

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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# Confessed Job-Hopper Accepts Herself

Marjorie Megivern



Returning to the *Beacon* newsroom this week has reminded me of the many times I've sat here over the past 15 years, looking out on Shallotte's Main Street, happily pecking away on a computer, or, once upon a time, a typewriter. Last week I was just "visiting," filling in for the vacationing Susan Usher. But on at least five or six occasions over the last 15 years, I've walked into a *Beacon* job, swearing it was "forever," and as many times traveled the other direction soon after with a regretful "farewell." In their infinite kindness, *Beacon* publishers have kept an open door policy for me.

In between these returns have been a fascinating array of jobs, somewhat more hifalutin' "careers," everything but any semblance of retirement. I have worked as a Kelly temporary, it's true, but even perma-

come his aide; from there, the job of Wilmington's cultural arts coordinator appeared dazzling; and again, two years down the road, the role of program director at a Methodist church captured my allegiance. Job-hopping has been my life's story, I'm afraid, and until recently I have felt apologetic about it. What kind of restless, frivolous gadabout would hold down five successive jobs in one year? How could a person whose longest employment tenure was four years have any substance or redeeming social value? Just as I was about to claim Attention Deficit Disorder or seek psychiatric help, I rethought the whole mish-mash of my working life. I now insist there has been some merit in that merry round of employers. It has, for one thing, given me a breadth of experience and education

few people enjoy. I learned in the congressman's office about the desperate plight of those who subsist on governmental help, and "shiftless" is the last thing I would call most of them.

Having owned my own weekly newspaper for one painful year, I know (but can't practice) what it takes to succeed in a small business. Two years inside the workings of the Methodist Church stripped me of some illusions about the clergy and organized religion in general.

Five months as a junior high teacher gave me new respect for educators, but also for the turbulence of adolescence. Secretarial duties in a tutoring organization offered insights into the lives and possible salvation of inner city children.

The job I left the most readily, after just two weeks, was that of a technical writer. It amazed me that anyone who loved the craft of writing could find any pleasure in "dumbing down" instruction manuals on the operation of machinery. I found none at all.

You get the picture. I have, after 20 years of flitting from flower to flower, accumulated considerable breadth of knowledge (no depth, you understand) and perhaps even a little wisdom. Certainly I have been exposed to wildly diverse employers who had much to teach me from their own lives as well as through the work they paid me to do. And usually, the offices, churches and plants where I spent a year or so were "home" to a congenial family of workers in which I was warmly included.

None of these advantages have been more present than at *The Brunswick Beacon*, where the employers, the "family" and the work have lured me back to them over and over. I can say that of no other job and no other people.

If I were writing today as a permanent staff member, I would be overjoyed and content to stay forever. Yes, I would...and yet... wouldn't it be fun to try my hand at writing grants for that theater company?! Hmmm! Well, here I go...flutter, flutter...and Farewell!

## Legislature Joining Trend Of New Respect For Elders

There is one "special interest group" whose new foothold on state government should be welcomed by citizens of every political persuasion, race and age. The recent move by the North Carolina General Assembly to create a Senior Tar Heel Legislature could serve to enhance senior involvement in government and politics, benefitting all concerned.

The number of adults 64 and older is growing faster than any other age group. The 1990 state census found about 676,000 of them in North Carolina and approximately 7,600 in Brunswick County, 14.6 percent of the population.

We really don't need statistics to convince us, however. Devotees of the arts have noticed a recent sudden increase in plays and movies about older people: *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Cemetery Club*, *Whales of August*, and *I'm Not Rappaport*, to name just a few. Even television is discovering that white-haired people have lives, even ideas, romance and career capabilities. The late but popular *Golden Girls*, *Matlock*, *Murder, She Wrote*, and the new *Frazier* are a few examples of realistic TV attention to aging.

As this segment of the population lives longer and grows, a number of problems result. People over 64 make up a disproportionately large percentage of those living in poverty, for instance. In our area, 27.5 percent of the poor are in that category, and the percentage has been increasing.

Medical attention for this age group represents the largest piece of the health care pie. Seniors as a group are sicker, sick oftener and for longer periods than other groups.

The social and personal aspects of aging are even more painful. In America there is not an automatic respect for the elderly; too many of them are shunted into institutions, ignored, seldom valued for their wisdom and experience, and often live in helpless isolation.

However, another kind of senior citizen is increasingly visible. As medical science has kept us alive longer, it has also bestowed greater vigor and health on many into their 60s, 70s and 80s. These alert, vital people are participating vigorously in the political process, individually and through such organizations as the American Association of Retired People. They vote, demonstrate and write to their legislators. In cities and small towns they are on the cutting edge of every social issue, from environmental protection to abortion.

