

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Dredging Is Past Due Break For Commercial Fishermen

It was a happy day for commercial and recreational boaters last week when the dredge *Hampton Roads* reached the Varnamtown fish houses.

"I'm 62 years old, and I've only seen them come up this far one time before," said Billy Caison as he chatted with a friend on the waterfront. "I've never seen them go up as far as they're going to."

When it's all said and done, 3.6 miles of channel will have been dredged in the Lockwood Folly River, from the Intracoastal Waterway to a point two miles upriver from the fish houses.

It's about time the commercial fishermen got a break. This dredging project will hardly make up for the double-whammy of increasing regulations and decreasing water quality that have rendered fishing a nearly impossible way to make a good living. (The latest proposed new regulation would require waterproof tags on every basket of shellfish harvested.) But it will give back to local fishermen a traditional safe harbor near the Lockwood Folly River bridge—a refuge which shoaling has made inaccessible to all but the smallest boats in recent years.

There is also optimism that the increased water flow resulting from the project will flush out pollutants and bring about the re-opening of contaminated fishing areas. Seeing a little ground gained on that front would be a welcome change, too.

Worth Repeating...

- *No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible.*
—Jerzy Lec Stanislaw
- *About 60 years ago, I said to my father, "Old Mr. Senex is showing his age; he sometimes talks quite stupidly." My father replied, "That isn't age. He's always been stupid. He is just losing his ability to conceal it."*
—Robertson Davies
- *It's good to be just plain happy; it's a little better to know that you're happy; but to understand that you're happy and to know why and how...and still be happy, be happy in the being and the knowing, well that is beyond happiness, that is bliss.*
—Henry Miller
- *Manifest plainness, embrace simplicity, reduce selfishness, have few desires.*
—Lao-tzu
- *When choosing between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before.*
—Mae West

Accident Should Never Have Happened

To survive in the newspaper business, you have to develop a few emotional calluses. Though I have my share of them, I've never been able to cover a serious accident without experiencing a great deal of discomfort. On the way, a guts-in-a-knot sense of dread. At the scene, an eerie detachment. And afterward, a hundred slow-motion mental replays of what went wrong.

When I left the office two Fridays ago, all I knew was what I had heard on the office police scanner. There was a wreck on U.S. 17 north of the N.C. 211 intersection and I could tell by what wasn't being said that it was a bad one. I turned off 17 onto 211 to keep from getting stuck in the growing clot of traffic, parked on the shoulder of Stone Chimney Road and started running toward the Royal Oak station, the area from which the police radio sounds were coming.

Lynn Carlson



Crossing the road, I had a queasy flashback to 15 years ago when a plane crash in that intersection killed five young Navy men. I had been on my way to Wilmington from Holden Beach that drizzly winter Saturday when I happened on the scene. I wandered through the burning wreckage taking pictures, not realizing until I developed them that the smoldering flight jacket I had stepped over had been a victim's torso.

Snapped shuddering back into the present, I passed a man coming from

the scene who told me a school bus had been hit by a log truck but it didn't look too bad. I passed another who told me a school bus had been hit by a log truck and that it looked really bad.

A woman in an expensive sports car disregarded a deputy's directions and turned off 211 toward Royal Oak. She stopped and asked me how she could get to Wilmington; I told her she'd either have to wait it out or drive back up to Midway since a school bus had been hit by a log truck just up ahead. She rolled her eyes, rolled up the window, made a U-turn and headed back toward Southport.

It didn't take but one glance at the bus to tell that, though the accident could have been a great deal worse, it shouldn't have happened at all. A trucker driving too fast in bad traffic and not paying close enough atten-

tion found himself in the path of a stopped school bus. He was able to get his cab off to the right shoulder, but his empty trailer jackknifed and rear-ended the bus, injuring 15 of 18 passengers and their driver.

Though most everyone is going to be okay, the young life of Amanda Scoggins will be changed forever, simply by having been in the wrong seat at the wrong time. It took more than eight hours of surgery last week to fix her broken legs and another operation this week to repair the crushed pelvis she sustained when impact of the trailer mashed her seat into the one in front of it. Although Amanda and her family are undergoing a terrible ordeal, they can take heart in knowing that if caring and concern alone could heal her, she'd be as good as new today.

