

**THE BRUNSWICK BEACON**

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**What's Good For Beaches Isn't Always Good For County**

The South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce is being short-sighted in trying to influence the temporary or permanent routing of the Northern Outer Loop—the Wilmington bypass and connector between Interstate 40 and U.S. 17 in Brunswick County.

We didn't hear the South Brunswick Islands communities asking Leland, Belville or other northern Brunswick communities where a "welcome center" should be located; they might have suggested the point where the I-40 connector enters Brunswick County or connects with U.S. 17, by golly, instead of the U.S. 17 bypass and N.C. 130 west interchange in Shallotte.

The proposed routing should look closely at the needs of Brunswick County as a whole and especially at the needs of northern Brunswick County, often viewed in its own eyes and that of county and state government as a "stepchild" of sorts.

Northern Brunswick is the county's industrial heartland, and ease of access from its industrial parks to I-40 is critical.

Sometimes we in the southwestern corner of the county forget that tourism may be the county's leading industry, but it certainly isn't our only industry. It is important to Brunswick County's long-term growth and stability to balance the industrial profile, not become overly reliant on a single industry. We must not fall for the rule-of-thumb that what is good for the beaches is good for all of Brunswick county. That's faulty logic.

The chamber has written the N.C. Department of Transportation suggesting what it calls a "short term plan" for bypassing Wilmington while a more permanent route is worked out.

It proposes the state route traffic around Wilmington off of I-40 by way of Exit 408, which would turn traffic onto N.C. 210, which runs into U.S. 421 and U.S. 421. By widening about 12 or 13 miles of Highway 210, the route to the southern Brunswick beaches would be four-lane all the way to Shallotte and beyond.

Then, it says, environmental studies could be done and the best route determined for the long-term solution.

"We're looking for immediate relief, something that will help us right now," explained chamber Executive Susanne Sartelle.

While saying the route is proposed as a short-term solution, the chamber request reads more like a long-term route proposal, contrasting this plan with other route proposals.

Judge for yourself:

"We believe that this bypass route will have the least adverse affect on the environment and will be the least expensive, given the options."

In addition, the chamber suggests the route could be completed in the least amount of time and would open the door for needed development along 210 and 421.

Certainly traffic has to follow some route until the bypass becomes a reality. The chamber had already asked that—and is pretty confident that DOT will—put up signs denoting Exit 408 as the route to U.S. 17 and the Brunswick County beaches. It was logical the chamber suggest the same route for a temporary bypass.

But now that chamber proposal is on the list of alternative bypass routes the N.C. Department of Transportation is taking to a public meeting in Wilmington for review and discussion."

As a permanent route that plan would be a huge mistake. The U.S. 17/74/76 interchange cannot adequately handle the rush-hour commuter traffic already flowing through, as anyone who has sat with traffic backed up can testify.

The sooner the state gets on with a genuine long-range solution, the better.

The environmental costs associated with building another bridge over the river farther north certainly must be weighed with those of increasing the capacity of the existing interchange and feeders into it.

Options are limited, given its location on a river and at the business districts of two towns.

Routing I-40 to the north beyond the existing towns would not kill business for Leland and Belville, because we can expect significant commuter traffic to continue using that route.

The rerouting would prevent the major ill associated with several other plans: cutting through one or more towns or the industrial parks on its way south.

The northernmost route—supported by Brunswick County government—channels traffic westward before making a left turn beyond the county industrial park and emptying into U.S. 17 at Bishop, near the N.C. 87 north intersection.

U.S. 17/74/76 option must be for the short-term. Sooner or later attitudes do not appear to be in the best long-term interest of Brunswick County. It does no good if those visitors to the beautiful South Brunswick Islands must make the final miles of a long journey in an ambulance.

Yes, our area can use the business that traffic is expected to bring, but the infrastructure to handle that growth needs to be in place first.

The existing interchange cannot handle the amount of traffic that would use this Wilmington bypass. The proposal to "move people" through the U.S. 17-74-76 interchange should certainly be of concern.

