just dark shapes. For the first time since buying our house ten years ago the street is in darkness.

Yesterday after reading in the *Beacon* that the Holden Beach Commissioners had voted 3-2 to uphold the ordinance concerning outside lights, I called Brunswick Electric and requested that our security light be removed as soon as possible. Then I called the town hall to notify them that there would be no need for a letter. BEMC is very efficient and the matter was resolved today.

There are a couple of points I'd like to make. First, I was quoted in the *Beacon* as having said I had never heard a complaint about my security light. What I said was that the neighbors on either side of my house had not complained; had in fact been thankful for the protection they, as I, felt it provided.

There was a complaint several years ago by someone who lives five houses and several vacant lots away on our street. (He also complained about three other lights, none of which were on our street.) My husband, our daughter and I came in on a Friday night to find the security light blackened. This should not have been done because we didn't request it.

My second point is this: I've said from the beginning that we would have our light removed if the ordinance was not rescinded, not because we agree with it (we don't), but because we are law-abiding citizens of the town in which we have

chosen to live. At the open hearing on this matter last Monday night, people spoke for and against the ordinance. Up to that moment I had felt that the things we had to say were important and could make a difference, that there might be a chance for rescinding the ordinance.

Then Commissioner Judy Bryan told of her complaints concerning a neighbor's light. She said she had tried and failed more than once to get the light blackened. She said she had cooked an entire meal without

turning on her lights, just using the illumination from the aforementioned light. It was apparent that her mind was closed to the issue.

I had heard in advance of the meeting that it would be a waste of time to voice my feelings. The ordinance was a "done thing," as the saying goes.

The *Beacon* article also stated that "a previous town board adopted the rules in November 1989 following a required public hearing. The lighting regulations weren't oppos-

ed until after they took effect last November and the town started enforcing them." This is not true. I wrote a letter to the town manager and commissioners on November 20, 1989, voicing my concerns about the lighting ordinance.

I should think my letter would be on file in the town hall, although no one was courteous enough to respond to my questions. We lived in Fayetteville at the time and could

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## Recycling Really Isn't Painful

The recycling movement has been growing stronger and stronger the last couple of years in Brunswick County.

The efforts of a few dedicated volunteers who set up the first recycling operations at Boiling Spring Lakes and Sunset Beach have been rewarded.

There are now seven established recycling centers sprinkled throughout the county, and the county government is paying for all of them.

In addition to the ones mentioned above, recycling centers have been set up at Calabash, Shallotte, Holden Beach, Southport and Long Beach. If it isn't already in place, I understand another center is in the works at Leland.

That means almost the entire population of Brunswick County lives within a few miles of a recycling center. Even the folks out in Ash are only 10 miles from Shallotte.

That means people really have no excuse not to recycle. It's simple and doesn't take any time at all. And best of all, recycling gives you a feeling that you're doing something to help the environment rather than hurt it.

It wasn't until recently that I

started recycling. I thought it would be a lot of extra work. But setting something aside to be recycled really isn't any harder than tossing it in the trash can.

I also believed that recycling a few soda bottles and newspapers every week really wouldn't cut down on the amount of trash going into our landfill. I was wrong again.

In fact, I was amazed at just how much of the stuff I'd been throwing away is recyclable. Old newspapers, plastic and glass containers and aluminum cans accounted for a lot of the bulk items I had been throwing out. Now they go to the Holden Beach recycling center instead of the landfill.

Brunswick Clean County Coordinator Terry Munn told me George Bush, the man who provides the local recycling collection trailers not

Doug Rutter



the president, has collected 489 tons of recyclable items here since December 1989.

That's a good start. But there's still a lot of recyclable items going into the landfill. They're taking up space in the landfill, which sometime in the near future will have to be replaced with another one.

Guess who will pay for it. Brunswick County taxpayers will pay for it, that's who. So if you don't recycle for any other reason, maybe you'll recycle to save yourself higher taxes.

You see, everything we do has some impact on the environment. We pollute the air every day when we drive to work. We pollute the water when we build along the coast. By recycling, we give something back to the environment.

I don't mean to sound like Captain Planet or anything, but this is the only Earth we have. Once this one's gone, we have nowhere to go. We all live in the same house, so to speak, so we all should try to keep it clean.

If you don't feel an obligation to protect our environment, consider the "pain of recycling" as the price you pay for living along the North Carolina coast. It's like another tax. So start paying it.