Mattie Bryant, driver of the school bus, called our office on Friday to explain that her bus was in the right-hand lane when the accident occurred, and that the log truck approached her from that same lane, contrary to what we reported last week. She didn't want anyone to think she had been letting off a passenger from the passing lane.

Mattie was readmitted to the hospital last week after the accident, suffering from pain "all over." She was released on Friday and said she is doing well.

Brunswick Countians are rightfully outraged at the number and severity of accidents in which log trucks are at fault. One caller said he thinks North Carolina should have a special "truck speed limit" of 45 miles an hour. Another was disgusted by the idea that it can be cheaper for a trucker to pay a ticket for speed, weight or faulty equipment than to arrive late, light or adequately equipped.

Expect to hear more on the issue as they take their cases to the people in charge.

There are rampant rumors that the log truck driver or his company are the same as those involved in previous accidents, including the November 1991 crash which claimed the life of Steve Allen Smith of Ash and Misty Dawn Carmichael of Shallotte.

Just for the record:
 ■ In the 1991 fatal crash, the driver was Charles Maurice Lassiter, 36, of Maysville, in a truck registered to T & J Trucking of Maysville;

■ In the recent accident near the state line, in which a Fayetteville couple was unharmed though pinned in their truck for an hour by logs, the driver was Steffonza McIntyre, 24, of Currie, in a truck registered to Kirby Daughtry of Rocky Point.

■ The school bus was struck by Willie Clarence Pridgen, 44, of Ivanhoe, driving a truck registered to L & T Trucking of Watha. Please be careful out there.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader Looking For Explanation Of Frequent Log Truck Collisions

To the editor:

Whatever in the world can we do to prevent this carnage on our highways, especially U.S. 17? In the past few weeks we have had several severe accidents involving large (mostly log) trucks with passenger vehicles, and most recently involving a school bus.

I do not pretend to know where the fault lies. Is it the driver, or is it owner of the trucking companies which apparently establish the incentive to throw cautious driving to the wind and reward the drivers for completing runs in times which preclude driving within the limits?

How many times have you personally been passed by trucks exceeding the limit? Have you ever seen a truck being ticketed for exceeding the limit? Why are trucks not required to drive below the speed of passenger vehicles? Why do so many accidents involve trucks found to have unsafe braking systems?

It is difficult to know where to start to help to remedy any of these problems, but I plan to try.
 Ruth Crosby, Shallotte

Warn Visitors Of Danger

To the editor:

As a transplanted New Jersey Shore fisherman to a

Carolina pier fisherman, I was shocked and surprised to read each year the number of drownings that occur along the Grand Strand beaches.

The reason may be that the vacationers using the beaches do not know the dangers of ocean swimming. They are not aware of the undertow and how to handle them.

I regularly fish Sunset Pier and each year have witnessed many near drownings. Four or five times last summer I was able to call out to nearby surfers to come to the rescue of these troubled swimmers and if not for the surfers I am sure that there would have been two or three drownings at Sunset Beach.

I realize small beach communities can not afford life-guards but I am sure there are ways to protect unsuspecting vacationers and would like to make a few suggestions.

■ When a beach house lease is picked up, hand out a printed pamphlet explaining the dangers of ocean swimming and explain what an undertow is and what to do if caught in one.

■ Parents MUST watch their children and never allow them to swim alone.

■ Install flags at quarter- to half-mile intervals along

beaches, yellow flags for caution and red when there are undertows.

Hopefully some of the above suggestions can be implemented to make everyone's vacation is happy and safe.

Theodore Paliwoda, Calabash

Good Job By EMS Head

To the editor:

Last week it happened, the call that we in the emergency service do not want to hear—the call that makes your blood run cold. The call? A report of an auto accident, a school bus accident.

As veterans of the fire and rescue service, the report of a vehicle accident is almost routine. But when it involves a school bus, everything changes. Your mind goes into high gear, searching all past training and experience for a plan of action. What will you find on arrival? What will you do first? What type of equipment or manpower will you need? Will you be able to handle it? All this happens within seconds.

