

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Time To Swim Against The Politics Of Division

Politics as usual? Yes, but with more—more division, more exclusion, more venom and more sour grapes. And with less—much less than the vision and forthrightness which generally characterized the recently departed all-Republican county board of commissioners.

That was the upshot of last weekend's Brunswick County Republican Party convention, in which thankfully the voice of reason—weak though it was—prevailed against attempts by the resolutions committee to take cheap shots at the legislators and education leaders among whose ranks voters declined to place two of the committee's three members last November.

It is to the credit of the majority of the 100 or so GOP faithful who attended Saturday's convention that they chose to eliminate language from the party resolutions accusing Brunswick County educators of teaching our children "1,001 ways to have sex"—a ridiculous assertion, hyperbolically phrased—and attacking Senator R.C. Soles and Representative Redwine as for their expressed willingness to bring the overblown Calabash "divorce" issue to a referendum.

Perhaps the attack on the Democratic legislators could have been anticipated and rationalized. They are public officials and, as such, can reasonably be expected to artfully dodge the bullets of the opposing party. But it was inappropriate and unforgivable to place Brunswick County's educational deficiencies solely in the laps of teachers and administrators battling a social climate whose diseased roots spring from a farther place than the schoolhouse door.

The deleted verbiage criticized educators for "training our children to be self-centered and focused on their 'feelings' and 'rights,' while the resulting resolution nonetheless demanded that teachers concentrate on "imparting of knowledge and the building and reinforcing of good citizenship and character," as if the foundations of good citizenship and upright character can be divorced from the feelings and rights of individuals. Teachers can only be expected to provide the building blocks of knowledge; it is parents who are failing at providing the examples.

Sadly enough, there's not much indication at this point that next month's Democratic convention will be any more encouraging or positive-spirited. The currently seated Democratic-controlled county commissioners have demonstrated little so far except a facility for conducting half-hour public meetings and inspiring widespread paranoia among county employees who are waiting for the hatchets to start flying. If you believe the Brunswick rumor mill, they do so with the blessing, if not the encouragement, of the Democratic party leadership.

There's an old political stump joke whose punchline is "I know what you're agin', but what're you fer?"

The convening Republicans made it clear that they are "agin" the way teachers teach, the way legislators legislate and the way everyone thinks and feels who doesn't think and feel as they do.

The Democrats in power—at least those with seats on the county board—are apparently concentrating on being "agin" the county employees whose names are reputed to be on their hit list. We haven't seen much yet that they're "fer."

Meanwhile, too many Brunswick Countians with vision and commitment to offer are electing to remain outside the county party system rather than to swim against the heavy surf of acrimony, recrimination and cronyism. It's time they took the plunge.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Most Want Calabash To Remain One Town

To the editor:
 Calabash's trash law does not bother the ordinary citizen, only the business people, and then I don't believe all the business people.

Most of the citizens take their trash to the town dumpsters. This is a saving in taxes; otherwise our taxes would be higher to accommodate the businesses who have the most trash.

If they feel they are being treated unfairly because they have to pay for private trash pick-up, then maybe they can put on their menus, "a 25-cent charge will be added to your bill to help trash the food you leave on your plate." Now this is only in jest, so you can see how silly this problem is.

As far as ordinances are concerned, those interested should take a ride up N.C. 179 through Calabash and see the great improvement since all the monster signs were forced to be removed by a sign ordinance.

It is true, Sen. R.C. Soles has been asked to intervene in the divorce of old Calabash from Carolina Shores. The majority want the town to stay as it is. It seems the problem is coming from people who own businesses in Calabash and do not

live in Calabash. Mr. Soles is only representing a few and is using his power the way he sees fit, not as the majority would like him to represent us. Is he being paid off by someone to tell us that he will introduce his bill to the legislature and if he does, it will pass? Now that's power.

Most of the articles written by reporters on the problems of Calabash are not written to represent the majority, only one person's opinion. I believe we can all get along as soon as we let the few who keep making the problems go along with the peoples' wants. And this is for old Calabash and Carolina Shores.

We're a great community and we can only get better in time.
 Helen Morrison
 Calabash

(More Letters, Following Page)

Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. We reserve the right to edit libelous comments.

