

Silencing The Grackle Song

BY BILL FAVER

A pair of boat-tailed grackles have decided to build a nest in a yaupon bush near our front door at the beach. They begin at day-break and work hard all day to gather materials and form their nest. At least I think that is what they are doing. The female seems to carry most of the nest-building responsibility, while the male shares his joy with the other shiny males hanging out nearby.

It is obvious they have a lot to talk about, whatever it is. They are constantly chattering and strutting and displaying, seeming to show off for the female. The poor mockingbird, whose bush they have taken over, sits nearby and just watches.

I must admit the noise gets to me after a while, and I almost agree with Robert Frost in his poem, "A Minor Bird":

I have wished a bird would fly away,

And not sing by my house all day;

Have clapped my hands at him from the door

when it seemed as if I could bear no more.

The fault must partly have been in me.

The bird was not to blame for his key.

And of course there must be something wrong

In wanting to silence any song.

Taking the poet's advice, we decided to watch these iridescent black birds and even to offer them some breadcrumbs to entice them to us for better viewing. We were rewarded with some close observation and some understanding of



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

THE MOCKINGBIRD waits patiently while the grackles take over the nesting area.

their cockiness and their courting behavior.

They would posture and ruffle feathers, spread their wings and tails and bow. As they vocalized with excitement, they would often jump and turn and point their bills upward toward the sky and remain

almost perfectly still for a few seconds or longer. Then the pose was broken and they began again to fly around the yard or to come closer for more bread.

We left them still nest-building and courting and chattering. It was the only way to silence their song!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Five-Year Cancer Survivor Is Called 'Walking Miracle'

To the editor:

For many months I'd been praying that everything would turn out okay for Chris Caudill, especially after the bone marrow transplant; for I knew I could be right behind her.

I, too, got breast cancer at age 34. Early detection is the major key, and although I detected a problem at a very early stage, a doctor made his diagnosis by mammogram alone. He just passed the word along, "It's nothing, don't worry." After my lump had grown to about the size of a golf ball, all this doctor did was prescribe a drug used to break up fibrocystic lumps.

Thank God I got a second opinion when I did, because this lump has grown so much, so fast. I immediately went through a mastectomy and six months of chemotherapy, then the following year, three operations of reconstructive surgery.

My oncologist said he felt 98 percent sure I was cured. I went back to life as usual as much as I possibly could. Within a year I suddenly became completely crippled because the cancer had spread into my lower spine and pelvic areas. There wasn't too much left of my bones.

My doctor wanted me to begin chemo and radiation. I went to Duke for another opinion, and left there feeling I had about three weeks to live. All they wanted me to do was take an anti-estrogen hormone. I refused the chemo, but took a series of radiation treatments because my doctor assured me the radiation would shrink the tumors.

Determined to live, I then went to see an Indian chief in the North Carolina foothills who teaches self-help methods, and started my own research to find out everything I could to fight cancer. I made many changes in diet, attitude and priorities in life. This month I am a five-year survivor—a walking miracle, I am told by the professionals.

My question is, why wouldn't the professionals tell me right from the beginning what to do, instead of me having to learn about it the way I did, when I was so tired and fighting so hard to live?

To the family of Chris I say please be relieved that she is resting in peace now, because this girl did a lot of suffering. And to all the wonderful people in this county who prayed for me, I say God works miracles in many, many ways.

Robbie Porter
Ocean Isle Beach

A Far-Reaching Beacon

To the editor:

Just a note to let you know how far *The Brunswick Beacon* reaches, at least in terms of geography. It is read weekly in the communist country of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

I am assigned to the Department of Defense's Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, Commanding Detachment 2 in Hanoi, Vietnam, and have been here for 13 months. We have the mission to search for Americans who are still unaccounted for (MIAs) as a result of the war in Indochina. We are the only official U.S. Government

presence in the country of Vietnam.

As a former homeowner on Holden Beach, I have continued to remain up to date on activities at the beach by reading the *Beacon* and always look forward to incoming mail, especially the paper. I am due to return to the United States in June and look forward to being a homeowner on Holden Beach soon thereafter.

Best wishes to all at the beach.
Lt. Col. Jack Donovan
U.S. Army

Chief Has 'Fine Qualities'

To the editor:

I want to congratulate the Town of Shallotte for having Chief Rodney Gause, since he has many fine qualities.