At best it should be a VERY short-term solution. At its worst, the route would create a need for second bypass, the Leland-Belville Loop.

Visitors to southern Brunswick County would grow sick and tired of Brunswick County and its traffic problems before they ever reached U.S. 17 south.

The South Brunswick Island Islands Chamber of Commerce may be pushing this route as a short-term remedy, but its representatives must make it very clear to the state that such a route will never be acceptable to Brunswick County as a genuine solution to the problem of traffic congestion around Wilmington.

The chamber's zealotry in wanting to bring vacationers to the beaches may be lauded on the one hand. But on the other, it must be tempered with getting them here as quickly and easily as possible. It should never stand in the way of doing what is best for Brunswick County, if not for its individual members.

**The Captain Who Never Lost A Battle**

I first met "Jimbo" Clemmons in 1968, as a third-grader at Lincoln Primary School where he was principal. It was a rough year for both black and white students as Brunswick County's schools had desegregated after a spring and summer of riots and racial violence in the Leland community.

**Terry Pope**



Clemmons would march down the mint green hallways and, in his righteous manner, answer to a hundred squeaky voices, those of elementary school children who looked up to the man for providing them with an educational sanctuary. Black, white, Indian, race didn't matter. We were all his children.

During our adjustment to racial integration, we felt safe at Lincoln for one reason, the man in charge saw no colors and was concerned about the education of every child on his campus. If an eight-year-old could figure that out then the caring and concern that Clemmons outwardly displayed for his students was surely genuine.

The news of Clemmons' death last week was shocking for it was so sudden. A heart attack at home took away this educational pioneer who served 41 years as a teacher and principal in this county and served six years on the Brunswick County Board of Education.

In the 22 years that I knew Clemmons, never did I hear an unkind word said about him. People would disagree with his educational philosophy and expressed those views outright, but no one ever lost

helped construct a cement-block building on the Lincoln campus that was standing the day he retired as principal in 1984.

The educator with a master's degree from Columbia University in New York could have picked his spot in any other educational arena in the country, but Brunswick County was his home. A graduate of Brunswick County High School in Southport, Clemmons received a bachelor's degree from North Carolina Central College in Durham and obtained the rank of top sergeant in the U.S. Army prior to returning to post-graduate work in education.

In December 1984, a retirement party was held at Lincoln Primary School to honor the man that would be leaving after 33 years as principal there. Many of those attending had to fight back tears. There were tears of joy for his winning a seat on the school board and tears of sadness at seeing an institution leave the Lincoln campus. At a time when principals are reassigned about as often as professional baseball pitchers, his lengthy tenure there appeared phenomenal.

During his tenure as principal at Lincoln, Clemmons never took a vacation, saying that continuous work was "nothing but a state of mind." As a hobby, he planted shrubbery and flower beds at the school and could often be found beneath the hood of a school bus, for he was also a very good mechanic.

I returned to Lincoln Primary in 1978 to drive a school bus for Jimbo Clemmons. That first after-

noon he stood in the stairwell of my bus, and his authoritative voice captured everyone's attention. He told the students, in no uncertain terms, exactly what was expected of them on their ride home. Think I had any trouble with those kids? Nah.

Viola Thomas, a teacher at Lincoln Primary, said it best when she noted at her boss's retirement party, "He is a captain who has never lost a battle."

There is one battle we all must lose in life, unfortunately.

