

Some Unwelcomed Intruders

BY BILL FAVER

Last summer I read about some of the unwanted intruders in our mountains and particularly along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The article wasn't about poachers or hikers or people in places where they should not have been. It was about plants and insects and diseases that had come in and caused great harm to our mountains.

One of these happened many years ago and changed the landscape of the southern mountains. By 1914, the chestnut blight, an introduced species, had wiped out the last chestnut tree and had killed off the dominant tree of the mountains. Since the blight was a foreign and unwelcomed intruder, the trees had not built up a resistance and there was no natural control present.

Similarly, today, the balsam trees are being affected by the balsam woolly adelgid, also an introduced species. Someday balsam trees may go the way of the chestnuts and no longer cover our mountainsides.

Some plant species have been brought in from foreign sources. The Japanese honeysuckle was brought in as an ornamental vine to add some beauty to our yards. It has virtually covered old homesites and will take over any spot where it is left unchecked. Similarly, kudzu was brought in to help control erosion in gullies throughout the country. Planted along roadsides, it has taken over everything in its path. With no enemies and nothing to stop it, kudzu has become the dominant plant species in many places. Root systems as much as 40 feet deep make it almost impossible to eradicate. In south Florida, well-meaning people brought in water lilies from Japan to beautify canals and now the canals are choked with aquatic vegetation.

Too often we fail to understand the consequences of our actions and many times it is impossible to know what will happen. We can learn afterwards that nature's checks and balances have been violated and now we have a problem. It is hard to foresee what will happen, but we are getting better at it. Maybe someday we'll understand that all nature is interrelated and interdependent and we usually cause trouble when we interfere.

Results Due Soon In Check Sought By Education Board

District Attorney Rex Gore says he expects to have a report by the first of March from the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department regarding questions raised about the hiring of the county's school superintendent.

The Brunswick County Board of Education asked Gore's office to investigate after one board member, Robert Slockett, claimed personal knowledge of efforts by a fellow board member to make a deal with an applicant for the post. That candidate, Barbara Rogers, a Wake County principal, later suggested her unwillingness to deal influenced her not getting the post. She, through Slockett, also questioned whether the man who got the post, long-time school system administrator P.R. Hankins, should have been disqualified because his application package was incomplete. He had not included illegible transcripts.

Mrs. Rogers, who never brought her concerns to the full board, has since filed a grievance with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Gore said he asked the sheriff's department to check out several dates included in the material forwarded to him last week by the school board's attorney, and the whereabouts of the parties involved on those dates.

"I hope to have some results by the end of next week," said Gore.

As of Tuesday the sheriff's department had not asked for help from a state agency in conducting the investigation.

Phil Perry, the chief of detectives who conducted the initial investigation, is on vacation and will not return until next week, a sheriff's department spokesman indicated Tuesday.

Calabash Delays Decision On Golf Course Signs

BY DOUG RUTTER

The Calabash Board of Adjustment talked with representatives of two area golf courses last week but did not decide whether to allow them to promote the businesses with signs that violate town code.

Carolina Shores Golf Course and Ocean Harbour Golf Links both requested variances from the town sign ordinance.

Golf course representatives said signs are critical to directing visitors to their courses and keeping pace in the region's competitive golf industry.

American Golf Corp., which owns Carolina Shores Golf Course, asked for the variance so it can keep two signs standing at either end of Country Club Drive.

Calabash Code Enforcement Officer Ed Schaack said both signs are off-premises signs, which are prohibited in the town and its extrajurisdictional area. An off-premises sign is one that isn't located on the same property as the business it's promoting.

Shallotte attorney Mason Anderson, who represented American Golf Corp. at the variance hearing last Wednesday, said he believes both signs for Carolina Shores were in place before the town incorporated.

Calabash was incorporated in 1973. Board member Phyllis Manning said the sign near the intersection of N.C. 179 and Country Club Drive wasn't there when she moved to the community in 1979.

Anderson presented deeds to the town board which he said show that the Carolina Shores property was once one large tract of land which was later divided for the golf course

"These people have come here. They have made a substantial investment in our community."

—Mason Anderson, Attorney, American Golf

and a separate residential community.

The attorney said permanent sign easements were included in the deeds, and the golf course was purchased with the right to keep the signs included as part of the deal.

Anderson said a variance for Carolina Shores is in order because the signs are located on permanent easements and take on the characteristic of being on golf course property. He said there is no other practical use for the sign easements.

The lawyer also said the signs were not in violation when they were erected, and they are situated in the only location presently available to the golf course that will serve the intended purpose of the signs.

He said it would place an undue hardship on American Golf Corp. if the signs were removed. With the pro shop and course located inside the residential development, the signs are needed to direct traffic.

