

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Valdese Understands The Value Of Tradition

Traditions. We scoff at them, sometimes try to ignore them. But traditions are one of the ways families, church denominations and societies pass on their heritage and values to a new generation.

Keeping traditions helps us remember who we are and what we are.

For Valdese, a small, progressive North Carolina town tucked in the foothills of the Blue Ridge and South Mountains, traditions remain important. Valdese is one of the only communities I know where a celebration of its history is a celebration of religious freedom.

Valdese was founded 100 years ago this past May by 427 members of the Waldenses or "Vaudois," a Protestant religious sect dating from the Middle Ages that suffered under nearly 500 years of religious persecution.

The Waldenses were nearly decimated.

However, Henri Arnaud led a band of Waldenses from the Piedmont region of northwest Italy into forced exile in Switzerland, to return another day.

In August 1689, Arnaud and 800 men fought their way home through a French force of 2,500 men.

Each August, the Waldenses of Valdese and those of the valleys of the Cottian Alps celebrate that "gloieuse rentree des vaudois dans leurs



Susan Usher

vallees," or Glorious Return, a turning point in Waldensian history.

After more trials and small victories, on February 17, 1848, in the Open Letters or Edict of Emancipation, King Carlos Alberto of Savoy restored full civil and political rights and freedom of worship to the Waldenses.

That was cause to celebrate also, with bonfires lit on the hillsides.

In the Waldensian Valley and in Valdese, bonfires are still lit each Feb. 17 to celebrate the edict and freedom of worship. The bonfires remind us that such freedoms can't be taken for granted and are often hard-won.

Prospering in peacetime, the sect outgrew its lands and members began emigrating to other countries, including the United States. Upon arriving in Valdese, the Waldenses planned to farm communal lands, but soon discovered an affinity for American entrepreneurship.

While making a deliberate effort to preserve its past, today Valdese prospers as a manufacturing and cultural center for eastern Burke County and beyond. Town leaders are generally as forward-looking as the original settlers whose story has been told each of the past 26 summers in the outdoor drama, "From This Day Forward."

Other small groups strive to preserve the Waldensian winemaking and bread-baking traditions, their distinctive Provençal patois, and the game of boccie, a favorite team pastime of the early settlers.

A progressive attitude and a solid industrial base keep Valdese economically healthy. Among its industries, the largest privately-owned bakery on the East Coast, Waldensian Sunbeam Bakeries. The yeasty aroma of baking bread greets visitors walking downtown.

Along with two million hamburgers or hotdog buns a day, and 165 king-size bread loaves a minute, Waldensian makes those raisin-rich, frosted "Spanish Bar" cakes.

On the other side of the street rises the sanctuary of the church organized simultaneously with the arrival of the Waldenses.

Only in Valdese, I suspect, will one find a boccie court on the lawn of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church, a museum documenting the

history of the Waldensian sect in its rear yard, and records of a long-ago \$40 loan from the church to three of its members to help found a hosiery mill. (That enterprise, known as Alba-Waldensian Inc., provides hosiery, intimate apparel and speciality health products to a global market.)

More recently the church assisted in the creation of Centennial Park, a downtown focal point. The space is intended to serve as a sort of town square, a place for townspeople to mingle and share conversation and activities. It features a \$15,000 European-style, tiered stone fountain.

On a circular wall behind the fountain cast bronze plaques pay tribute to various facets that help make up the community, such as education, religion and industry.

Notes the Centennial Souvenir Program, "It is hoped this will endure as a monument to the lives lived out in and for this community and as an encouragement to our youth to take their place to see that it continues."

That's what traditions like the Edict bonfires and the Celebration of the Glorious Return are all about—making sure that the good things of our past are carried on. For Valdese, those good things include a strong Vaudois heritage of faith, courage, perseverance, and commitment to community.

Notifying Victims Of Parole Lets Them Know They Matter

Consider this scenario. It happened to an acquaintance of the writer of this editorial.

