

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Why Use Kids As Pawns In Grown-Up Games?

Susan Usher



Since when is it kosher to use children as pawns in grown-ups' games?

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad those nasty roads in places like Shingletree Acres and Deerfield Estates were graded last week, hopefully in time for school buses to make it through on Monday.

However, I do have a few questions about the process involved and about what happens next. And I'm concerned about what this unfolding story reveals about our willingness as individuals and neighborhoods to accept responsibility.

At the school board meeting the other week we heard parents threatening to keep their children out of school if the roads in Shingletree were not fixed. They acted as though they were doing those kids a favor.

A large group from that neighborhood managed to make it to that school board meeting at West Brunswick High School, so we know that where there is a will, there is a way. If this community wants to get their kids to school, they can.

Meanwhile they could continue

seeking a permanent fix for the roads. They might even follow the example of property owners on other "private" roads and maintain or improve it themselves.

Listening the other Wednesday night, you would have thought somebody owed the Shingletree Acres neighborhood a road. And that bus service was something owed their children, not a privilege.

By keeping their kids out of school they may have sent some unintended messages:

- 1) That going to school every day isn't important. If you're trying to make a political point, it's okay to miss school.
- 2) It's okay to use kids as pawns or as leverage in negotiations.
- 3) Society owes us. This time, it's

a road. What about next time?

It reminded me of some of the Florida residents I saw on television after Hurricane Andrew made its devastating sweep across that state. They were standing around asking, "I'm a taxpayer. Where's the government?" instead of pitching in to do what they could for themselves.

I've watched over a period of years as Shingletree Acres residents have tried everything in the book to get their roads to qualify under one state rule or another. Now that it's clear the area isn't going to qualify under the old subdivision rules, their spokesman is trying to get the state to take over the roads because, he contends, they existed but were overlooked when the state began taking over roads from the counties some years ago. They may have been.

If he can actually prove that, it might get the state off the hook: DOT could probably justify taking over maintenance there without taking over all the other roads in the county that don't meet state requirements.

Meanwhile the Shingletree Acres roads are private. That means their

upkeep is the responsibility of the people who live in that subdivision, as are hundreds of other private roads, paved or unpaved, across the county.

That's partly because while other counties across the state required developers to install roads that met state standards, for approximately a decade Brunswick County did not.

County commissioners, like the U.S. Cavalry, came to the rescue last week of residents of roads like those in Shingletree Acres, saying it would grade, one time only, roads in the process of being taken over by the state.

But what will happen if that "when" because I am an optimist the DOT finds that it cannot quality some or any of these roads for state maintenance? If those parents return with the same demands, will the county keep going back and grading again although roads are no longer, by law, a county responsibility?

And, voters, if you've got a problem you don't care to handle yourself, have you thought about talking to the commissioners? Better hurry, the line's already forming.

Some 'Unity' In 'Community' Can Improve Our Report Card

Take a look at Susan Usher's column to your right. Now read the letter below by Buster Gillis. Think back to a few weeks ago when you learned that the Brunswick County schools system, for the third year in a row, ranked near the bottom on its state school report card.

The link between these seemingly unrelated incidents? They constitute a vivid illustration that what Brunswick County's public education system most seriously lacks is the "unity" that belongs in "community."

What are children to believe when their parents will offer them a chance to stay home and play when the road is too muddy for the bus to come? Nothing positive about activism; only that you can always get some attention if you're willing to cut off your nose to spit your face.

What are children to learn when a teacher offers them the opportunity to ante up a dollar a point for extra credit, even if part of that dollar will be donated back to the school? That everything's for sale, a tenet to which we adults often subscribe, but to which we should insist our children be exempt. And that, as long as you can come up with the dough, why settle for earning a C if you can buy a B without doing (or learning) anything extra?

These are strong reminders of the fact that a community-wide commitment to education—to the joy of knowledge for its own sake, and for the sake of the greater good—is the only way to solve problems that may manifest themselves inside the schools, but that by no means began or will end there.

