

Familiarity Breeds...Bubba

In defense of the rights of all human subpopulations, including Southern white males, not to be stereotyped, let me just say one thing: Bubba indeed.

It seems that along with our new president we get "Bubba" magazine, "Celebrating the First Bubba President."

And the gourdheads among my own subpopulation of newspaper reporters and editors aren't embarrassed to go after it like flies on a roadkill with writing like this:

"If you measure stock performance in NASCAR points, rather than Dow ones, read on.

"If you thought 'thirtysomething' was how many beers \$15 ought to buy at the 7-Eleven, your time has finally arrived along with that fella from Razorback country."

It makes me want to retch, and not because I perceive Bill Clinton as any kind of sacred cow. Quite the contrary. Tear him to shreds for his ideology, his economic policy, his position on gays in the military, his dalliance with Gennifer Flowers or the letters he wrote in college.

Knock yourself out making fun of his hair, his thighs, his saxophone playing, his wife's hat and his daughter's cat.

But before you defend this Bubba thing as all in fun, ask yourself whether my colleagues at the Associated Press would embrace in the same spirit of mirth a new publication making chinlin' and watermelon jokes about a newly elected President Jesse Jackson.

Or if they would giggle along in such good nature if Mario Cuomo or

Lynn Carlson



Paul Tsongas were the new commander in chief, and be as eager to publicize materials satirizing their respective Italian and Greek heritage.

No, I'm pretty sure that somewhere between Boss Hogg and Steppin' Fetchit is where the sacred cow boundary lies. And, to borrow a Bubba-ism, that dawg won't hunt.

The ugly stereotype of Southerners as slack-jawed inbreeding imbeciles got fresh national media exposure a couple of months ago when Georgia native and former "Today Show" talking head Deborah Norville turned her incisive gaze on the Kenneth Register murder trial in South Carolina.

In a decidedly pro-Register piece broadcast nationwide in the middle of the trial, one of Norville's interview subjects concluded that Register's DNA samples would be inconclusive because Conway, S.C., like many small Southern towns, is so inbred that, heaven knows, everybody's genetic fingerprint looks just alike.

Uncle Granddaddy and I agreed to give it an A for imagination. The

jury, nonetheless, sent Register up the river.

Some of my journalistic peers are also having a ball with the Calabash-Carolina Shores separation issue on the same grounds, of course.

That old Civil War analogy is just too tasty for them to pass up—it's so much more colorful than the mundane reality that Districts 1 and 2 are for the most part squabbling over grass-mowing, neon signs and garbage hauling.

Besides, when you whip up a little "Grapes of Wrath" or "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" imagery, you've got yourself a story people can hold onto.

Here, pick a stereotype: —Hard-working salts of the earth struggle against the oppression of a throng of restless Carpetbaggers who no longer have to make a living and are determined to make it impossible for anyone else to, in the process breaking the spirit and defiling the heritage of this quaint fishing village; OR

—Slovenly backwoods Rebels resist and fail to appreciate the effective, efficient government developed for them as a precious gift by their more experienced and sophisticated new neighbors from the urbane North who have given themselves unflinchingly to toiling in the vineyards of the common good.

It may be clever stuff to read if you have no contact with the realities at hand, but it's wearing a little thin around this neck of the woods. Ain't it, Billy Bob?



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

Ocean waters mean more to us than recreation; our very life depends upon them.

The Great Moderator, Equalizer

BY BILL FAVER

Those of us who live near the ocean and enjoy all its benefits sometimes forget how important it is to all of life. We overlook the fascinating creatures the oceans provide, and we take for granted the cycles which are dependent upon the waters for their functioning.

In a beautiful and well-written volume called, *The Water World*, published in 1885, Professor J.W. Van Dervoort, reminded us:

The ocean is essential to the existence of man and of all vegetation; it is the great moderator and equalizer of terrestrial climates, purifying the atmosphere that we breathe and sending off a perpetual supply of vapors, which condense into clouds, and are the sources of moisture and fertility to the soil. We must also think of the facilities afforded for an intercourse with distant nations. It has been remarked that contact with the ocean has unquestionably exercised a beneficial influence on the

cultivation of the intellect and formation of the character of many nations, on the multiplication of those bonds which should unite the whole human race, on the first knowledge of the true form of the earth, and on the pursuit of astronomy, and of all the mathematical and physical sciences.

