

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Clegg's Departure A Step Backward For Brunswick

David Clegg's resignation as county manager and county attorney is an unfortunate, though not unanticipated, setback for Brunswick County.

During his tenure in the dual job, Clegg distinguished himself as a skillful leader and a tireless promoter, dedicated to the principle that government's job is to serve all its constituents in as fair, efficient and apolitical a fashion as is possible.

His administration was characterized by a clarity of mission and attention to detail which are rare qualities among rural governments.

He was aware, as all effective public administrators are, that a good image for the county in the region and the state is an important asset. He worked tirelessly to improve Brunswick County's.

Clegg proved his ability to take pressure from elected officials and citizens, eschewing the nepotism, favoritism and cronyism that in times past have been hallmarks of Brunswick County government. But that type of administrator can only survive and thrive in an atmosphere where his ethics are respected and reflected by the elected officials at whose pleasure he serves.

Though not known to shrink from a challenge, Clegg apparently saw no future in his options—hanging on in an atmosphere of misery created by new county commissioners bent on ending his position and principles, or waiting and wondering when the ax would fall.

Finding both that rock and hard place untenable, Clegg resigned gracefully, without expressing rancor toward the men who made it impossible for him to do otherwise. A true class act, he will be missed.

More Than A Close Call With This Freak Storm

As frightening as Saturday's off-season hurricane clone may have been, Brunswick Countians can be thankful that no lives were lost in the weekend's winter weather debacle.

Though many residents and visitors endured inconvenience and discomfort which tested the boundaries of their tolerance, most escaped relatively unscathed, with no damage that can't be repaired with roofing materials, lumber and liberal applications of elbow grease.

High on the inconvenience scale was the stranding of an estimated 100 carloads of day visitors on the island of Sunset Beach during the storm's height. But they should be thankful, too—that inconvenience was all they suffered. They weathered the storm in their cars for nine hours, some using up all their fuel as they kept their engines and heaters running to keep warm as temperatures dropped throughout the afternoon. They left that night, cold and frightened, but blessedly otherwise safe.

The island's one-lane pontoon bridge must be swung open and rendered impassable during winds of more than 30 miles an hour to prevent it from being damaged or, in the case of weather like Saturday's, destroyed. The wind stayed high for nine hours, even longer than would have been likely in a true hurricane. This is not the fault of the the Department of Transportation or the town council. It was simply a freak storm with unforeseeable consequences for the old bridge.

Though a winter storm had been forecast, the extent of the wind speed, wind-driven tide and low barometric pressure was not. Sunset Beach officials were given only five minutes' notice to swing open the bridge and leave it that way—only enough time to send one firetruck and firefighter, who is also a police officer and emergency medical technician, to the island.

The freak nature of this storm will spark new debate about the extent to which the old bridge imperils residents and visitors, and what level of risk is acceptable. The most logical and reasonable step now is for those on both sides of the bridge issue to start searching in earnest for common ground.

The DOT last fall presented an array of options for a new, safer, more reliable bridge, and asked for public input. It's time townspeople reached a consensus and made their wishes known to Odell Williamson, our new DOT board member, who is on the island next door and in a position to help.

Saturday was proof that waiting is folly.

Worth Repeating...

■ *Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
 Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
 From seasons such as these? I have ta'en
 Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp;
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
 And show the heavens more just.*

—Shakespeare: King Lear

■ *Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude.*

—Shakespeare: As You Like It

Oh, Shut Up And Eat Your Walnuts

Who are these nutrition fascists and why should we listen to them anyway?

These are the nimrods who promised us that oat bran would lower cholesterol, which sent the marketeers into a frenzy of adding it to everything from breakfast cereal to denture paste.

Consequently, oat bran futures went through the roof and every commodities trader in Chicago got to buy a new Range Rover. Until, that is, the miracle was debunked and oat bran was relegated to its former use as the primary constituent of particle board.

Now it's walnuts. Researchers, in a study funded by the Walnut Council (go figure) have determined that eating walnuts lowers cholesterol. There is also some indication that the same might be true of almonds, pistachios, cashews, Goo-bers and Raisinets, but their respective councils have been out of the loop.

What they sometimes neglect to tell you in the 30-second sound bites is that this only works if you substitute the walnuts for an equal amount of other fat in your diet. (If then.) Just scarfing handfuls of walnuts between meals and waiting for your cholesterol to drop would be like adding a sixer of Lite beer per

Lynn Carlson



day to your regular booze intake and expecting to lose weight and become more sober.

When first we began to fret about cholesterol—scurrying off to the health fair at the mall to learn our levels, our ratios and the difference between LDL and HDL—we as Americans did the wise and logical thing.

Began a program of regular aerobic exercise? Not exactly...

Gave up those 600-calorie double-decker burgers with the Thousand Island dressing and pasteurized process cheese food product? Well, no...

What we did was rush off to the nearest supermarket to buy "spread" to slather on our toast and baked potatoes and corn on the cob. This was, in my humble estimation, the blackest day in gastronomic history since the discovery that people

would buy rice cakes, not as a home insulation medium, but as an actual food product.

Okay, I will own up to being persnickety about food. I order fancy coffee beans which are delivered to me by UPS, and I grind them myself.

I do not eat hot dogs or bologna, or drink wine that can be opened without a corkscrew.