Until the community of parents and educators working together can demonstrate their commitment to the belief that going to school is children's most important endeavor, and that instilling the love of learning is pivotal to children's success in school, nothing else we try will have much chance of succeeding.

Worth Repeating...

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never. In a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common. This is to be my symphony.

—William Henry Channing



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Are Students Earning A Grade Or Buying A Grade?

To the editor:
I guess I'm old-minded when it comes to schools and education. Back in the '60s when you went to school, you dressed neatly, kept your hair cut in a neat fashion and kept your shirttail tucked in.

If you didn't, the principal sent you home with a note to get a haircut, and you were punished the second time you were caught with your shirttail out.

You didn't talk back to a teacher. If you did, you were sent to the office and punished, or even suspended for a week.

If you skipped school and were caught you were suspended for a week also.

But now, if you talk back to a teacher, nothing is done or said. If you skip school up to 10 days, nothing is done. After 10 days, you have to go on Saturdays and make up every day over the 10-day limit. No expelling these days; it would be rewarding the kids today.

I thought all this was bad, but this week I think I heard it all. Now you can build your grade up by eating at a local fast food restaurant. That's right. Students in one class this past Tuesday could, by eating at this restaurant, add to their grade by as much as 10 points. This was done by giving the kids a point per dollar spent at this restaurant if they brought their receipts in to class.

To me this is not earning an education, but buying a grade instead. It makes you wonder where the teachers went to school to learn this kind of grading.

This is not only ineffective but discriminatory. What if a family is short on cash with parents not working or sick and not able to afford to give their kids money to go to a fast food restaurant to eat?

Say a kid had a 70-point grade and had to work to get it and another had a 60-point grade and went to this restaurant, spent \$10 and carried his receipt to class for the 10 points.

Is this fair to the one who worked for the 70 grade for the other to buy 10 points and get the same grade?

What do you think about this way of giving grades?
Buster Gillis
Shallotte

Writer Takes Offense At Column About Road

To the editor:

Ugh. No other word can encompass the degree of disgust I felt when I, a 19-year-old native of Hale Swamp Road, read the slanderous and, above all, offensive column your daggy little paper's news editor, Susan Usher, wrote.

I have a few questions for the Usher woman. Of what exactly were you thinking when you penned that article? Were you thinking at all? Did you think that no resident on this "attention-starved" road would take personal offense at what you wrote?

Perhaps you didn't figure that there would be a resident literate enough to understand your wacked patronage, sly gentility, and sham aesthetics.

Even though your columns appear on an "opinion page," you don't and never will possess the right to refer to someone's dwelling, someone's home, as a "tumbling-down shack" or a "decrepit trailer."

Do you know our circumstances? Do you really care? Or does your primary concern rest in the fact that this "miserable road" will lead you to the beach? Have you ever considered Highway 179? Why not use it?

In the future, I hope that Ms Usher will hone her writing skills (does she have any?) and produce something that won't make her look like, say, someone who's gotten too big for their thrift store Levi cords. In the method of the comic Denis Leary: I think you hear me knockin', Susan. And I think I'm comin' in. And I'm bringin' a rusty trailer, a junk car, and the rest of my "miser-

able" little road with me.

Bridget Hill
Shallotte

Don't Overlook The Bridgetender

To the editor:

Solitude spreading around his shoulders like a cloak, his day begins as sunlight reflected from the windswept water casts minute sparkles through the windows of his

floating "office."

Knowing that this lonely existence is of extreme importance to people he'd never met and probably would never see again, he smiles and waves to strangers who, in their frenzy to keep an appointment or not to miss a tee time, hardly acknowledges this gesture.

It seems not to bother him that the nature of his job causes this attitude.

As the day slips by like the tide, tempers flare hotter as scurrying va-

ditioners realize that they are at the mercy of this one person. Scorned, cursed and almost never praised, he goes about his business calmly, allowing cars to travel on the causeway and then boats to traverse the choppy waters of the Intracoastal Waterway.