Another important part of the ocean world is the effect of the water on the emotions and feelings. We enjoy the attempts of poets and writers when they express our feelings and our longings in their words. We experience the healing and restorative powers of the waters, whether or not we enter them. We feel the breezes and the sunshine and know release and hope and renewal.

The professor also observed, "It is so fixed and true in its work that nothing can throw it out of gearing." That may have appeared true in 1885, but 100 years later we know the "great moderator and equalizer" is in real danger from pollution, development, over-fishing, and global warming.

We need again to affirm the importance of the oceans to our own physical and emotional well-being, along with all of life.

FAVER

GUEST COLUMN

'Packing' For School: Violence In North Carolina Classrooms

BY THOMAS C. GOOLSBY

Going to a North Carolina public school is becoming more and more of a dangerous proposition, with education becoming a distant second concern behind the physical safety of students.

Violence in our schools is becoming such a problem that, just as in many other parts of the country, scores of public school teachers are now choosing to send their own children to private schools. The concern for their children's safety and the desire for children to learn the three "R's"—something that is becoming increasingly difficult for public school students to accomplish—is the main motivation behind this trend.

Over the past several years, the incidence of students carrying guns to school in North Carolina has risen dramatically. The Juvenile Law Study Commission and the School Board Association are both supporting bills before the General Assembly that are designed to hold parents responsible for negligently allowing their children to carry guns to school.

Firearms in schools are now a fairly common event to read about in the newspaper. Perhaps the most shocking part of the situation is that many times the students carrying the guns to school are the "good guys and gals." They are otherwise good kids who have decent grades and no past discipline problems. They are packing a gun to school in an attempt to protect themselves or their friends from the more seedy elements in public education.

What's the answer to violence and fear in the public schools? Let's look back to when public education worked better than it does now. When I was in school, the teachers and school administrators had the authority and the power to punish. I feared the wrath of my teachers much more than the wrath of any

bully. I never feared for my life, and it never crossed my mind to bring a gun to school in order to protect myself from the threats of the class bullies.

If kids were really bad, the juvenile justice system plucked them from the public school and they went off to "reform" school for "extended periods," not the "extended vacations" of today. Nor were the bad boys and girls merely kicked from one school to another as is standard policy in many instances today. The constant troublemakers who were not bad enough to be sent off to reform school were placed in a special class run by a big, gruff and mean "coach" who basically baby-sat these uneducable miscreants until they reached age 16 and could drop out of school.

Was this policy cruel and uncaring? Under today's standards of coddling criminals and ignoring victims, yes it probably was. But back when I was in school, education had the top priority and the psychobabble of modern school counselors and the complaints of the other, all too numerous, "administrators" whose jobs involve anything but education, were rarely heard. The students who wished to receive an education were allowed to do so, free from the fear and intimidation of young thugs, drug dealers and gang members.

Today we choose to sacrifice the

potential of many good students for the much talked about, but rarely seen, rehabilitation of the few young criminals in our public schools. The good suffer and the bad merely get worse. We hire more counselors to help everyone "talk out" their problems. We employ more security guards, write more laws and purchase metal detectors. We are more than happy to write off the good students and any chance that they might have in making something of themselves because we don't want to admit that some kids are too far gone for public education.

It's time for the politicians, school administrators and public safety officials to come down from their ivory towers and face the real world. Our children are in school to be educated, not to perform some type of social experiment. Our schools must be made safe, and we have our own past to guide us.

"Kick the bums out" if need be. Place the priority on the education of the educable children and keep the thugs out of our schools. Make the North Carolina school system a safe environment where children are free to learn, not a haven for young criminals and brutes to prey upon the helpless who will learn nothing but fear and victimization.