I'd rather have a five-ounce piece of rare grilled beef tenderloin once a month, and no other red meat, than to eat ground beef three times a week.

And I won't touch "spread."

Why do you think they have to call it that? Because it's not really food. Do you think some of the products in your grocer's dairy case are called "cheez" and others "creme" and "nondairy coffee whitener" just to be different? Uh-uh. To go further would be to commit one of the few types of consumer fraud prohibited by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

I never gave up butter—never even turned to margarine, much less "spread"—rationalizing that a tablespoon here and there for sauteing wouldn't hurt a thing, and that any substitute for a thin film of sweet cream butter on a slice of freshly-baked bread would be a gratuitous

form of blasphemy.

And now I've been vindicated. We've known all along that butter and margarine have the same amount of calories, but now it seems that the laboratory-made "spread" you scoop out of that decorative and useful plastic tub is more cruel to your cardiovascular network than the bovine-based stick I keep in my butter dish.

But wait! There's more! There's the French paradox. How can a people have 60 percent less cardiovascular disease than Americans when they will liter upon liter of wine and eat buttery croissants and velvety Camembert cheese and rich sauces made with egg yolks and heavy cream? Couldn't have anything to do with the fact that your average Frenchman eats well-prepared fresh food, and much less of it, walks or rides a bicycle instead of driving everywhere, and enjoys long leisurely meals, reasonable work-days and a couple months' vacation every year. Could it?

Meanwhile, I'll continue to cook with a little butter, stay away from bologna, eat walnuts if and only if I want to, and try not to pay attention to any more nutrition propaganda. Unless, of course, it confirms that what I'm already doing is the right thing.



Where Do We Draw The Firepower Line?

"...the right of the people to keep and bear .50-caliber machine guns, M-16 automatic rifles and AK-47 assault rifles shall not be infringed."

Eric Carlson



That's what you are likely to hear from the National Rifle Association when that army of 700 law officers finally smokes out the wackos in Waco who murdered four people and wounded 16 others in a 45-minute fire fight Feb. 28 and who have the above-mentioned weapons (and others) in their arsenal.

A police detective told me the other day that he had never heard of a firefight lasting that long during his entire tour in Vietnam.

Well detective, welcome to law enforcement, 1990s style. A time when police are forced to pull back their armored personnel carriers and send in M-1 tanks because the criminals have armor-piercing shells.

Before the smoke of battle clears, we will hear yet another round of demands for laws prohibiting the sale of exotic military weapons. And we will hear the NRA proclaim that these were among the "arms" that the second amendment protects our right to keep and bear.

Never mind that the framers of the constitution were talking about muzzle loaders that lobbed little balls of lead—with unpredictable force and accuracy—at a rate of about one every minute.

The NRA would have us believe that our forefathers looked into their crystal ball and decided that Americans should also have the right to own a gun that fires about 1,600 rounds per minute and can easily cut a pickup truck in half.

I used to belong to the NRA, back

occupation. I still think it would be great fun to unleash a missile from an F-14 Tomcat flying at Mach 2, but I have no delusions about having a "right" to do so.

But the NRA hollers like a hit dog every time we consider restricting the scope of our constitutional "rights" to own modern military weapons. Even after one of these weapons is sprayed at a school yard or used to ambush federal agents.

The NRA will remind us that it is illegal to own these guns in their fully-automatic state. Which means that instead of blasting a full clip of ammunition with one squeeze, the gun will fire only as fast as you can pull the trigger.

They won't be so quick to point out that anyone who buys a semi-automatic AR-15 knows how easy it is to convert it to a fully-automatic M-16. Keeping one in its legal state is like having a Lamborghini Countach with four bald re-tread tires.

When we owned our restaurant in Hendersonville, a guy came in and tried to sell me a brand-new AK-47. It was a perfectly legal model, still in the box. And he was nice enough to include an advertisement for a conversion kit to make it just like the rifles used to kill thousands of GIs in Vietnam.

There are basically four reasons why people buy guns: food, fear, fun or felonies.

You may not like hunting. But killing animals for meat is a far more natural human endeavor than bungee jumping or climbing aboard an airliner or watching television. Still, it doesn't take a machine gun to shoot a deer.

You may feel perfectly safe in your home. But you can't deny someone who lives next to a crack house the right to protect himself. However, he doesn't need an assault rifle that is more likely to be stolen than to be used for self defense.

The only legal reason to own a modern military weapon is for fun. Guns are fun to collect. They are even more fun to shoot. Especially the ones that shoot lots of bullets really fast.

But is that a valid reason to allow access to all guns? Thousands of people take drugs to have fun. Others like to drive at 100 miles per hour just for fun. Because one man's fun is another man's felony.

Some people think drive-by shootings are fun. Like the carload of young men who sprayed a parking lot near Burgaw with an AK-47 last week, killing 20-year-old Horstene James as he sat behind the wheel of his car.

By defending the tiny minority of Americans who want to own these weapons, the NRA runs the risk of provoking a public backlash against mainstream gun owners. Just as the extremism of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Irish Republican Army obscures the message of those who peacefully oppose Zionist and British occupation of their homelands.

America is getting fed up with gun violence. The NRA can help focus people's anger on the criminal instead of his weapon. Or it can cause the public's anger to turn against legitimate gun owners by defending murderous weapons that have no socially redeeming value.