The person who can control the lives of so many for such a short period of time is, of course, the bridgetender at Sunset Beach.

The fact that he has rules to fol-

low as to the opening and closing of the bridge has no meaning to most of the people waiting. It is so much easier to simply blame him for their inconvenience.

Would it really be so bad if we smiled, waved and said "thank you" to someone who has the responsibility of bringing some order to this tiny part of our world?

John Sellers
Sunset Beach
(More Letters, Following Page)

A Nose, By Any Other Name, Would Smell

Several of my friends from far away subscribe to the *Beacon*, even though they've never been to Brunswick County. When I talk to them on the phone, they invariably ask:

"Where did all those unusual place names like Exum and Makatoka and Navassa and Bald Head originate?"

Well folks, after much painstaking research, I have unearthed some astounding information about the history of some of our regional appellations.

For example, few people realize that our county seat of Bolivia was named after Simon Bolivar, the freedom fighter who helped Brunswick County win its independence from Spain in the early 1800s. He later waged similar campaigns of liberation in South America.

Shallotte, as most of you know, was so called by early French settlers who used to sell green onions (eschallotte) from roadside stands. Subsequent generations have resisted the temptation to change the town's name to "Collard" or "Shrimp" or "Yard Sale."

Winnabow was likewise named for signs that used to appear along the road advertising weekly turkey shoots. Competitors would fire arrows at targets in hopes of taking

home the first prize—a new bow.

Contrary to popular belief, the emperor Napoleon never came ashore at Bonaparte Landing. Actually, the area was fondly remembered as the site of a major New Years Eve bash held by Shallotte residents who gave it the French name "Bon" (good) "Parte" (party). Likewise, another favorite relaxation area to the east came to be known as "Casual Beach."

It was the Irishman Shawn O'Grady who named one of the South Brunswick Islands after his mother's favorite expressions. Whenever he got into mischief, she would exclaim: "Oh, Shawn! I'll be!" Visitors had trouble remembering this, especially after a wee dram of Shawn's homemade whiskey, so it became Ocean Isle Beach.

A fellow named Ned Loh was the first man to set foot on what we now know as Holden Beach. Unfortunately, old Ned suffered from severe

dyslexia and wrote his name backwards on the signs identifying the strand along his island.

The community of Ash was built on the ruins of an ancient Indian village destroyed by a volcano that erupted in the early 1600s. The violent explosion left no trace of the 4,000-foot mountain that once stood there, replacing it with a thick coating of ash.

Little is known about the Viking invaders who came to Brunswick County many years before the great navigator Christopher Columbus miscalculated his position by a mere 15,000 miles and "discovered" the Bahamas. But they gave us many of our place names in eastern Brunswick County.

We know that the place must have reminded those seafaring Scandinavians of their home, because they named the community of Malmo after a city at the southern tip of Sweden. A nearby area where the harsh winter winds were blocked by tall pine trees was considered the "Lee Land." And the spot where they manufactured church bells became "Belville."

But alas, these Norse ancestors of mine were not terribly imaginative and soon ran out of good names. So when they established another settlement off to the northwest, the best they could come up with was "North

West." They didn't do much better when naming their "south port" or their fishing grounds "along the beach."

Several other communities in our county owe their names to early residents who were homesick for their birthplaces far away.

Hence we have Navassa, which was settled by voyaging expatriots from the lovely island of Navassa in the West Indies. And Sunset Beach, whose first inhabitants were shipwrecked Hawaiian surfers who longed for the pounding breakers of their home on the North Shore of Oahu.

More recent settlers likewise named their new homes for places they longed for elsewhere.

The first residents of Waccamaw, for example, so named their new home because it gave them easy access to nearby outlet malls in South Carolina. Calabash residents were similarly fond of restaurant row in Myrtle Beach.

Like the meats, cheeses and vegetables on a super-supreme pizza, the amazing variety of these place names reflects the rich diversity of our ethnic heritage.

The United States may be the world's great melting pot, but we have the good fortune to live in America's great Brunswick Stew.

Eric Carlson

