



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

WHELK SHELLS are not as plentiful as they once were along our beaches.

The Missing Shells

BY BILL FAVER

One of the questions I hear a lot is, "Where are all the shells?" It would seem from conversations with beach residents and visitors alike that we have fewer and fewer shells on our beaches each year.



FAVER

I, too, can remember when we could expect a broad expanse of shells along the high tide line during the fall and winter months. I wish I knew the answer to where they have gone.

Part of the answer must rest with the movement of sand in the ocean currents. Empty shells (skeletons of the animals who once inhabited them) get buried in the moving sand and are not washed ashore as they are when the sand is more stable. Too, the movement may cause changes in habitat of the mollusks living in the ocean off the beach, causing them to move to other places.

Some of the answer has to do with the fact that more people visit our beaches and collect the shells that do wash up. Only the very early risers get to see what the nighttime tides left up. And most of us feel very lucky if we find a sanddollar or a starfish or an olive or tulip someone has not discovered before us!

Sad to ponder, but we have overcollected some species and may have caused them to disappear from our coast. Uncontrolled pollution of our inland waters may also cause a loss of some species. Storms change sandbars and ocean currents; dredging takes its toll; beach renourishment changes things. As necessary as some of these measures may be, we should not be surprised to see their impact on shells, birds, and even ourselves.

Count your blessings the next time you have a good shelling day. Take only the best specimens and remember other folks would like to find some, too, so don't be greedy! Perhaps we can look back on these lean shelling days and remember when it was a real treat to find a fine specimen of our native shells.

GUEST COLUMN

When Bear Meets Bubba, It's Tragic

BY LINDA INGRAM

Enclosed is a letter I wrote through the eyes of my cat "Bear." I'm writing this because I think people need to be made aware of gun control, or the lack of it, I should say.

We live in Forest Hills subdivision near Holden Beach. There is a person who lives just outside the subdivision, and his property abuts the road we live on. There are a lot of families who come here for the weekend, and many of us live here year-round.

Our neighbor likes to shoot in the woods that runs along our street. He doesn't seem to care where he aims. Sometimes the blasts are so loud and close, they make your ears ring.

Last Thursday my cat was shot while roaming through those woods. (Brunswick County) Animal Control and the sheriff's department cannot do anything about it, even though I was home and heard the shot, knew where it came from, and shortly after found my cat with his face torn half off. The veterinarian confirmed it was indeed a bullet wound.

It is a felony to shoot a domestic animal, but you must actually see it happen. If I had seen it through all those trees, they could have done something. Of course, if any of his stray bullets should damage my property, I can file a civil suit against him.

What has us and our next-door neighbors really concerned is the safety of the rest of our animals, children and anyone of us who may get in this person's way. If the day ever happens, and surely it will, will the county then decide to make more strict and enforceable laws concerning shooting in populated areas? We'd like to get some action started before a real tragedy occurs, and not after.

Please read the following letter, and maybe you would like to print it for your readers.

Dear Bubba:
(don't know your real name, but it fits):

Hi! Bet you're real surprised to hear from me. I know as you read on you'll remember me quite well. We met last Thursday afternoon while I was enjoying the sunny day playing in the woods behind your house.

It's a great place to hunt, and nobody loves to hunt better than I do. Maybe I should not have intruded on your property, but there were no signs warning me to keep out, and the area was plentiful with squirrels and mice, which are two of my favorite things to hunt.

I wasn't going to hunt your birds, because I know you shoot them for your kitty to eat. You said so one day when my owner got mad at you for

shooting in the woods. I'm surprised your kitty can't catch his own birds because, like me, I know he loves to hunt. Cats are the best hunters of all.

I heard your footsteps coming toward me, so I thought I'd stop and say hello. I'm a very friendly and trusting little guy. I know a couple of months ago you tried to shoot my dog, because we saw you and my owner yelled. You even said you'd try and shoot him again.