For The Love Of The Silver Screen

I'm a feisty young heiress, suffocating under my family's rigid standards of propriety. In the midst of a tantrum, I dive from our yacht, swim safely to shore and hop a bus. On the lam, I meet a streetwise, handsome-to-die-for newspaperman who saves me from a masher and, unbeknownst to me, schemes to take me under his wing just so he can get the scoop on my story and prove he's not washed up as a reporter.

We end up having to share a tourist cabin somewhere down South, where he strings a blanket between the twin beds and calls it "the wall of Jerico." He loans me a pair of his jammies. He takes off his shirt and I try not to swoon.

After 90 minutes of mishap and madcap, I'm wise to him. And I am furious. Nonetheless, we manage to straighten out the whole kooky mess, confess our undying love for each other and live happily ever after.

For an hour and a half, I can be Claudette Colbert, with her pincurls and mischievous eyes, in *It Happened One Night*. The 1934 film swept the Academy Awards, winning best picture, with Colbert and Clark Gable taking the acting honors and Frank Capra, the best director award.

The next time one movie took all the big four was 1975 when *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* won best picture. Milos Forman was



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named best director, and best performance by a leading actor and actress went to Jack Nicholson and Louise Fletcher.

It didn't happen again until last year when *The Silence of the Lambs*—Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, director Jonathan Demme and the picture—won it all.

I love the movies. And although bundling up on the couch with a remote control and a stack of videotapes can constitute a perfectly adequate winter weekend activity, this doesn't make up for the fact that THERE IS NO MOVIE THEATRE IN THE SOUTH BRUNSWICK ISLANDS!!!!

Ordinarily I manage not to dwell on this unfortunate fact, rationalizing that there are lots of places I wouldn't be caught dead living in that have a half-dozen cineplexes and not a single ocean.

But the Academy Awards are coming up, so it seems an appropriate time to implore all you prospec-

tive investors and entrepreneurs out there to give a little consideration to a venture in cinema for this burg. Sure, there are easier ways to make a buck than running a movie house, but if that kind of thinking prevailed, there wouldn't be any restaurants around here, either. If you build it, we will come.

In the meantime, here's a condensed chronology of some of the Oscars' golden years, just to whet your appetite for the awards, on the off chance you've seen any of this year's nominated movies. (The only one I've seen is *The Crying Game*, but it was apparently the one to catch if you could only catch one.)

You might be surprised to be reminded how many great films were made in some years. You might be inspired to rent some of these classics or tape them off the late-late show. Or you might just reveal your advancing age, like I do, by squawking about how they just don't make 'em like they used to.

I know and love every one of these. Here goes:

■1945: Ray Miland in *The Lost Weekend*, Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*.

■1947: Edmund Gwenn in *Miracle on 34th Street*, Elia Kazan for directing *Gentleman's Agreement*, Loretta Young in *The Farmer's Daughter*, Ronald Coleman in *A Double Life*.

■1948: Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet*, Jane Wyman in *Johnny Belinda*, John Huston for directing and his father Walter Huston for starring in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*; Claire Trevor as a gin-soaked gangster moll with a heart of gold in *Key Largo*.

■1949: Broderick Crawford as a thinly-disguised Huey Long in *All the King's Men*, Olivia deHaviland in *The Heiress*, Joseph L. Mankiewicz for directing *A Letter to Three Wives*.