Anderson said the golf industry is very competitive and signs are needed to point visitors in the right direction.

"These people have come here. They have made a substantial investment in our community," Anderson said. "It's a very competitive

near the Calabash River bridge.

Williamson said the four signs promoting the golf course were only up three or four months before they were taken down. He said all but one of the signs was situated on land owned by him or his corporation.

Schaack said permits were never issued for the four signs. Williamson said he wasn't aware he had to get permits.

Besides the four Ocean Harbour signs, Williamson said the town forced the removal of one sign for The Pearl Golf Links and one sign promoting Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course. His family owns both of those courses.

Calabash has had its sign regulations in place since 1982, but the town didn't start enforcing them until last year. The enforcement has resulted in the removal of approximately 80 signs so far.

Williamson said Calabash officials should be more willing to compromise and work with merchants in and around town instead of stirring up trouble with them.

The board of adjustment adjourned last week without setting a date for another meeting. The board has 30 days to make a decision on the requests.

Williamson said he waited two months to come before the board and hoped he wouldn't have to wait another month to receive a response.

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If you've been curious about all the activity going on just west of Southport on N.C. 211, here's some exciting news. The gently rolling berms and picturesque ponds are part of the grand entrance of what will be Brunswick County's premier golfing community, St. James Plantation.

Beyond the entryway, extending to the intracoastal waterway, construction of P.B. Dye's magnificent 18-hole golf course is on schedule for play this fall.

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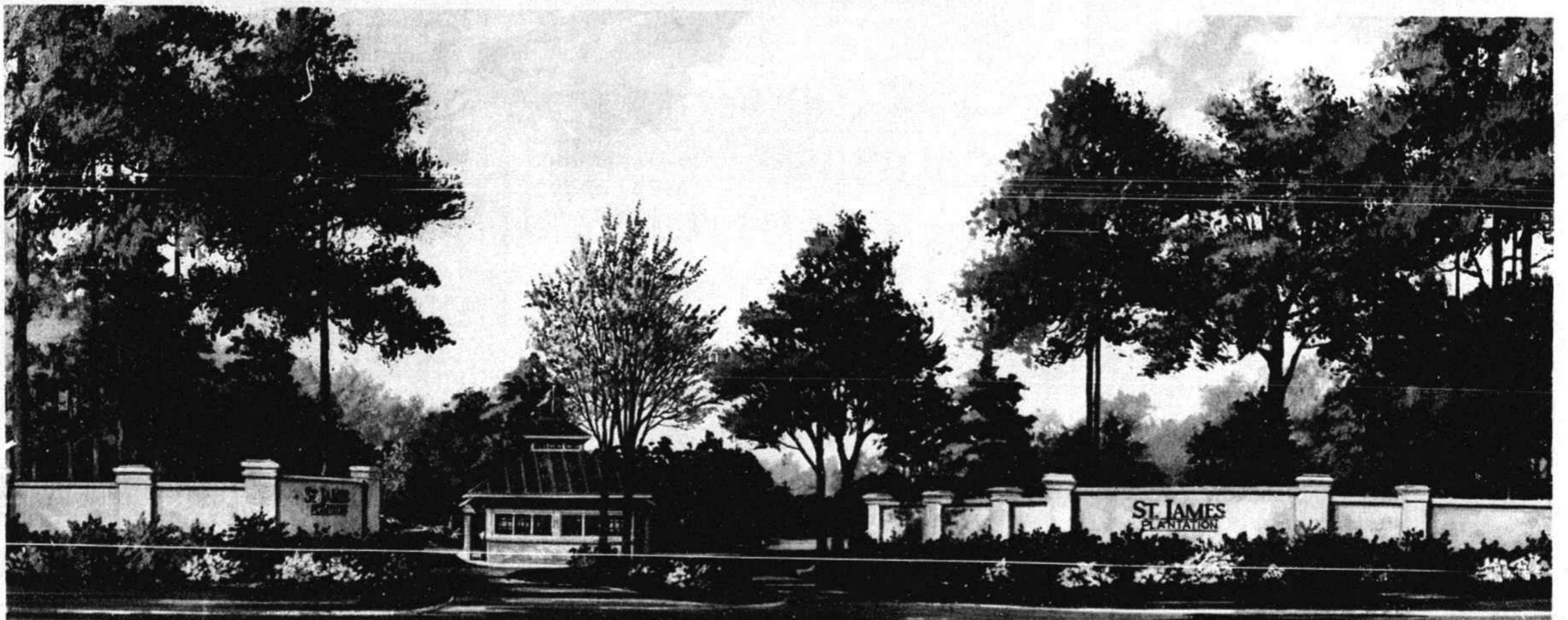
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