Boy, if they knew then what they know now, I'd be feeling better right now because you'd be in jail. Oh, what the heck, I'm not a dog, I won't try and chase your cat. I'm in no trouble, am I? Maybe I can teach your cat how to hunt his own game and we could be friends and roam through the woods together.

Well, I guess I was wrong about you, Bubba. I'm usually a good judge of character, especially when it comes to hunters. Why did you have to shoot me? I meant you no harm. God, the pain, and I was so full of blood all over my pretty face and the front of my white coat.

I had to get home. You started looking for me. Now I feared you. You wanted to finish me off so no one would know what you did. Lucky for me, I turned because the vet said you were trying to shoot me right between my big green eyes.

I thought you'd like to know I did make it home, and my owners took one look at my hideous smashed face and took me to the vet. Mom knew right away that I had been shot, because she heard you fire. Dad and the vet weren't convinced until the X-rays came back. They

knew she was right then.

The vet wasn't real happy. I heard him tell them to inform Animal Control and the police. It didn't do any good, though, because Mom didn't see you shoot.

I'll be home Monday. I won't be real handsome anymore, and I'll only be able to dream of hunting; most of my teeth are gone and I depended on them for the kill. But I'll be content to lie in the sunshine and enjoy my life watching my friends hunt and maybe giving them a few pointers.

I will tell them first off not to hunt in the woods across from my house and not to trust just anyone with a gun. Some hunters have no respect for lives, even the lives of other hunters.

You know something, Bubba? Last Thursday your deadly aim maimed me for life. What will happen when your careless aim maims or kills an innocent child who may want to play in or near those woods on a sunny day?

You're safe for now, Bubba. Only you and I know for sure who shot me. Well, I'm sure God knows, too. And if God knows, how safe are you really?

Be more careful, Bubba. If you should hurt someone, you won't be hunting anymore either, but you won't be lying in the sun dreaming of better days either. You'll be lying in a cell having nightmares about what tomorrow will hold in store.

See you around, Bubba. Sweet dreams.

Your pal,
Bear
Linda Ingram lives in Supply.

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Developing A Course In Reality

This is why I went to journalism school? I don't think so.

In the course of three days last week I covered a birthday party, a wedding, a homemakers' luncheon, a Halloween carnival and a horse-shoe-pitching contest. Somewhere in there I also served as "moderator" of a meet-the-candidates gathering.

That's a far cry from all those lofty analyses and hard-hitting investigative pieces on which our esteemed professors dwelt way back yonder in the Watergate days. Do you suppose it never occurred to them that there were several thousand of us journalism students for every daily newspaper in These United States, meaning most of us would necessarily end up working for rural weeklies, at least until a nine-to-five job in government or public relations opened up?

To hear those guys tell it, we professional journalists would be required to give ourselves body and soul to our work, the most gratifying pursuit in the world, where every day would be fraught with moral dilemma and every issue would be an opportunity to reveal some noble truth to an eager public.

There would be no spouses or children, weekends or vacations. If we were truly dedicated, we'd have no time or need of such frivolity. There'd be too many planes to catch, press conferences to attend, scams to expose, despots to topple.

We'd remain ever objective, taking great pains never to form an opinion about an issue we were assigned to cover, never to make friends with a source, always to observe and never get involved, to keep a respectable professional distance.

Why do you suppose we young adults with noses for news never asked ourselves this: If the world of professional journalism is anything as action-packed as those guys say it



Lynn Carlson

is, and if they know as much about it as they say they do, then why are they content to spend eight hours a day teaching us how to draw editing symbols, sketch out page layouts and count characters to make headlines fit (all skills, incidentally, which computerization has since rendered utterly obsolete)?

And this: How come they all have wives and mortgages and take Saturdays and three-martini lunches?

And this: In order to remain objective all the time, wouldn't you have to move every week or undergo electroshock therapy or something?

About three months after I graduated from journalism school, I ran into one of my classmates. He had yearned to be a sports writer and had the guts to say so in front of those high-toned professors, who sniffed that sports had nothing to do with real news and did everything they could to discourage and ridicule this particular classmate.