Now, in North Carolina the new senior legislature will bind them closer still to a government that has not fully heard or spoken to them in the past. Its purpose is a two-way street of communication. The General Assembly can speak through county delegates to seniors statewide, explaining legislation, taxes and programs that affect them. Conversely, in county forums and by personal contact, individual seniors can convey through their delegates their concerns, their suggestions and questions related to state legislation.

Creation of a senior legislature is, we hope, not a token effort to appease this important population group. It seems to be a message from the General Assembly that says, "We realize your health care and poverty issues are intricate and severe, and we want to do something about them; we also value your ideas and expertise in all aspects of state government."

If that's the message, we're all winners in a new day of respect for our elders.



## News Nuggets From Nome, Sweet Nome

There's no place like Nome." So says the motto of the *Nome Nugget*, "Alaska's Oldest Newspaper." And while I can't vouch for the accuracy of their claim, reading the *Nugget* convinced me that I, for one, have never been any place like Nome.

A glance at my trusty atlas reveals that Nome is a town about the size of Southport on the coast of the Bering Sea about 250 miles below the Arctic Circle. That puts it less than 300 miles from the former Soviet Union and about 4,000 miles from Supply.

Our pal Dr. Paul the optometrist is living in Nome for a while, flying to remote communities to administer eye exams for the U.S. Public Health Service. He is the only optometrist serving an area roughly the size of Oregon.

He sent us a package last week. Inside was a vacuum tube from an abandoned Distant Early Warning (DEW) station located on a hill outside Nome. It was one of many DEW stations that used to watch the skies in case the Soviets decided to lob a few ICBMs across the North Pole.

Paul figured I might want to save the radio tube as "a memento of the Cold War." Besides being thoughtful, Paul has a remarkably different outlook on life. More so since he fell 75 feet off a waterfall and onto his head.

He also sent us the Sept. 16 issue of the *Nome Nugget*, which is "published daily, except for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday." In that regard, it is not unlike *The Brunswick Beacon*.

There are other similarities. The front page has a heartwarming photograph of children hanging upside-down on playground equipment, an image that could have been captured at Waccamaw Elementary School. The lead story tells of a citizens

Eric Carlson



group voicing opposition to a proposed 4-percent rental occupancy tax. If you take out the references to Nome and replace them with Calabash or Holden Beach or Shallotte, you wouldn't be surprised to see the same article here.

Even the district court docket looks pretty familiar. Albert Johnson pleaded no contest to a charge of disorderly conduct and was sentenced to one day in jail. John Okie pleaded guilty to assault and trespassing. He got a suspended sentence and probation.

But take a closer look and you'll see names like Jotilda Noongwook, Anna Rookok, Eugene Ikonikonok, April Wongitillin, Bernard Irrigoo, Derek Nayokpuk and Frances Kingeekuk.

Now I may be wrong, but I don't think we have too many Ikonikonoks or Wongitillins around here. I couldn't find a single Kingeekuk or Irrigoo in the phone book, although they may have unlisted numbers.

Of course, Nome probably doesn't have a lot of Stanalands or Formy-Duvals or Varnams (or even Varnums) and not nearly as many Hewetts and Gores and Millikens (and Milligans) as we do.

On page seven, there was a sad story about the funeral of Chris McCulloch, one of the air carriers that provide Nome with its only access to the outside world. (You can't get there by car.) McCulloch's fellow pilots flew in

a broken formation over the city, with one plane missing to symbolize their fallen comrade. "Chris's ashes were scattered over the tundra near the site where he crashed while performing an air show before a crowd that included many of his friends," the story said.

On a lighter note, Lana Creer-Harris reported in her "Tundra Trips" that she had recently spotted a sharp-tailed sandpiper. It was number 493 on her bird list.

Sandy Amazeen, in her "Arctic Kitchen" column, offered a delightful sounding recipe for "Cranberry Mincemeat." She advised that it can be made with or without the 2 lbs. of cooked, chopped moose meat.

In the same way that Brunswick Islanders keep close tabs on passing fish species, Nomeites seem to be very interested in the comings and goings of bears. Judging from the story titled "Bear Tales On The Prowl," it sounds like they need to be.

Bill Buchanan reported watching a mother bear and three yearling cubs through binoculars from about 500 yards away. He said he "bel-lowed" at the bears and was surprised when they "just ran off instead of slapping his head off."

Jerry McCall and Pat Houghton of the Alaska Fish and Game Department were sleeping after a day of counting fish when a bear wandered into one of their tents. "Pat yelled and woofed and clapped his hands to scare the bear," the story said.

But "the more noise Pat made, the more curious the bear became" until he apparently wandered off. Houghton said the bear wasn't aggressive or destructive, "He was just checkin' things out."

In one of the *Nugget's* advertisements, Robert "Fat Freddie" Madden promoted himself as "a fiscal

conservative candidate for Council Seat A." Madden told readers, "Talk to me. I want your vote!"

