

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 1993

## Give A Little, Gain A Lot

Give and take. Compromise. That's what mediation is all about and that's what happened when the Brunswick County Board of Education and Brunswick County Board of Commissioners met for slightly over 14 hours a week ago.

In a move approved by commissioners, the school system gave up some \$550,000 in furniture, equipment and vehicles in order to meet day-to-day operating expenses, and pledged to see where else it could trim expenses.

In turn commissioners, recognizing the need for the Leland Elementary School, allocated \$500,000 from its savings to get the project started, with a promise of another \$365,000 to come if the two panels can agree on funding.

Most important in the long-term scheme: both boards pledged to make a deliberate effort to improve communications through joint meetings of both boards and of key individuals. If they hold to that commitment, we should not have the communication breakdowns seen this year.

Earlier in the year commissioners had accepted the schools' capital needs plan, outlining construction and renovation projects that need funding over the next 10 years. But the two boards never discussed if and how the plan would be funded.

Then, in the crunch of changing personnel and meeting other deadlines, a liaison committee between the two boards failed to meet to discuss the budget and the schools never got to present/discuss their proposed 1993-94 with commissioners.

It was almost as complete a communications breakdown as one could have between two boards, with both sharing the blame, if one must point fingers.

Opting to appeal its 1993-94 budget allocation was a big gamble for the school board; after all, it stood to undermine any existing relationship with the commissioners as well as its hope of adequate funding next year. Unfortunately, there wasn't much of a relationship to endanger.

The need for a new Leland school was urgent, and there were other needs as well. The court action was a harsh way to get the commissioners' attention, but it did the job. For a full day the two boards were forced to set other concerns aside and look at the needs of the education system.

Still unresolved is a source of local funding for school construction. Lease-purchase? Long-term bonds? Commissioners have some capital outlay needs of their own, from storage space to water and sewer construction. That suggests a joint effort to pass a bond issue referendum might be a serious option.

In any case, it's good to see the two boards committed to communicating better and meeting more often to discuss issues of mutual concern. After all, any relationship requires nurturing and these two boards share responsibility for something very important—our public schools. When they're willing to give a little, we gain a lot.

## Summer's Last Invasion

It's been a fast summer, too fast, and now it's fading away. It flew by in a flurry of invasions led by every variety of insect and pest known to man, interspersed with welcome interludes spent with friends and family.

You would know summer was winding down even if the days weren't getting shorter, colors emerging in the trees, flower heads drying and back-to-school flyers appearing. Why?

Because the last invasion of the season is under way: sugar-starved ants are trying their darndest to get into my kitchen. This assault is an annual tradition, but one both sides takes seriously. Maybe I'd even miss the tiny, red-brown hordes if they didn't make the effort.

As the greenery of day lilies shrinks in the perennial border, the zinnias and impatiens bloom furiously, as if knowing their days are numbered. On the patio the rosemary and the hibiscus are both blooming, strangely enough, but the morning glory vine is just that—lots of vine and no blossoms. The watermelon vine is starting to crinkle up and the zucchini is bowing out in one last glorious show of big, yellow blossoms.

A giant squash growing up, over and around the compost bin has gorgeous flowers the size of my face, but hasn't borne a single veggie all year. And time's running out.

The hummers are feistier than ever. Four feeding "flowers" and no two of our six regulars will settle down to a meal together. No, they'd rather spend three-fourths of every day fighting pitched air battles against each other as well as the yellow jackets and wasps that constantly hover near the feeder. One colorful male hummer is unbelievably stubborn and possessive. He sits at the tip of a liatris, on guard. He may not be in the mood to eat at the time, but it's HIS feeder and so one else should eat. Any time another hummer appears, male or female, he chases it away.

Sometimes there is so much activity it looks and sounds like the Battle of Britain, in miniature.

They still manage to go through a feeder of sugar water once every 1 1/2 to 2 days, supplemented by stops at flowers all around the yard from the hibiscus to the cardinal flower.

Another good sign: The kids in the neighborhood are shopping for back-to-school clothes, and the house behind ours is poised for new occupants to arrive any day. Don and I are planning a fall getaway to the mountains.

## Worth Repeating...

- The Puritan hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.  
—Lord Thomas Macaulay
- You gotta have a swine to show you where the truffles are.  
—Edward Franklin Albee



Susan Usher

# The High Price Of Mercantile Progress

An Oklahoma entrepreneur is test marketing computer software that lets people order their groceries at home via personal computer. It's an idea whose time has, in a way, come back.