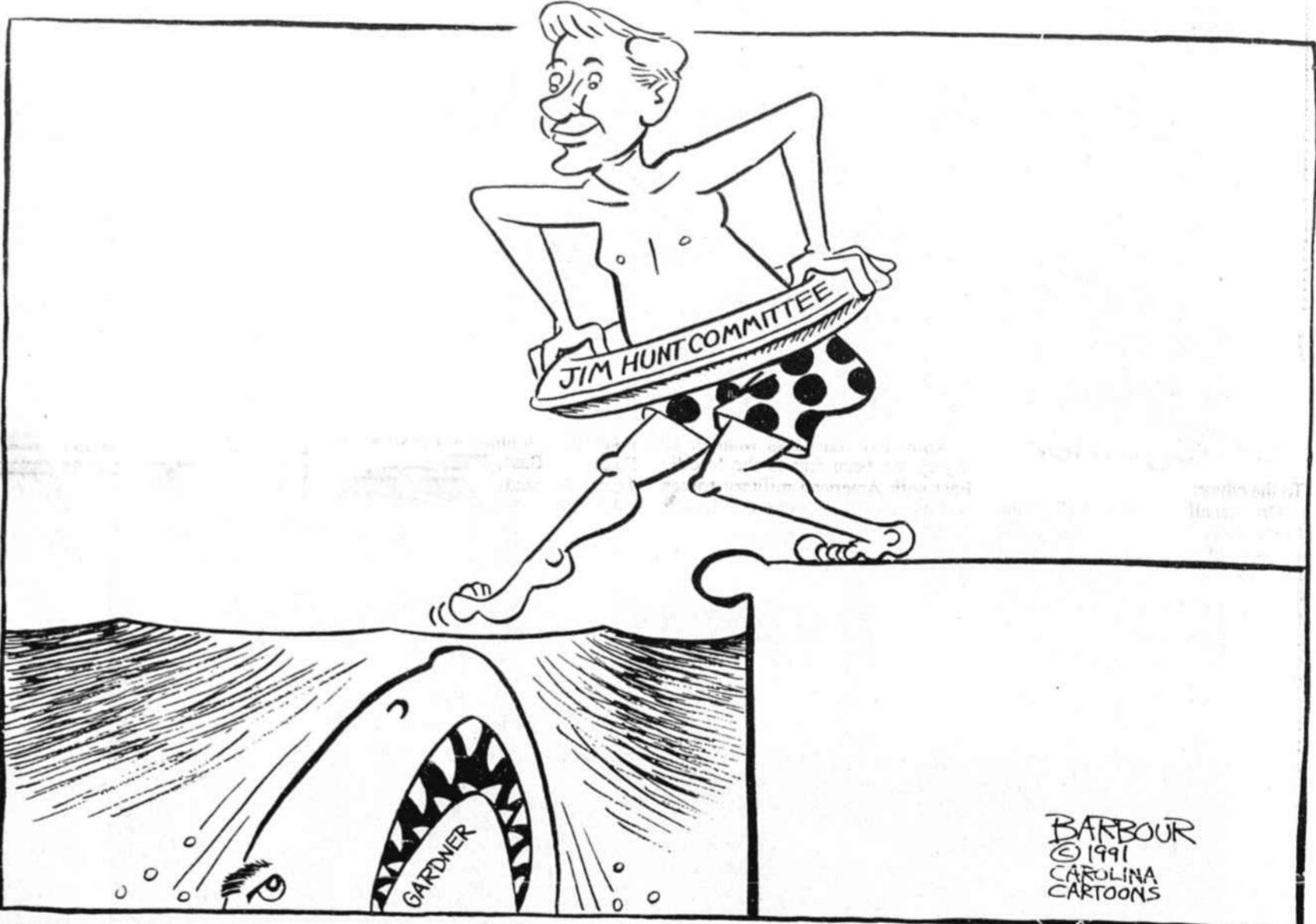
"I always had a big mouth, but I carry a big stick. My big stick was to look at the record," Clemmons once said about his career at Lincoln. "It's the kids, the actual contact with them that I'll miss the most."

On occasions since then, I've had to interview Jimbo Clemmons for information about his political races or in covering school board meetings. He would always laugh and say, "You know me, Pope! You go ahead and write it! You know how to write it, Pope!" And then he would begin to talk about everything. Everything.

Well, I don't know how to write it this time. So I'll let Jimbo say it, as he did at his retirement in 1984, just one of the many milestones in his brilliant career.

"I don't want anybody to feel sorry for me. James Clemmons has done the very best he could, and he isn't going to ask any more than that from you."

