

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Edward M. Sweatt and Carolyn H. Sweatt.....Publishers
 Edward M. Sweatt.....Editor
 Lynn S. Carlson.....Managing Editor
 Susan Usher.....News Editor
 Doug Rutter.....Sports Editor
 Eric Carlson.....Staff Writer
 Peggy Earwood.....Office Manager
 Carolyn H. Sweatt.....Advertising Director
 Timberley Adams, Cecella Gore
 and Linda Cheers.....Advertising Representatives
 Dorothy Brennan and Brenda Clermons Moore.....Graphic Artists
 William Manning.....Pressman
 Lonnie Sprinkle.....Assistant Pressman
 Tammie Henderson.....Photo Technician
 Phoebe Clemmons and Frances Sweatt.....Circulation

PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1993

Give New Manager Freedom To Bring County Staff Stability

William Wyman Yelton embarked Monday on the new job of Brunswick County manager. We wish him the very best and hope his leadership will bring about the stability county government has woefully lacked for the past several months.

Yelton, 56, is no stranger to rural governments, having worked in Burke, Catawba, Sampson and Wayne, and with the governments of Wilson, Nash, Northampton, Edgecombe and Halifax in his capacity as a Council of Governments administrator. Also encouraging is his experience in the private sector, whose realities and practicalities its public counterpart should more often emulate if government is to be efficient and effective.

Recent months have been difficult ones for the county staff. After serving under an all-Republican board of commissioners, county employees found themselves working for a bipartisan board again—one whose relationship with then county manager David Clegg was destined to be adversarial. It was no secret to the staff that campaign promises had included firings and demotions in several county departments, starting with Clegg's.

In March, Clegg resigned, to the consternation of many citizens who felt he had done an exemplary job. Within a few weeks interim manager John Harvey proposed a budget, replete with his own suggestions for firings and cutbacks, which would have radically restructured the county government. The public balked and the board didn't buy it, opting instead to hold the line on the tax rate and sort out the details later.

It is in Yelton's lap that those details are about to fall. We hope the board allows him the freedom to exercise his own management style, to distance himself from political allegiances and to form his own opinions of Brunswick County's needs with a dispassionate eye.

Brunswick County is growing fast enough to seriously challenge even the most seasoned county staff and leadership. There are lots of problems and much to be done. It's time to get on with business.

Worth Repeating On Independence Day...

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange, indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated.

—Thomas Paine

It is natural for man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

—Patrick Henry

It's That 'You-Know-What' Season Again

Well, it's that time of year again. Time to stock up on batteries and water jugs. To buy a fresh gallon of Coleman fuel. To make sure the camping stove works. To top off the kerosene lamps.

Having lived away from the ocean for several years, I didn't pay much attention to hurricane season last year. Except to keep an eye on the Weather Channel to see if any of those little swirling cotton balls in the Caribbean might bring us some decent waves for surfing.

That was before the March 13 storm. Before we spent a day watching roof shingles flying through the air as if Mother Nature was playing an eight-hour game of "52 Pick-up." Before I saw the Intracoastal Waterway overflow the canal, pour across the yard, flood the storage room and cover the street.

It was a sobering reminder that—no matter how secure we might feel in our comfortable little homes and our familiar daily routines—when it gets down to the great card game of life, Mother Nature is still the dealer.

Just as she is everywhere, Californians live with the threat of earthquakes. Kansans can spot a funnel cloud on the horizon 20 miles away. Alaskans keep a thick down sleeping bag in their cars in case they

Eric Carlson



break down when it's 30 below zero. Mountain folk know just how much rain it takes to transform their babbling brook into a raging river.

Anyone who lives along the coast should have a plan of action for every stage of a hurricane's approach: A plan for when it's time to pull the boat out of the water. When to stock up on food. When to top off the gas tank and fill the water jugs. When to board up the windows. When to leave and head inland.

Veterans of this game can remember reaching one or all of those fail-safe points, only to see a storm veer away at the last minute. And they can probably remember being accused of over-reacting by folks who didn't take precautions. Folks who got lucky. Folks who will be victims when a big storm does hit.

Living on the Outer Banks for 10 years, we played Hurricane roulette several times every autumn. Since I

kept my storm kit on a closet shelf, I usually didn't have much more to do than to pull my Hobie Cat off the beach and keep an ear open to the forecasts.

Twice I rode out near misses in Manteo. Once I used a hurricane warning as an excuse to visit friends in Raleigh (arriving just as a major storm took a right turn out to sea).

What always amazed me were the idiots who headed TOWARD the beach when a hurricane approached. As if it would be fun to ride out a major storm.