During my childhood, even we kids could call up the downtown grocery store, place an order and charge it to the folks—no credit card required. Later that day, the big blue pickup would pull into our driveway, its familiar white wooden canopy sheltering cardboard boxes of grocery orders from the elements.

It was an especially civilized system of trade, and I'm happy to see it retooled for the age of information.

This won't, unfortunately, signal a mass-market comeback for the delicacies I remember from that hometown store—hoop cheese wrapped in butcher paper and delivered at room temperature; tender, close-trimmed delmonico steaks; lean, sage-spiked country sausage made right there in the meat market; fresh butterbeans and field peas; and the startlingly spicy Old No. 3 Blenheim ginger ale. But you can't have everything.

Home delivery is one of the only

Lynn Carlson



business practices I can think of from my small-town youth that is adaptable to this age of power-buying and discount club membership. Most of the others depended upon honesty, good faith, and familiarity with one's neighbors, human qualities no one seemed to know at the time were endangered.

I remember taking things home "on approval" from clothing stores, meaning I could take a dress home to show my mama before making a commitment to buy it. If she approved, she'd call them and they'd send a bill. If she didn't, we'd return it the next day, in pristine condition and with price tags intact.

Talk to any department store clerk now, and they'll tell you people don't think twice about buying a

dress or blouse or skirt, keeping it for weeks, wearing it, and trying to return it smelling of perfume or stained with makeup.

As recently as ten years ago, one of the older businesses in my hometown continued to pay its employees every Friday in cash, given out in small envelopes with hand-written statements of deductions instead of check stubs.

"Have you given any thought to joining the 20th century?" someone asked one of the partners. He explained that many of his workers could not read and write, did not keep checking accounts and would be uncomfortable having to go into a bank in their dirty coveralls to get their paychecks cashed.

This method of distributing wages was not stubborn resistance to modernization; it was a unique and thoughtful method of responding to the special needs of his employees.

Meanwhile, back in the real world...

Some shopping malls are banning teenagers from 6 p.m. until closing time unless accompanied by parents. If you haven't spent time in a city mall in a while, this may puzzle you.

It didn't surprise me at all, after having stopped by both a Charlotte mall and a Raleigh one on different Saturday nights in the past year. Both were packed with adolescents wandering aimlessly, loitering shamelessly, clogging the aisles at Record Bar and Footlocker and The Body Shop, handling merchandise, having a noisy party—in short, buying nothing and making it impossible for anyone else to.

Out in the public areas, security guards kept a high profile, breaking up pairs of teenagers necking on the benches and dispersing gangs of cursing teenagers who were either fighting or blocking the paths of the few legitimate shoppers in evidence.

It all struck me as a particularly perverse kind of public-private welfare partnership. Here, shop owners were paying top dollar to rent space wherein the most business being done was by private police attempting to control kids whose parents hadn't bothered to.

I'm sure I wasn't the only "shopper" who left, totally unsettled and empty-handed, having forgotten why I stopped in the first place.

And that's progress?



## Get Over Searching For The Hairy Man

A couple of things caught my eye in the Sunday papers last weekend.

The first was a story about three otherwise mature Wilmington guys who have embarked on a journey of self-awareness, "in search of the Hairy Man."

It seems these guys are having a problem reconciling their late 20th-century lifestyles—waking up, eating, going to work, going home, eating, watching TV, going to sleep—with their primitive urges to hunt, kill, pillage and conquer.

So these guys are taking part in such things as "wildman weekends" where they sit around campfires and beat on tom-toms and steam themselves in sweat lodges while complaining about their dwindling masculinity.

The other was a letter to Ann Landers in which a parent related a college football coach's advice to a student athlete who came to school wearing a T-shirt reading "Help Stamp Out Virginity."

You read a lot these days about men losing touch with their "maleness" in a modern world where the only genuine advantage men still have over women—brute physical strength—has become pretty much irrelevant. Except in sports, which (not surprisingly) has become the preferred male leisure activity.

Traditional gender roles have been shifting since the dawn of the industrial revolution, with the pace of change accelerating rapidly during the past half century.

Eric Carlson



In prehistoric times, those traditional roles made perfect sense. The stronger males were best suited to hunt for meat and to protect the tribe against invaders. Meanwhile, females bore the children, cared for them, gathered additional food and maintained the home.

