

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Towns Which Can Offer Absentee Voting, Should

The Ocean Isle Beach Board of Commissioners, in turning over its municipal elections process to the Brunswick County Board of Elections, also authorized absentee voting in town elections. We hope the Sunset Beach Town Council, which also has its elections county-administered, will do the same thing.

Absentee voting is not an option for towns which have their own boards of election and conduct their own balloting, as several Brunswick County towns have done in the past, and as Holden Beach alone continues to do.

Sunset Beach Town Council has turned its elections over to the county, but has not taken the next step of authorizing absentee voting. The board wants more information about safeguarding against abuse by out-of-towners who are not really permanent residents. While the board's concern and caution are understandable, it probably shouldn't expect cut-and-dried answers. The issue of what really constitutes permanent residency for purposes of voter eligibility is a perennial dilemma, especially in resort towns. And there is some legal and constitutional rationale for keeping the definitions rather vague.

Nonetheless, the potential for abuse alone is not adequate justification for stalling on the absentee ballot question. A legal process already exists for challenging questionable voter registrations and is at the disposal of any citizen who wishes to employ it.

Absentee balloting is one of the major prerequisites of having the county administer municipal elections—the others being cost-savings and having the process conducted by an exceptionally efficient county department. Towns who can offer that to their voters should do so.

## Turn Your Radio On...

North Carolina state transportation officials say they want to boost ridership on the state's 21 ferries, from Cedar Island to Southport.

They're talking about an all-out campaign of advertisements, booklets, on-board travel videos and cellular phones, and logo signs along highways leading to the ferries. Of course, an accompanying hike in ferry rates is also being proposed.

One inexpensive, fast contribution to their ridership campaign would be to reactivate a system already in place but unused for two or more years. Motorists approaching the N.C. 211/U.S. 17 intersection at Supply can tune in on their AM dial for a message about the Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry schedule, but few know that.

The message is still being broadcast, though it sounds as scratchy as an old 78 rpm record. However, the signs telling drivers where to turn on the AM dial to hear it were taken down in advance of the U.S. 17 road widening project—and haven't been put back up.

## The Best Kind Of Neighbor

We tend to take the safety of our homes and property for granted until something comes along like a hurricane, a tornado, or a wildfire.

Firefighters were frustrated last week as shifting, gusting winds and an afternoon sea breeze made a tough job tougher as they tried to keep the lid on a fire off N.C. 211 that wanted to run free with the wind.

They were already battling extremely dry conditions. Most of the area involved in the fire has been ditched and drained. Add several weeks without rainfall and organic or peat soils several feet thick in some spots and dry as dust, and you've got the potential for trouble. Even when the soil appears to be burned out and cooling off on top, it continues to burn beneath the surface and even under or through narrow fire lines cut with a plow.

All that's needed to cause the smoldering mass to flare up is a gust of wind, which can carry hot embers across the lines, spreading fire.

Last week firefighters were working at a furious pace to widen the breaks around the fire and to scrape below the heavy peat-like soil to mineral soils that wouldn't burn, trying to establish a safety zone and deprive the fire of fuel. But, paying no heed to the weather forecast, the wind kept shifting to new directions and playing havoc with well thought out plans. On Tuesday, the fire became a very real threat to approximately 10 families on N.C. 211 who had to be evacuated.

Luckily for us, Brunswick County's volunteer fire departments and the N.C. Division of Forest Resources (we usually call it the Forest Service) have an exceptionally fine working relationship nurtured and developed over the years by Brunswick County Ranger Miller Caison and Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan and the men and women they work with.

Tuesday, while state personnel moved to contain the fire within newly-cut line on the northeast side of N.C. 211, volunteer firefighters were stationed all along the highway itself, defending individual homes as the fire approached.

Tuesday wasn't the only day state and local firefighters worked side by side. Volunteer firefighters played a key role Sunday, Aug. 1, spraying the roadsides along the highway, helping hold spot-overs to a minimum.

Once the fire was contained within lines and coming under control, volunteer firefighters continued on the job, refilling the tanks of converted military equipment (Gamma Goats and Nodwells) used by the state to wet down the fire line off the highway, where fire trucks can't go, and using their own brush trucks and hoses to wet down "hot spots."

Driving along N.C. 211, you can see the difference teamwork makes. Look at houses and other structures along both sides of the road. Look at how close this fire came.

Thank county commissioners for continuing budget support of the Forest Service in Brunswick County. And thank a volunteer fireman for being the best kind of neighbor you could want, someone who cares.