A mother and her seven-year-old daughter are walking down a Main Street sidewalk in another town. A man they recognize drives past, blows his horn, waves and smiles. The mother's blood runs cold as the daughter freezes in mid-step.

It has been 18 months since their second worst ordeal ended when the man who waded had gone to prison.

It began with the discovery that the man, the 60-year-old husband of the babysitter, had raped the little girl. Her outraged parents had heeded their nobler instincts and pursued the matter through the proper channels instead of yielding to a more visceral urge to take the law into their own hands.

Throughout the grueling court proceedings and hard-won conviction, and for a long time later, there was extensive therapy for the whole family to help them try to understand why some people do such terrible things to innocent children. The little girl had finally started to evolve back into the friendly, trusting child she had been before. Her nightmares had become fewer and farther between.

The man had been sentenced to six years; he served a year and a half. The parents knew that one day they might have to deal with the sickening reality of his release, but no one had warned them it could be any day this soon.

The victims—not just the girl but everyone who loved her—were never informed that the rapist had been paroled. Meeting him on the street was just one more assault for a family whose members hadn't done a single wrong thing except unwittingly hire a babysitter whose husband turned out to be a pedophile.

If a new state Department of Correction rule is strictly enforced, crime victims won't have to suffer that kind of shock anymore. Victims and their families will be automatically notified when those convicted of violent crimes are about to be paroled. The victims won't even have to ask; they just have to let the Parole Commission know their new address if they move away.

Notification is a positive move to help show victims that they're at least as important as the criminals. In a system where victims can expect precious little justice, it's a step in the right direction. And it's long overdue...

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Liquor Tax Hike Makes More Sense Than Plan

To the editor:
 President Bill Clinton recently said, "One of the reasons American health care is so expensive is that our hospitals and our emergency rooms are full of people who are cut up and shot."

He is absolutely right!
 Since 1960, the per-capita violent crime rate has multiplied over three and a half times. In 1990, there were 23,440 Americans murdered; 124,480 raped; and 265,630 injured while being robbed. Also, 108,710 were victims of serious assault. Each of these categories grew substantially from the previous year.

With accelerated interest in crime, the relationship of alcohol to criminal behavior is being concealed from public view.

However, the word is getting out! Alcohol is involved in 68 percent of all manslaughters, 62 percent of assaults, 54 percent of murders and attempted murders, 30 percent of all suicides, 60 percent of all child abuse, 80 percent of all spouse abuse, 80 percent of fire deaths and 50 percent of all highway deaths. Furthermore, we are told that 50 percent of all hospital admissions are alcohol-related.

To address the growing cost of medical care directly related to alcohol, what does the president recommend? A 75 percent tax increase on a pack of cigarettes!

Yet, a Harris poll shows 71 percent of Americans favor a \$2 tax increase on a bottle of liquor, which would generate about \$4 billion annually. This could help dramatically in paying the cost of an adequate health plan.

Of course, the liquor industry is

adamantly opposed to any liquor tax increase because sales would decline—some economists predict as much as 30 percent. Then alcohol-related crimes would decrease, and the cost of health care would decline accordingly.

Don't hold your breath for this to happen! The president and Congress will not likely allow this to occur. When the president announced his health care plan, who was standing on his left? None other than Augusta Busch from the family that produces Budweiser and Busch beers! Have you noticed the millions that the alcohol industry puts into Congressional campaign coffers?

The longer I live the more I realize how right Abraham Lincoln was when he said: "Liquor has many defenders but no defense."

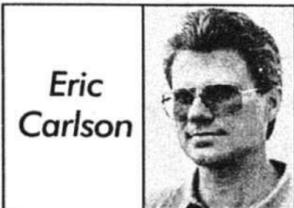
Coy C. Privette
 Raleigh
 EDITOR'S NOTE: Privette is executive director of the Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.

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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:
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 Anonymous letters will not be published.



In Memory Of Duane, Berry And Elizabeth Reed



Eric Carlson

Neither had anyone else. But boy, could they play! Two drummers. Two lead guitars. A driving bass player. A singer with a voice like B.B. King and Ray Charles. And the best slide guitarist since Elmore James. I was bowled over.