Like those surfers from Charlotte who thought they could get a jump on the big waves by camping out on an island near Charleston as Hurricane Hugo approached. Or the revelers who gathered for a hurricane party at a Gulfport, Miss., hotel when Camille hit in 1969.

The surfers ended up spending a horrified night clinging to the tree-tops as their campsite—and the island—disappeared in the storm surge. The Gulf Coast hurricane parties were never seen again. Nor was the hotel.

Hurricanes are the kind of excitement we could gladly do without. Even a minor hit will tear up the beach, topple trees and knock down power lines. Which usually results in several days without electric

stoves, air conditioning, television, gas stations, grocery stores and sometimes drinking water. Not much of a party.

Still, I have a real fascination with dramatic weather events. I immediately head out on the porch when the lightning starts cracking. I was one of the last two people they ran off the Holden Beach Fishing Pier as the waves started washing onto the deck last March 13.

So I must confess to having taken part in a little hurricane silliness myself.

During one storm that gave Nags Head a glancing blow, a friend and I went "moon walking" on the beach in 90 mile-per-hour winds wearing two NASA space suits (with helmets) that he bought at a government surplus auction.

The wind was so strong we could stand on the edge of a dune and lean into the wind almost to the point of being horizontal. Until a gust would throw us backwards, or a lull would drop us flat on our faces.

Then there was our "hundred-year-storm plan," for the inevitable monster hurricane that every Outer Banker assumed would one day wash 50 years of development off that fragile sand spit and send it floating across Albemarle Sound. We had another sort of "hurricane kit" prepared for that event.

A friend who worked for the National Park Service had copied the key to the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. We had cased out a place where we could hide during the evacuation. And we kept a detailed list of the supplies we'd need to survive for up to a week.

Through our jobs, we had access to a powerful VHF radio, lots of photographic equipment and a broadcast-quality half-inch video camera. So the plan was to document the storm of the century from the tallest—and hopefully the sturdiest—vantage point overlooking the most exposed piece of coastline on the Atlantic seaboard.

Pretty dumb idea, eh? But we were young and foolish. And probably correct in assuming that our video footage would be bought by every television network in the world and our photographs would end up in the history books.

After all, we reasoned, what was the worst thing that could happen? We might spend our last moments on earth riding America's tallest lighthouse as it toppled into the ocean during a category 5 hurricane. Not a bad way to go.

Just remember kids. Don't try this at home.



One Of Nature's Own Special Light Shows

Fireflies were all around us, not just dozens of them, but hundreds—as far as we could see along either side of the narrow, curving country road. One of Mother Nature's own light shows.

Dusk had fallen. It was about 9 p.m. Don and I were still driving toward Lexington, Kentucky, and a good night's sleep after spending much of the day in the cool limestone caverns of Mammoth Cave National Park.

But the fireflies...

We thought we already had seen some sights on this trip that would eventually track across 14 states and cover more than 3,000 miles: Victorian-era Eureka Springs, its

Susan Usher



beautiful Thorncrown Chapel contrasting sharply with the gaudy, almost-Gatlinburg shops.

The arch in St. Louis. The caves at Mammoth. Steamboats on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Rolling countryside with one pastoral scene after another. Huge domes of sand and minerals in what

seemed to be the middle of nowhere in Oklahoma.

Raymore Day, with Little League-size boys and girls streaming all the way around the inside of the Kansas City stadium only to watch the Royals lose to the Angels, again. Watching the home team falter probably didn't bother the junior players. After all, their entry into the stadium had just been displayed on a giant screen to everyone in the stadium.

But nothing either natural or man-made outdid those awesome fireflies and the spectacle they offered. They flickered, in unison it seemed, along the white fencing that marked the boundaries of Shakertown, and across the meadows on either side.

Both of us have spent plenty of

time outdoors as youngsters chasing fireflies or "lightning bugs." In fact, only the evening before, I had joined a young friend in Bowling Green, Kentucky, in her own backyard chase. And we've both been to so-called "light shows." Still, neither Don nor I had ever seen anything like this. So we crept along, the only traffic on a winding, rural lane, enjoying this pre-Fourth of July exhibition as long as we could.

The following evening we rolled into Foscoe, picked up a local newspaper, and learned that nearby Boone had only recently been dubbed the "Firefly Capital" in recognition of its first Firefly Festival.

If they only knew.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Calabash Business Owner Supports Controversial Building Inspector

To the editor:

Since April of 1978 I have been the proprietor of Calabash Nautical Gifts in Calabash. I chose Calabash because I felt the growth potential for a small business was great, and the small town atmosphere was very appealing. At that time, Calabash lacked the "neon glitz" of the overpopulated beach areas such as Myrtle and North Myrtle Beach.