Morgan Snowmachine Sales offered \$300 worth of WinterWear clothing and accessories free with the purchase of a new Polaris snowmobile.

Milton Johnson, a certified public accountant, advertised his plans to set up shop in Nome for the week of Sept. 18-24. Chiropractor Dr. Sandra Vaisvil and massage therapist Catherine Thundercloud Nicholas ran a notice offering their services the following week.

And in a sure sign of changing times, Bering Air service announced that it would begin twice weekly flights from Nome to the (former Soviet) city of Provideniya for \$200 (one way).

Now, to answer the question on all of your minds. It doesn't appear to be all that cold in Nome just yet. Highs in the 50s and lows around 30 degrees. Still, the local extension homemaker wrote her Sept. 16 column on what to do with all those garden vegetables already hit by frost.

The almanac lists the average February temperature in Nome at 3 (that's three) degrees. The lowest temperature ever recorded on the North American Continent was minus 81 degrees at a small airport in Snag, Alaska. Which is nowhere near Nome, but too close for comfort.

Paul writes that he is looking forward to seeing the Bering Sea freeze solid. Personally, I'd rather spend February right here—where the average temperature is around 50—and read all about it in the *Nugget*.

(Want to keep up with Nome-town news? Out-of-state subscriptions are \$55. Write the *Nome Nugget News*, Box 610, Nome, Alaska 99762.)

## Worth Repeating...

- Never esteem anything as of advantage to you that will make you break your word or lose your self-respect. —Marcus Aurelius Antoninus
- The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom. —H.L. Mencken
- Queen Victoria was like a great paper-weight that for half a century sat upon men's minds, and when she was removed their ideas began to blow all over the place haphazardly. —H.G. Wells
- Let us give Nature a chance; she knows her business better than we do. —Michel de Montaigne

## Spelling Bee IV: Nightmare On Nychtalopia Street

Lynn Carlson



It was, to steal a phrase from Richard Pryor, as hard as Chinese arithmetic. Goliath slew David. The men beat the women. Marjorie Megivern and I lost the spelling bee in the umpteenth round when John

Meyer and Richard Myers of the *Wilmington Star-News* bested us by correcting our misspelling of "amanuensis" and then acing "antimacassars."

An amanuensis, says my ragged copy of Webster's 9th Collegiate, is "a slave employed to write from dictation or to copy manuscript." Antimacassars, it says, are covers which protect the backs of furniture from being soiled by Macassar, a hair oil used in the mid-19th century.

But, hey, it said right there in the spelling bee rules that obscure words were fair game.

We fought tooth-and-toenail, and I probably would have passed out had it not been for Marjorie, whose theatre experience keeps her ever cool in the spotlight. She's also a crack speller, surviving "inveigle" and "cattarh" and reminding me to put a second "L" in "pointillism." Nothing but her steady confidence kept me from stumbling as I squeaked through "mnemonic" and "jalousie."

I told you it was hard... So hard, in fact, that I didn't feel even a little cheated at having come in second. After all, can you spell "nyct-

talopia"? Probably not unless you are an "ophthalmologist," and most people can't even spell that.

There was that moment about 3 this morning when it occurred to me that one little "n" could have cinched it for us. I had spelled "ratatouille," then they misspelled "connoisseur." I was sure I could correct it, but I was one lousy "n" short of ending the suffering.

If you remember how shamelessly I gloated when the *Beacon* won last year's bee, you may be surprised to learn that I can't say a single nasty thing about the victory of Team Meyer/Myers. They are, in all deference, the best pair of spellers I've ever seen.

Last Friday was what my dad calls my "Jack Benny birthday"—you know, the one number no one believes when you say how old you are. My own grandmother, rest her soul, miraculously remained 39 even after her children entered their forties.

It was a delightful coincidence that I spent an hour or so on my first 39th birthday visiting with Madgelene Bennett. Most people who don't know Mrs. Bennett at

least know of her, but here's a little background anyway.

She was honored Sept. 25 with a surprise 90th birthday party at the Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad building. For 10 years, she has operated the popular Saturday thrift shop whose proceeds go to the squad. Two weeks ago, she was among those receiving the Governor's Award for Volunteer Service from Jim Hunt.

Mrs. Bennett, at 90, is a beautiful, strong woman with plenty of energy, a gracious disposition and a mind as clear as spring water. She was widowed in 1978, and later took up her volunteer work. "I had to do something," she said. "I'd have been gone a long time ago if I had just stopped right there."

Eric was with me during the visit, and on the way from Calabash back to Shallotte we marveled at Mrs. Bennett's vigor and how much we had enjoyed meeting her. We agreed that I couldn't have asked for better inspiration on this most middle-aged of birthdays than this wise, happy, lovely woman entering her tenth decade on this earth.