Susan Usher



# When Workers' Rights Are All Wrong

Duke Power Company is being accused of infringing on the privacy rights of its 18,000 employees.

What did the company do, you may ask—concern itself with workers' after-hours political or social activities?

No, its heinous offense was forbidding employees to express their religious beliefs and personal opinions through voice mail, computer systems and fax machines. Company equipment, of course, presumably existing for the conduct of corporate business by workers who are being paid a competitive wage to operate it.

One unnamed employee reportedly lamented, "I hate to see us drive our religious beliefs completely out of every public forum whatsoever," as if a private company's business communications machinery can be even remotely construed as a public forum.

An American Civil Liberties Union lawyer reportedly cautioned that her organization "would not support a policy that prohibits all personal messages" transmitted on the company's nickel.

I think Duke Power has every right in the world to issue a "strictly business" edict. Indulge me while I share a couple of personal experiences illustrating why I feel strongly about the topic.

Lynn Carlson



A couple of years ago it fell to me to reprimand a nursing assistant who was handing out religious tracts to patients at the clinic where I worked. Seems she'd take folks' temp and blood pressure, stick their fingers and slip them a pamphlet telling them The End was near and they'd burn in hell if they didn't convert to her particular faith.

"My church requires me to witness," she said in her own defense.

"Not on this organization's time," I insisted.

"If you fire me, I'll sue," she countered.

"If we catch you again, we'll take that chance," I said, despite the uneasy knowledge that in this screwy day and age, she might just win.

A long time ago I worked at a technical college (in another state) where the faculty was infested with people who managed to squeeze in a little teaching here and there while devoting most of the workday to a

well-known pyramid sales scheme.

I was in my mid-20's and new on the staff, so they took to me like ants to a Sturpee spilled in the parking lot. I'd only been there a couple of weeks when a business instructor in our little office cluster sauntered in and asked if I took vitamins. Huh? I asked. A half hour later he was still pitching me on some kind of astronaut pills which cost \$80 a pack.

"Just let me see a pack of them and read the literature, and I'll let you know," I said, certain he'd lay off me if I stuck them in my desk drawer until he had to ask for them back.

It didn't work. In a few weeks he asked, but not until after he had sat down casually, made eye contact oh-so-warmly, and inquired, "Lynn, do you have a dream home in your mind?"

From there he told me how I could make enough money to quit my day job, build that dream home and enjoy complete financial security for the rest of my life if I'd just take the first step by investing in a beginner's sales kit of quality household and personal care products.

I could use my time and position there at the college to establish all the contacts I'd need until I became so rich I could thumb my nose at this little piddling job, he said.

I said everything I could think of

that might hurt his feelings, but to no avail. He pestered me and I cussed him on a weekly basis until I transferred to another building.

I'd just gotten my files moved into the new digs when I got a call from the tool-and-die instructor. His wife and he would be delighted to have my husband and me as their dinner guests on Saturday night.

Extreme trepidation notwithstanding, I had to ask: "Billy, you don't mean to be rude, but are you planning to try to sell me something?"

"Of course not!" he answered in his best spider-to-fly tone. "I just thought we'd grill some steaks and then maybe watch a videotape about a wonderful opportunity that's yours for the asking. I'll bring home one of the department's VCRs."

(This was back in the days when VCRs cost a couple thousand dollars and only colleges and rich people owned them.)

I lost my cool. I called him a sleazeball for keeping a job as important as teacher for no apparent reason other than its convenience as a source of victims. Not to mention that he could get away with devoting only a fraction of his time to the task for which he had been employed.

"Now, Lynn," he cooed. "You overreact. Let me ask you this: do you have a dream home in your mind..."



## In The Name Of All That Does Not (Stink)

(Editor's note: The word "stink" has been substituted for a slang term normally defined as "to draw in by establishing a partial vacuum." Its vulgar usage might be deemed inappropriate by readers of a "family" newspaper. Which should tell you something about the show.)

Uhh...huh-huh.  
 Uhh...huh-huh-huh.  
 That would be cool.  
 Heh, heh. Heh, heh.  
 Yeah. This stinks.  
 Heh, heh.

If you can honestly claim never to have heard snatches of moronic dialog like this, you evidently don't spend much time around teen-agers. Lucky you.

But if those nervous chuckles sound vaguely familiar and ominously perplexing—like one of those nasty kitchen smells you can never seem to locate—allow me to clear up the mystery.