I quickly became involved with the local chamber of commerce and became a member of their board. I also in 1980 co-founded a local merchants association. I believe I have continually strived to make Calabash a prosperous little mecca, not only for myself but for other merchants, in the midst of tourist-oriented beach chaos. In so doing I was this year honored by being chosen Small Business Person of the Year in Brunswick County by three local chambers of commerce and Brunswick Community College.

Until just a few years ago, Calabash remained relatively unscathed by the large imposing sight of beach-wear stores, etc., promoting things such as almost totally naked ladies on beach towels in their front windows. Fortunately, about this same time the town acquired a new building inspector named Edward Schaack.

Before Mr. Schaack's presence, the town began taking on the appearance of the highly commercialized beach scenes, which most of us merchants feared would happen. Unbeknownst to most of us merchants, there were town ordinances and regulations already in place which prohibited many of us from doing things which would create a "tacky tourist trap" which we dreaded. Due to Mr. Schaack's knowledge of these rules and ordinances and his experience and ability to enforce them, he was able to retain what it was we most admired about Calabash.

Human nature and good business sense tell you that in order to out-do or get one-up on your competitor, sometimes you have to out-advertise them. In so doing, it's very easy to extend beyond the stipulations set forth in the town ordinances governing the sizes of your ads and lighting, etc. Few, if any, of us merchants have not had disagreements with Mr. Schaack over sign ordinances and building codes.

To explain what I mean, I purchased a large helium blimp for several hundred dollars which flew directly over my golf shop advertising a special on golf balls. This was a great advertising tool which could be seen from miles away and on many golf courses. Within about an hour and a half, Mr. Schaack showed up explaining why I could not do this. The blimp was working, I was mad as hell, and Ed Schaack was right.

I have had several run-ins with Mr. Schaack over this sort of thing. About six months ago I tried to expand my Christmas shop to accommodate more merchandise. Upon applying for a building permit I was told by Mr. Schaack that in order to do this I would first have to construct a fire wall 20 feet high and 90 feet long, in another location in the gift shop.

Since this would cost me an additional \$10,000 to \$11,000 dollars and take more time than was available before the tourist season was upon us, I was forced to delay the addition. This cost me several thousand dollars in sales for the 1993 season. I was upset, but Mr. Schaack was correct. He had the safety and welfare of the general public in mind, which I had not considered.

The general nature of Mr. Schaack's position, that of building inspector, tends to carry with it a rather negative connotation. He is called upon to approve ideas which people feel are beneficial to their desires. More often than not, these ideas need some form of adjust-

ment which may in turn cost the individual a little more time, work or in some cases, money. These changes may be contrary to the original idea or they may rub the person the wrong way for whatever reason. People do not appreciate someone telling them that their ideas need adjusting to conform with someone else's ideas.

Mr. Schaack has undertaken a task similar to that of a tax collector. Mr. Schaack in the beginning was not very well thought of, since most of us were free to take whatever steps were necessary to promote our businesses with little concern for rules or regulations.

However, since the initial shock of enforced conformity has taken place, I believe most business people and merchants would agree that Mr. Schaack has been an asset to our community.

To the best of my knowledge, he has been consistent with everyone. With Mr. Schaack there is no "grey area." Ed on several occasions has been very helpful to me and my business by volunteering his advice on how to turn a violation into a viable solution. He has been very professional in all my dealings with him. I admire the man for his accomplishments and ability to "hang tough" in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity.

I do not believe Ed would ever compromise his position by seeking or taking favors, either monetary or in any other way. One does not necessarily have to like the man, mainly for the position he holds, but you must respect him for his accomplishments and his professionalism.

A few years ago, after becoming deeply involved in construction of a new baseball facility at a local high school, I arrived at an impasse with the school and building officials over some construction details. Only with Mr. Schaack's assistance were we able to resolve the problem to everyone's satisfaction. Ed was kind enough to offer his expertise in this matter at no expense

to anyone concerned. Few people were capable of resolving this problem, and even fewer would be willing to do it at no charge.

I personally don't believe the current accusations made against Mr. Schaack are justifiable. I believe the circumstances leading to the harassment charges brought against him are nothing more than evidence of another thorough job of making certain all the requirements are met in regards to the local and state codes.

This thoroughness is nothing new to most of us businessmen, but is merely his way of assuring that things are done properly and within the guidelines of the law. This trait, again, is not new to most of us, but nonetheless can be an annoyance to those used to cutting corners.

I believe the town was very fortunate to acquire Mr. Schaack when it did. Again, most of us would have let greed get in the way of keeping our little town eye-appealing and safe. Thanks to Mr. Schaack and his persistence, this is much less likely to happen.

Clark S. Callahan
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. Under no circumstances will unsigned letters be printed. Letters should be legible. We reserve the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.