I had an occasion to ask for his assistance, and his professional, caring and helpful attitude was outstanding.

Gladys R. Holden
Supply

Thank Officers For Work

To the editor:

On May 15 of each year National Peace Officers Memorial Day is observed across the United States. The week of May 14 was proclaimed National Police Week by President John F. Kennedy in 1962.

In 1982 the Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police started the National Peace Officers Memorial Service. Since that first service over 10 years ago, the attendance has mushroomed from a few dozen individuals to crowds estimated at more than 15,000. Guest speakers in past years include President George Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, John Walsh of "America's Most Wanted," and West Virginia Deputy Sheriff Ron Watkins, maimed by a car bomb.

This year 136 federal, state and local law enforcement officers will be honored in Washington, D.C., at the National Memorial Service. This number includes five North Carolina officers who died in the line of duty in 1992. Over 250 officers are known to have died in the line of duty in North Carolina history.

Law enforcement officers put their lives on the line every day they report for work. The rewards for a life of service are few; the dangers and stress are ever-present.

The next time you see a law enforcement officer, please let him or her know that you appreciate the job they do. It will mean more to them than you will ever realize.

Tom Vernon, Secretary
Fraternal Order of Police
Brunswick County Lodge # 53

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. Address letters to *The Brunswick Beacon*, P.O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

Mary, Mary, How Grows Your Garden?

She had been in the garden. There were all the telltale signs: dirt around her cuticles, a dark smudge across one cheek, trails of sweat trickling down the center of her back and something rusty brown like dry peat moss on the worn scuffs protecting her feet as she stood in line at the counter.

Her hair looked like a rat's nest, as though it had been squashed under a hat on the most humid day of the year and then set free in the wind. She had a "farmer's tan"—red neck and cut-off marks on the arms.

This 30-something woman was filling her arms with more "yard stuff" and chatting enthusiastically with the saleswoman about the new flower bed she was digging.

But what I really noticed was this: She was happy, relaxed and smiling. If she had had a bad day at the office, you couldn't tell it now. She was in her element.

Perhaps that helps explain why gardening is the No. 1 hobby in America: It's therapeutic, offering exercise, fresh air and a choice of short- or long-term gratification, depending upon what you choose to plant. For care-dependent adults with no children and no pets, it provides an alternative form of nurturing.

But watch out! It can also be a power thing for those who enjoy exercising control. ("Get the Safer's, honey. We have mealybugs to exterminate.") Or better yet, "Get aggressive with me one more time, liriope, and see if I don't cut off your water supply!"

Some of us who call ourselves

Susan Usher



gardeners are happy just digging in the dirt, others have much higher expectations of reward, such as prize-winning dahlias or roses or bounteous harvests of corn and beans. It suits me just to have fresh salad makings every day.

A cousin recently cast his analytical gaze at my little backyard garden. It has short rows of raised beds that are a little higher than usual (a trick learned from previous water-logged seasons). Not much was coming up at the time and the beds hadn't been mulched. I admit they looked kind of pitiful, but still I didn't expect what came next.

Coolly he asked my husband, "You got somebody buried out there?"

So some of us are better gardeners than others. Who cares?

According to the National Gardening Association, gardening is the top hobby in America. The NGA says Baby Boomers are not only fueling this trend, they're changing the way America gardens. Yuppies were the extreme in weekend gardeners, I suppose, with their \$100 custom tools and rare, imported French beans and herbs.

Vegetable gardening used to be a

necessity for households, a way to help make ends meet and insure healthy meals for your family. It didn't require much in the way of special clothing or equipment.

You can still follow that model of frugality and health consciousness, but gardening has become trendy. You know what that means. You can pour as much moolah into the ground these days as you have to spend, choosing rare vegetable varieties or unusual trees and perennials for your landscape, an entire wardrobe of gardening apparel and an array of specialized tools that rivals high-tech industries.

Scale's not important either. You can plant a few pots on the patio or in the window or convert the entire yard into your own miniature Paradise, with sophisticated irrigation and greenhouse systems to boot.

Do it whatever way you like. The doctor say it's good for you. Fellow gardeners say it's fun.

Whatever. Research shows that people begin to relax within five to seven minutes of being around greenery. It's nearly as soothing as having a pet. It helps speed recovery of the physically sick, helps keep the emotionally disturbed on an even keel and brings a sense of well-being to any and all of us.

So I'll see you in the garden!

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