You have obviously overheard one of your own children, or perhaps that youngster who bags your groceries, or some other teen-ager, who has become a devotee of Buttheadism, the latest adolescent cult religion.

Buttheadism should not be confused with Buddhism, in which adherents follow the "noble eightfold path" (right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right contemplation) to attain enlightenment.

No. Buttheadists attain enlightenment by spraying an aerosol can across the flame of a Bic lighter and chanting, "Fire! Fire! Fire!"

A Buddhist might say that all apparent opposites—black and white, good and evil, high and low—are illusionary manifestations of a single, harmonious whole.

Eric Carlson



For a Buttheadist, the world is neatly divided into two distinct and diametrically opposed spheres: things that "stink" and things that are "cool."

If this simplistic world view sounds appealing, you may learn more about the teachings of Butt-headism by switching to the MTV (Music Television) station in your area at either 7 p.m. or 11 p.m. most weekday nights.

There you will meet "Beavis and Butt-Head," two tragically misshaped and hopelessly idiotic cartoon teen-agers who star in a wildly popular and vaguely unsettling program that will soon spawn a full-length movie, a record album and the usual plague of fad marketing.

Beavis and Butt-Head are latch-key juvenile delinquents whose primary activities are watching television and avoiding anything that resembles work or structured education.

Most episodes begin with Beavis and Butt-Head giving a running commentary on the latest pop music videos before embarking on some pitifully misguided adventure inspired by a television show or commercial.

Like the one where they see a lawyer's advertisement for estate planning and hatch a scheme to get themselves included in a neighbor's will. They assume that one good deed should earn them their desired

reward. So they agree to wash the man's poodle.

Naturally, they take the dog to a laundromat, where the prospect of cheap thrills makes them forget their mission. They take a ride in a tumble dryer, get sick, vomit all over the dog and return the reeking poodle to the neighbor, who angrily orders them to leave.

Hopelessly incapable of grasping their failure, Beavis and Butt-Head innocently ask if they can expect to receive an inheritance as a reward for good intentions. When the door slams in their faces, they decide that the neighbor's attitude "stinks" and go home to watch more videos. Huh-huh.

Then there's the episode in which a televised health advisory warns that the "top prescription cold medication" may cause hallucinations. Deciding "that would be cool," Beavis and Butt-Head go straight to the emergency room.

Shouldering past a patient who has a fork stuck in his head, they go to the front of the line, display their symptoms (globs of green gunk spewing from their noses, mouths and ears) and ask for the top "description" cold medication. The nurse runs them off. So they go home to watch more videos. Huh, huh.

In another show, the boys actually get jobs at a fast-food restaurant. The dialog over the drive-through speaker goes something like this:

CUSTOMER: I'd like a double cheeseburger with no lettuce, and pickles on the side.

BUTT-HEAD: Uhhhh...Shut up! Huh-huh...Go away!

CUSTOMER: And I'll have a small order of fries with no salt.

BUTT-HEAD: Uhhhh...Shut up! Huh-huh...Go away!

CUSTOMER: And a large orange

soda with no ice. BUTT-HEAD: Uhhh...Go away. Huh-huh. We're, like...closed or something.

Eventually, the customer comes inside to place his order and unknowingly purchases a burger wrapper containing a hot and crispy mouse that Beavis has tossed into the deep fryer. That was cool. Heh, heh.

Not surprisingly, animal rights activists are among the many groups disturbed by what they see as the "message" of Beavis and Butt-Head (particularly the episode titled "Frog Baseball").

This is probably because most of what the boys find "cool" involves destruction, violence, loud noise, scantily clad women and jokes about pubescent urges, bathroom activities, flatulence and posterior anatomy.

Teachers are understandably upset about the show, knowing that they will bear the brunt of Buttheadist "humor" in the classroom this fall. And they aren't too pleased about the boys' attitude toward reading:

"I hate videos with words," Butt-Head often complains. "If I wanted to read, I'd go to school. Huh-huh."  
 "Yeah," Beavis agrees. "Words stink. Heh, heh."

It would be easy to suggest that Beavis and Butt-Head will adversely influence our young people, encouraging intolerance, sloth, militant ignorance, vandalism, cruelty to animals, disrespect for elders, devolution, sexism, anarchy and bad haircuts.

But as Patrick, our 15-year-old devout Buttheadist, would advise those critics: "Settle down. You'll give yourself a wedgie. It's just a cartoon. Huh-huh."

Yeah. Heh, heh. And it's pretty cool, too.