After the first arriving personnel reported several children injured, volunteer fire and rescue units from all over the county responded immediately. Also with the

volunteers, Brunswick County Emergency Medical Service responded with its advance life support units under the leadership of county EMS coordinator Doug Ledgett. On arrival Mr. Ledgett began setting up a command structure. He designated a triage (a system for determining the most critical injuries in order) officer and set up on-site communications. During the entire incident he remained in his vehicle coordinating the efforts of the rescue and EMS units, keeping track of which children went to which hospital, handling all radio traffic, and calling for additional units—all the things an effective coordinator must do.

Whenever we see or read about such an incident, the image of the injured being removed, or the firefighter carrying the child from a burning house comes to mind. But without the many men and women behind the scene, operating as a team, none of these scenes would be possible. At the bus accident, Mr. Ledgett remained in his vehicle, behind the scene, coordinating operations—a "no-glory" job but one of the most important. That's the sign of a true professional.

Al Nord, Chief, Civietown VFD

(MORE LETTERS, Following Page)

Bog, Fry, Feed—Eating Out For Charity

Almost every week in the *Beacon* we run one or more notices of fish fries or other dinners spon-

sored by non-profit groups such as fire departments, Boy Scout troops, fishing clubs and churches. Sometimes they're called "dinners," other times "bog," "fry" or "feed." Whatever you call them, the food is usually (but not always) good and the service very friendly. Get friends to order also and many groups will deliver. You can't beat that for the price.

Someone with a liking for fried fish, barbecue and hush puppies could eat someplace different every weekend, helping a worthwhile cause at the same time. I've bought plates out of a sense of obligation, to show support for a good cause and to satisfy hunger while not having to cook supper. But sometimes I buy just because the food is so good.

Over the past 10 years I've eaten about everywhere—breakfasts in Calabash, fish fries in Southport,



Susan Usher

barbecues at Town Creek and chicken bog at Waccamaw Fire & Rescue and points in between.

When in search of pork barbecue, Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department is my No. 1 choice. No, their barbecue isn't homecooked like Zion United Methodist Church occasionally offers. But on the first Saturday of the month they serve well-seasoned lean chopped pork in large, consistently-sized helpings—a regular plate that can feed two people with small appetites and a

whopper that could feed almost an entire family, or one big man with a huge appetite. The volunteers make good coleslaw and hush puppies, too; not every menu can boast that.

My favorite chicken bog isn't made for mass consumption, because it would be too spicy for most tastes. It features lots of chicken (picked thoroughly after stewing to remove skin and bones), a richly flavored broth with peppers, two or three different kinds of sausages, and just the right proportion of rice. Not too much, not too little.

Looking for a great biscuit? The cooks at Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department know how to make one. The rest of their Saturday morning breakfast isn't bad either.

For vegetable soup, the choice is tough. Both the Methodist women at Camp Church in Shallotte and Village Point Church at Shallotte

Point serve a mean bowl of soup. Quite different from each other, but both very tasty. Last fall Camp Church featured a new recipe that is spicier than the earlier version, and um-um good. Take your pick; their luncheons are usually on different Saturdays.

But my favorite local charity breakfast (which I haven't indulged in for some time) has to be at the Brunswick County Fishing Club on Sunday mornings during the season. It may have something to do with the view from the fishing club windows or the drive across the marshes to reach the clubhouse at Sunset Harbor. In any case, my appetite was always enormous and I ate too much.

The VFW serves a tasty Brunswick Stew at the Festival By the Sea at Holden Beach I hear, but twice they've sold out before I got there. Next year, maybe. I do love a

good Brunswick Stew.

Seafood? There's no discussion. It has to be the Dixon Chapel Oyster Roast, with its oysters roasted over a wood fire and served with fried bread and pickles (sometimes homemade).

Yes, there are plenty of great places to eat while helping out a local church or charity, but I'm still looking for a mess of slumgullion like my father and his friends used to make down at Shallotte Point.

The cast iron pot would hang over the fire and cook for what seemed like eons. The aroma wafting from it was almost as good as the food within: whatever they brought from the river—fish, clams, conch, shrimp—stewed with peppers, onions, tomatoes, potatoes and pork and served over a bed of hot rice.

Just thinking about it makes me hungry.