"John, what happened, did you take a job covering the police beat?" I asked when we ran into each other at the sheriff's department. "Nah, I'm an insurance adjuster," he replied, looking wistfully off past my shoulder somewhere as he added, "You know, in four years of journalism school, it never occurred to me that if I became a sports writer, I might hate having to work EVERY night and EVERY weekend of my life..."

I was lucky. Having been brought

up in a newspaper family, I was pretty much illusion-proof. I'd been writing up weddings and taking pictures of grammar-school plays for years and knew that's what I'd probably be going back to. Since then, I've dropped in an out of the news-writing business several times, always on a small-town level, never expecting glitz where there would inevitably be grind.

But back to last week. Those small-time assignments included:

■ Getting to help Mina Mintz celebrate her 104th birthday at Autumn Care, surrounded by her family, friends and fellow residents.

■ Watching a young couple from Pittsburgh exchange wedding vows on the strand at Holden Beach, and feeling how much they love each other and the town where I live.

■ Tasting extraordinary goodies with the Extension Homemakers, accepting an unexpected certificate of appreciation for the *Beacon*, and hearing Susie Carson tell about local history.

■ Taking pictures of some of the most imaginative Halloween costumes in the world, surrounded by grown-ups—some with no little children of their own—who volunteered their time to make the celebration safe and fun.

■ Having a small part in helping the residents of Sunset Beach make up their minds about how to vote in their town election.

■ Hanging out in a paralyzingly cold wind with the most committed of the perennial Festival by the Sea horseshoe competitors. I wouldn't have missed it.

No, it's not what they taught me in school. It's not about meeting secret sources in dark basements or having the luxury of spending ten or 15 hours writing a single story.

But it's absolutely about where I live, how people interact, and what they care about. And it's real.

MORE LETTERS

Dedicated Teacher Is Appreciated

To the editor:

Many times parents of children in our public school system have negative comments about different teachers, and they don't mind sharing these comments with family, friends, co-workers and/or school officials.

Agreed, some comments are justified, and I speak with over 16 years' experience as a parent of children in this system. I myself have had a few. However, for every negative there is a positive. It is time for the positives to be heard.

As the mother of a third-grader, I have another nine-plus years in this system. In some small way, I hope this letter will inspire more positive, appreciative feelings for our teachers.

I am taking my time (thank you for letting me take yours) to toot the horn of Sonya Anderson, third-grade teacher at Waccamaw Elementary. My son Christopher missed school last Thursday and Friday due to illness. Mrs. Anderson called me at home Friday night to discuss his health and classwork.

To my knowledge, Mrs. Anderson teaches a very busy, fast-paced yet well-managed classroom, and I believe she puts forth 110 percent teaching ability to see that each child stays on target. Because of her dedication to children, I believe she did not want Christopher to be overloaded this week with an added make-up agenda. Accordingly, she went far beyond a teacher's duty to bring classwork and homework to him.

Mrs. Anderson, I believe you truly care for the "total child" and for

this, I commend you. For personally bringing Christopher's work to him on "your" Saturday, I thank you.

And finally, I'll say: For all the "Sonya Anderson teachers" in our school system, you are appreciated!

Cecelia B. Gore

Ash

'Pathetic Human'

To the editor:

I would like to address this letter to the person who came into my yard this past weekend and stole a shrub I was getting ready to plant.

I want you to know that I am very angry and upset. What I would like to know is why you did not take the eight other shrubs. Did you just need the one?

Whoever you are, you can't have any morals or you would not have come as close to my front door as you did to take something that did not belong to you. How would you feel if someone did this to you?

Write Us

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters must include your address and telephone number. (This information is for verification purposes only; we will not publish your street/mailling address or phone number.) Letters must be typed or written legibly.

Address letters to:
The Brunswick Beacon
P.O. Box 2558
Shalotte NC 28459

Anonymous letters will not be published.

What bothers me most is that you came during the night while my family and I were at home. You really are a piece of work. I really feel sorry for you that you have to steal shrubbery. You are a pathetic human being.

Leslie J. Roach
Supply

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