Since I was supposed to be going to college, I hitch-hiked back to Syracuse the next day, where none of my friends had ever heard of the Allman Brothers either.

Then Eric Clapton came to town with his new group "Derek and the Dominoes." (Some unknown English dude named Elton John was the opening act.) As a special treat, Clapton announced that the band would be joined by a fellow named Duane Allman, who had played on the famous "Layla" album.

That name again. The same guy in the mutton-chop sideburns playing slide guitar with a Coricidin pill bottle. And he was giving the legendary Eric Clapton a run for his money! I was bowled over again.

One night in late June I stayed up until dawn listening to a live radio broadcast of the final concert at New York's famous Fillmore East auditorium. The last group to take the stage sounded familiar. It was them again—The Allman Brothers Band.

Back at school, the incoming freshmen were settling into the dormitory when I heard a familiar song wafting from one of their rooms. It was that same haunting twin-guitar melody that had grabbed me in the

Hofstra gym four months earlier. "Who IS that? And WHAT IS that song?" I asked the new guy with the very loud stereo.

A lanky Italian kid with a Marlboro permanently fastened to his lip looked up from unpacking and said, "The Allman Brothers Band—'In Memory of Elizabeth Reed.'" And so I met Joseph "J.J." Rendina of Masontown, Pa.

We two Yankees spent hundreds of hours listening to "the brothers" and eventually found a sizable number of converts to this new style of music. Based heavily in the Chicago blues of Muddy Waters, Elmore James, John Lee Hooker and B.B. King, the Allman's added a dose of country, a dash of jazz and a pinch of gospel to create what would come to be called "Southern Rock."

Before long, Rolling Stone magazine was calling the Allman Brothers "the best rock 'n' roll band in the past five years." They were the vanguard of a new movement that would popularize such bands as Z.Z. Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Many of today's country-rock bands have their roots in that era.

I became such a fan that I started writing record reviews for the school paper and for a local entertainment guide. I sent clippings to record companies and they gave me lots of free records to review. Then they sent me backstage passes and scheduled interviews with folks like the Marshall Tucker Band, Charlie Daniels, Wet Willie and other "Southern music" acts.

Since political science hadn't gotten me into a single concert, I soon changed my major to journalism. Which is how I came to write for newspapers. It was my fondness for this particular music that led me (and several other friends) to move south after college. Which is how I came to live in North Carolina.

One of my fellow Allmans aficionados, Tony Yoken, became such an expert on Duane Allman's early studio work that he was asked to help compile the second anthology of Allman's work, released in 1974. Although he was born and reared in suburban New York, Yoken also moved south after college and currently lives in Memphis, Tenn., with his wife Pam Denney, another Syracuse Allman Brothers fan.

Unfortunately, like so many things of that era, the Allman Brothers' potential was never realized. On Oct. 29, 1971, Duane Allman was riding his motorcycle on a Macon street when he swerved to avoid a truck and died after the resulting crash. One year and 13 days later (21 years ago today), the band's bass player, Berry Oakley, was riding his motorcycle on that same street when he collided with a bus and was killed.

Oddly enough, it wasn't until after their deaths that the band got the recognition they deserved. In the summer of 1973, an outdoor performance by what was left of the Allman Brothers drew a half-million people to a concert in upstate New York. It was the largest crowd of rock fans ever assembled.

On a trip to Macon a few years later, I went to Riverside Cemetery to visit the resting place of two fallen brothers. The local fellow who brought me there took me to another gravestone. The one that inspired the band's trademark song.

As I stared down at the slab, I saw that Elizabeth Jane Reed Napier gave birth to two boys. A chill ran up my spine as I realized that both brothers died at the age of 24. Then I noticed her last name.

Duane Allman and Berry Oakley, the backbone of the Allman Brothers Band, both died at the age of 24...on Napier Avenue.

Worth Repeating...

All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was.
 —Ernest Hemingway