Thomas Goolsby is the editor of *Carolina Syndicated Columns* and an attorney in Durham.

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MORE LETTERS

If Government Waste Were Cut, We Could Afford Needs, Wants

To the editor:

After reading Mr. Carlson's column in the Feb. 25 issue of the *Beacon*, I came to the conclusion that he, as I, should have been born at the turn of the century, when times were not as complicated.

I agree that the owner of Bird Island has every right to develop her property. After all, didn't the early owners of Holden, Ocean Isle and Sunset beaches have that right? I also agree that it would be wonderful to have the funds to purchase Bird Island and preserve its natural beauty.

We would have had these funds if our government had not spent so much money to study gas emissions from cow "flatulence." Now, if you don't know what that word means, I suggest you get out your dictionary because \$19 million of our tax dollars was spent just for that study.

Shallotte Inlet and Tubbs Inlet are in serious need of dredging. We could do this, but again, our government chose to spend \$2 million to construct a replica of an ancient Hawaiian canoe.

Holden Beach wants their canals dredged, but NO!! Their tax money went to a private institution to study the sex life of Japanese quail—\$107,000 worth.

Sunset Beach and Holden Beach need a sewer system. Maybe they could use some of the \$350,000 in tax money spent to renovate the House Beauty Salon; part of the \$800,000 spent for a restroom on Mt. McKinley; the \$100,000 spent to study how to avoid falling spacecraft; or one of the most ridiculous government expenditures, that of a study costing us \$160,000 to see if

you can hex an opponent by drawing an X on his chest!

These are not figures that were just pulled out of the air. They came right out of the federal budget.

So here we sit in Brunswick County with our beaches eroding and our septic tanks backing up, while our congressman voted to spend \$6 million to upgrade the two-block-long Senate subway.

It appears to me that every time our government gets a piece of ham, we should, at least, get a piece of bologna. So come on, Congressman Rose, did you really need to spend \$57,000 for gold-embossed playing cards for Air Force Two, or \$10,000 to study the effect of Naval communications on a bull's potency?

It would probably have been okay to spend all those millions to rehabilitate the S.C. mansion of Charles Pinckney, a framer of our Constitution. Unfortunately, the house was built after he died. Let's face it, we needed more of that tax money to put with the \$150,000 we spent to study the Hatfield-McCoy feud.

Maybe I'm wrong for thinking that our government is wasting our tax dollars, but I didn't come down in the last shower of rain. I'm sure that feud was over years ago!

Now it appears that our government needs more of our hard-earned tax dollars to pay for more of these absurd projects.

Ken Proctor
Ocean Isle Beach

Do Retirees Count?

To the editor:

We are being told that the wealthy will bear the brunt of the

proposed tax increases and that the increases are fair. Those who are retired and drawing Social Security benefits need to take a close look at how they will be affected. The current threshold that triggers federal taxability of 50 percent of Social Security benefits is \$32,000 for a couple. The test for that threshold is arrived at by totaling adjusted gross income plus any non-taxable interest income plus 50 percent of Social Security benefits.

Let us assume a couple with other income of \$26,000 and total Social Security benefits of \$12,000. That couple would be at the threshold (\$26,000 plus 50 percent of \$12,000). Using standard deductions, exemptions and 1993 Tax Schedule Y-1, I calculate that couple would owe \$3,165 of federal income taxes.

Using the same assumptions and applying the proposed taxability rate of 85 percent of Social Security benefits, I conclude the couple could now owe \$4,211 in federal income taxes—an increase of \$1,046 or 33 percent! In my own case I have estimated an increase of 18 percent.

Where is the fairness? Would the couple in the example be considered wealthy? Would they not be among the middle-incomeers that Clinton is so concerned about, or is it that retirees just don't count? We would also bear the burden of the new energy taxes.

I agree that we need to do something about the federal deficit, and I am willing to do my part. However, I honestly believe the Social Security proposal is unfair.

Joseph Wilson
Carolina Shores

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