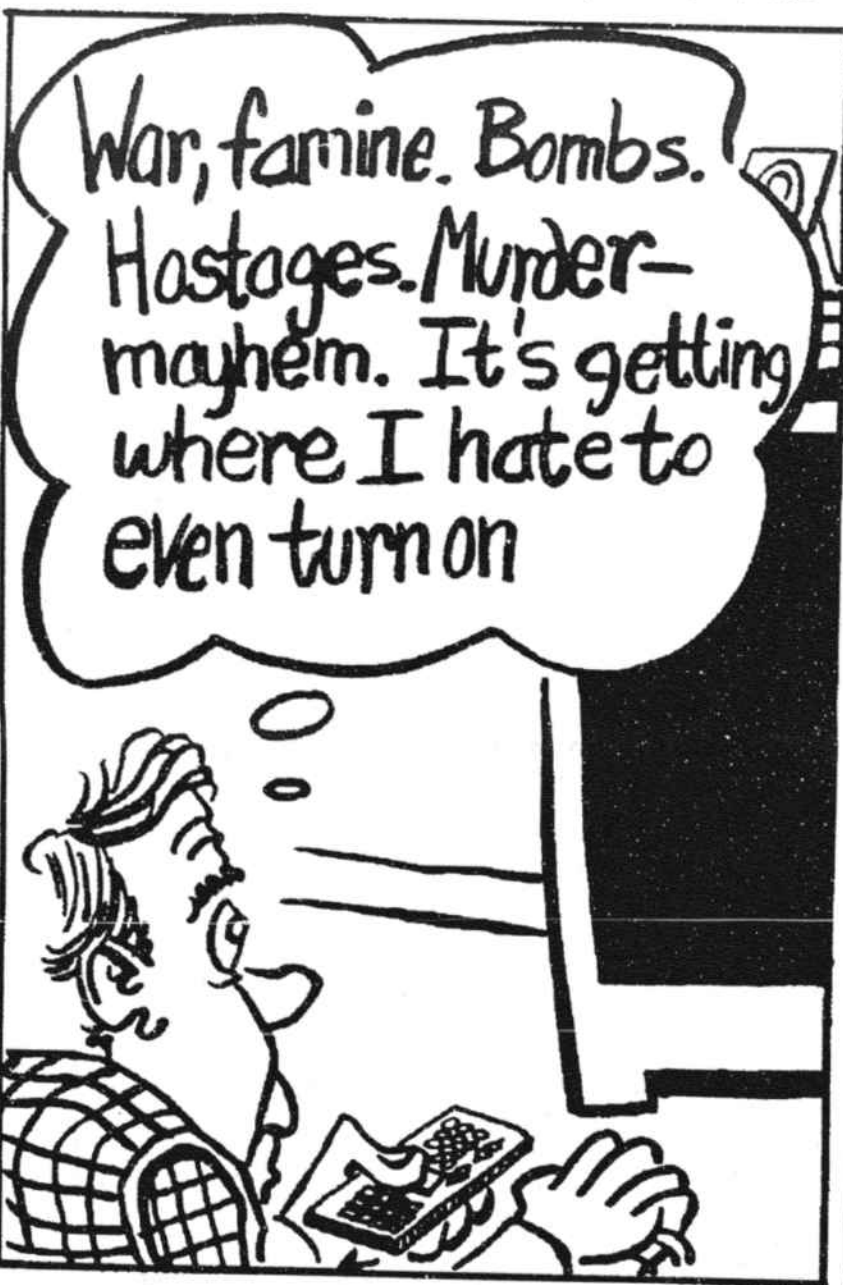
■In 1951, Bogie in *The African Queen*; Vivien Leigh, Karl Malden and Kim Hunter in *A Streetcar Named Desire*; director George Stevens for *A Place in the Sun*; and *An American in Paris* as best picture.

■1962: Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke in *The Miracle Worker*, Ed Begley in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Lawrence of Arabia as best picture.

■1967: Rod Steiger in *In the Heat of the Night* (also best picture), Katherine Hepburn in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, George Kennedy in *Cool Hand Luke*, Estelle Parsons in *Bonnie and Clyde*, director Mike Nichols for *The Graduate*.

■1976: Peter Finch and Faye Dunaway in *Network*, Jason Robards in *All The President's Men*, and best picture *Rocky*.

Now that's entertainment!



Spinning Yarns Down At The Rumor Mill

RIIINGG!..."Hello."
 "Psssssst! Guess what I heard!"
 "Surprise me."
 "Well, I've got this friend who works at the nuclear plant. He told me there is a secret tank down there where they keep a giant flounder that got sucked through the cooling pipes and into the reactor. It grew to the size of a stealth bomber!"
 "Uh huh. And what's this guy's name? I'd like to talk to him."
 CLICK!

You'd be amazed how many rumors you hear at a newspaper office. Trouble is, we usually can't substantiate them. And we can't print them as news stories until we're sure they are true. But some rumors are hard to ignore.