This logical division of labor continued through the centuries, as tribal wanderers learned to farm and settled into villages, which grew into cities that joined to become nations, which have coveted and competed and conquered each other ever since.

Big, strong men made the best soldiers, the best seafarers, the best plowmen, the best blacksmiths, the best builders and the best explorers because physical strength helped a person survive and succeed at such things. And since somebody had to stay home and raise the children, women were the obvious choice for the job.

As civilization advanced, there were plenty of occupations for which brains were more important than brawn. But since men generally

maintained the upper hand in so many other arenas, they did their best to keep women "in their place."

Enter the machine age. Factories took women out of the home and into the workplace, where mechanization allowed them to be just as productive as men. After World War II, when they took over the jobs of workers-turned-soldiers, women realized that "their place" was wherever they wanted to be.

So where does that leave us guys? Unless you're a lumberjack or maybe an oil rig worker or a repo man or an NFL linebacker, you're probably doing a job that could be done just as well by a woman. Which makes the old borderlines between breadwinner and homemaker get pretty fuzzy.

Apparently, a lot of guys find themselves lost and adrift without the old "Me Tarzan—You Jane" role playing. So they pay a bunch of money to go on "wildman weekends" to redefine their maleness and get in touch with their "hairy man" via such activities as chopping wood in the nude.

To me, this sounds like another psycho-babble ripoff for men who are in a serious state of denial about the realities of modern America. Rather than fantasizing about the good old days "when men were men and women were glad of it," perhaps they should consider a simpler and cheaper solution:

Get over it! Because one of these days women are going to catch on to

some of the ways the old "hairy man" ethic still relegates them to second-class citizenship.

Take the media, for example. In most movies and television shows, women usually play the mates or the victims or the objects of pursuit for the more important male characters.

In TV commercials, women are also used as lust objects beside products that the advertiser also wants the men to desire. Is any other explanation for all those jiggling bikini bodies in beer commercials?

The same attitude is being passed along to another generation through music videos (especially rap) in which the primary attractions are scantily-clad, gyrating females fawning over bare-chested tough guys.

Unfortunately, it's a message that seems to be getting through, as we hear stories about date rape and about that gang of well-bred teenage boys who developed an elaborate point system for competing in their "conquest" of young girls.

Which brings to mind the other piece in Sunday's paper; about what the coach told the student with the "Stamp Out Virginity" T-shirt.

He suggested that the boy hang on to that shirt and put it away somewhere. Then, if he ever married and had a daughter of his own, he could take it out and imagine how he might feel if he saw a similar shirt on the first boy to ask her out on a date.

Not bad advice.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Remarks About Utility Were Contradictory

To the editor:

Your reporter may have reported factually what was said at the Calabash Board of Commissioners meeting on Aug. 10. However, the remarks made by the Powell Associates engineer about Carolina Blythe were so derogatory, I feel in fairness he should have contacted the utility for their comments on said remarks.

At that meeting, several residents, including myself, stated that we believe strongly that all of Calabash should have water and sewer service. The method by which it should be obtained is what we are asking our commissioners to explore. A practical and economical method is needed, whether it be by Carolina Blythe, Little River, Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority or a new water/sewer authority, etc.

Some of our commissioners seem caught up in

the presentations of Powell Associates on the creation of a regional water and sewer authority. Its estimated cost is \$25 to \$30 million, and at its completion may cost considerably more.

In reviewing several reports given to the Calabash commissioners by Powell Associates, I extracted the following excerpts from one of those reports:

"Based on the analyses provided...the following plan of action is recommended:  
 —Purchase of the entire Carolina Blythe system for \$4,500,000."

Also: "Powell and Associates and Piedmont Olsen Hensley engineers have inspected the Carolina-Blythe plant and have found it to be in excellent physical shape. In addition, operating records for the plant filed with the state Division

of Environmental Management (DEM) and inspection reports filed by DEM indicate an excellent operation history."

Do we believe their reports or their comments at the town meeting?

When the Calabash commissioners decide which way they intend to go, we ask that the residents they represent be advised early on of the rationale behind their decision—a decision which can and may impact residents both financially and in quality of service.

John Farley  
Calabash

(EDITOR: An article including the response of Carolina-Blythe owner Billy Burnett to the Powell Associates remarks begins on Page 1-A of this week's Beacon.)

(More Letters, Following Page)