This captain never lost a battle.



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**March Madness Was Made For The Underdogs**

**Doug Rutter**



It's March Madness time. It's the time of year when college basketball runs through its final frantic paces and brings an end to another long season.

It's the time of year when the top student-athletes receive honors and Dick Vitale names his various teams. He's got the All Windex Team (guys who are tops at cleaning the glass), All Dow Jones Team (guys who play good one game and crash the next) and All Airport Team (guys who dress sharp and look good in the airport but can't play their way out of a wet paper bag).

The NCAA Basketball Tournament is special. Even people who don't follow college basketball seem interested when the field of 64 teams is announced and the festivities begin.

But contrary to popular belief, the NCAA tournament is not great because of teams like the UNLV Running Rebels or the Arkansas Razorbacks or even the North Carolina Tar Heels.

What makes the NCAA tournament so great are the teams like Montana, St. Francis, Georgia State, Northeast Louisiana and Towson State.

These are teams that have two chances of winning the tournament—slim and none. They're also the teams that Americans love to support. The basketball tournament format lends itself to upsets, and that's what makes it great.

The tournament will have already reached the regional semifinals by the time this column is published. The field of 64 will have been cut in half, and then cut in half again.

I hope several of the top teams have been knocked out by the time

we reach the Sweet 16. There was already one major upset the first day of the tournament.

The University of Richmond Spiders, who compete in the same conference as the UNC-W Seahawks, pulled off a very big upset last Thursday when they toppled the mighty Syracuse Orangemen.

Richmond's win was the biggest opening-round upset since the NCAA tournament expanded its field to 64 teams. Playing well as an

underdog is nothing new to Richmond. In 1988, the Spiders knocked off the defending national champion Indiana Hoosiers in the first round.

March Madness is all about pulling for the little guys like Coastal Carolina. The branch college of the University of South Carolina is located just over the border, down near the Waccamaw Pottery.

The upstart Chanticleers were matched against mighty Indiana in their first-round game last week and gave the Hoosiers, ranked third in the nation, everything they wanted and more.

The Chants were within three points of the lead with less than three minutes to play before Indiana pulled away. Maybe Coastal Carolina didn't get a win, but at least a few more people know they're out there.

I'll never forget the upset

Villanova pulled off in 1985. They were given absolutely no chance of beating the Georgetown Hoyas, with Patrick Ewing towering over everybody.

But Villanova coach Rollie Massimino got his team fired up and believing in themselves and they went out and made just about every shot they took. That was a special tournament for me, because I grew up just a short drive from Villanova.

In the film Hoosiers, I really like what one of the players says about competing in the Indiana state high school basketball championship.

He tells his teammates not to win it for themselves or their school, but for all of the small schools that never had a chance to play for the title.

That's what the Villanova Wildcats did six years ago. I hope another college underdog does it again this year.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**Military Appreciates Public Support**

To the editor:

I think this is an opportune time to express appreciation to the people in this area for their many acts of kindness and generosity to the military personnel assigned here. It is heartwarming and gratifying to witness the reception they have received throughout our extended participation in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

As with those who were deployed to the Gulf region, the U.S. Army, Coast Guard and Naval Reservists stationed here were called to active service to aid this nation and the coalition partners in

a unified stand against repression and aggression. They willingly left families, jobs, friends and roots to preserve freedom, serving in a place unfamiliar to many of them. We are especially proud of the job they have done and will continue to do for as long as necessary to support the return of U.S. Forces and their equipment from the Gulf region.

It would be an impossible task for me to even try to list individual and group efforts put forth over these past seven months in making these soldiers and sailors feel welcome and appreciated. They know

who they are and those who helped them in making ideas become reality. To all collectively, please accept our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

Our job isn't finished. We are committed to see it through, and I'm confident the good citizens of this area will continue to be behind us all the way.

Michael S. Featherston  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
Commanding  
Military Ocean Terminal  
Sunny Point  
(More Letters Following Page)