RIIINGG!..."Hello."
 "Psssssst! Guess what I heard!"
 "How many guesses?"
 "No. Really. Have you ever wondered why the Brunswick County government complex looks like a bomb shelter? Because it's really a secret CIA project to communicate with UFOs!"

"If you look at it from outer space, when all the construction is done, the buildings will spell out LAND HERE—FREE BEER."

"Really? And when are the aliens coming?"
 CLICK!

After hearing a rumor like that, some folks would start mounting anti-aircraft guns on their roof at the first sign of an L-shaped foundation being poured in Bolivia.

Others would swear the rumor wasn't true even if they saw 20 drunken Martians having a keg party in the health department parking lot.

Likewise, journalists, broadcasters, publications and TV shows vary widely in their gullibility and their



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willingness to represent a juicy rumor as fact.

Which is why news magazines run the gamut from "The Economist" to the "National Enquirer" and television news shows range from "The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour" to "Geraldo."

I've always worked for newspapers that had enough integrity not to print rumors as news stories. So for years, I have had to listen to all those calls and keep all those juicy rumors to myself.

But now I have my own newspaper column. A forum where I can spread rumors, voice ridiculous opinions and make up anything I want. A place where (to paraphrase the renowned Dr. Hunter S. Thompson) "only a lunatic would write this stuff and claim it's all true!"

Which is a long-winded way of saying:
 "Psssssst! Guess what I heard!"

Right after the November election, when the Democratic Party won a majority on the Brunswick Board of Commissioners, I started getting these phone calls about terrible things that would soon happen in county government.

Being new to the area, I assumed these rumors were the typical aftermath of a political campaign. I listened, jotted down some notes and

figured it would all blow over.

But it hasn't. I keep hearing the same rumors. And I see puzzling evidence that some of them may be true. Not enough to call these rumors news. But enough to pass them on, so you can watch what's happening and decide for yourself.

The first big rumor was that the local Democratic Party REALLY wants to get rid of County Manager/Attorney David Clegg.

This has always seemed ridiculous to me, since he is a Democrat who obviously knows a whole lot more about county government than any of them do. But perhaps that's the problem.

It seems the party big-wigs have put serious pressure on their commissioners to fire Clegg. Evidently, they are still doing so. They've been trying to get area newspapers to do stories about how much it costs the county in outside legal fees to defend itself against lawsuits brought by former employees and contractors.

They want the board to use this publicity as an excuse to dump the county attorney. However, they fail to mention that one of those suits was defended (and settled) by the county's insurance company. And in the other case, Clegg did not serve as counsel because he was called as a witness.

Another rumor has it that certain people want Clegg out of the way so the commissioners can handle some of these lawsuits out of court, thus allowing the plaintiffs to receive big cash settlements without having to spend their own money on costly (and very possibly futile) court action.

Several of my rumor callers say Clegg is standing in the way of ef-

orts to hand out political patronage jobs and is merely the first name on a long hit-list of county employees that the board is under pressure to replace. Others include County Engineer Robert Tucker, Parks and Recreation Director Bobby Jones and Commissioners Clerk Kelly Barefoot.

Why they might be targeting these people is unclear to me. Rumor has it that there are old grudges against some of these folks. Others need to be moved out of the way so faithful Democrats (including a former commissioner) can get county jobs.

Because some of these positions are protected by the county personnel policy, the only legal way the firings can take place is by eliminating the positions and creating new jobs for new employees.

So keep an eye out at budget time. You might see the county engineer replaced by a new "Director of Things Formerly Done by the County Engineer." The Parks and Recreation Department could be eliminated in favor of a "Department of Games and Grassy Places." Instead of an Operation Services Director, we may have a "Heavy Equipment Czar."

Meanwhile, other folks tell me to start wearing a flak jacket in the sheriff's department offices once the next election campaign rolls around. It sounds like everyone there is going to be running for sheriff except the sheriff, who will probably be running away to Florida until it's all over.

I've also heard that...
 Wait. I've got another call coming in.

RIIINGG!..."Hello."
 "Psssssst! Guess what I heard..."