

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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It's Time To Examine Each Board's Style For Substance

In the coming weeks, all the South Brunswick Islands towns will swear in newly-elected representatives of the people. Such occasions seem the perfect opportunity for each board to make a new or renewed commitment to open, accessible government and for citizens to more forcefully exercise their considerable power to make it happen.

- Things we'd like to see:
- every seat filled at town board meetings, even when the agenda items are routine;
 - detailed agendas, with explanatory attachments, made available to interested citizens the week before regular meetings take place;
 - meetings and public hearings scheduled at times when most working people, as well as retirees, are able to attend;
 - citizens asking more and better questions in a spirit of interest and concern rather than confrontation;
- We'd like not to see:
- issues voted upon without being explained or discussed (i.e., a town's real business having been decided on the phone prior to the meeting);
 - elective officials whispering among themselves in open sessions rather than addressing the public they have pledged to serve;
 - citizens or elected officials allowing their towns to be divided into political or economic factions;
 - anyone being allowed to continue to serve in an appointive position who does not attend meetings and fulfill the obligations of her/his appointment.

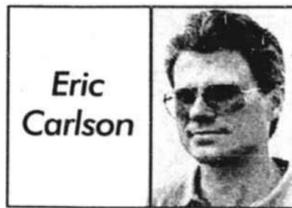
Every town from Calabash to Holden Beach has its own personality and each town board, its own governing style. It is the shared responsibility of elective officials and the citizens they represent to see that each town is governed in such a way that the style has substance.

Worth Repeating...

- Our worst enemies here are not the ignorant and the simple, however cruel; our worst enemies are the intelligent and corrupt. —Graham Greene
- A man gradually identifies himself with the form of his fate; a man is, in the long run, his own circumstances. —Jorge Luis Borges
- Freedom of speech and freedom of action are meaningless without freedom to think. And there is no freedom of thought without doubt. —Bergen Evans

Who Says There Is Safety In Numbers?

My dad used to say that the academic achievement known as the B.S. degree got its name from the barnyard byproduct of the same initials. Likewise, the M.S. signified "more of the same" and the Ph.D stood for "piled higher and deeper." Until last week, I had only earned the meager pile of B.S., in recognition of my four years of higher education.



Eric Carlson

But now, proudly enshrined on my wall in its own 3-by-3-inch frame, is a diploma stating that "(Your Name Here) has completed the National Safety Council's DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSE."

Which is to certify that I am \$100 poorer and will not get any points on my license for driving 50 miles per hour in a 35 mph zone on a Wilmington street where most people speed through red lights at 60 mph to avoid having their car hijacked and stripped for parts to buy crack cocaine.

Unfortunately, the four-hour course did not provide any defensive tips about avoiding that sort of urban mishap. What it did offer was an amazing array of fascinating and useful statistics.

For example, our instructor told us that only one traffic violation out of 50,000 results in a citation. Which means that of the five million people who went speeding through Wilmington that week, I was one of the 100 chumps who got tickets.

According to the statistics, if ten million of those people were driving

to the airport, they would be 5,000 times more likely to get killed in a car wreck than they would on an airplane, where only 1.6 would be expected to die in crashes.

Which means you are better off taking lots of trips, because 75 percent of all fatal automobile wrecks happen within 25 miles of home. The numbers also suggest that you should save your drinking for the flight, since 50 percent of all fatal auto accidents involve alcohol.

(There was no data offered on your likelihood of being strangled to death by a flight attendant for getting drunk and disruptive on the plane. Cheers!)

I was interested to learn that only 25 percent of all fatal car wrecks are caused by excessive speed. A whopping 80 percent of all deaths and serious injuries result from collisions at less than 40 mph.

However, you are 31 percent more likely to have a collision at 65 mph than at 55. Which makes you wonder whether it's such a good idea to ride in a plane going 500 mph after all.

They say anything can be proven with numbers, and that the three levels of falsehood are "lies, damn lies and statistics." But the most eloquent insight I ever heard about our devotion to numerical evidence came from the great Chi(cago)nese philosopher Mike Ditka.

"Da coach" was being questioned at a post-game press conference about a streak of wins his team had enjoyed despite lagging behind in all the "vital" figures used to gauge overall playing performance.

Ditka looked at the questioner like a grizzly trying to decide whether a curious tourist would taste better with or without his Gore-Tex parka. Shaking his head in disgust, he spat out the words:

"Statistics are for idiots!"

Even so, we hear them all the time. "Four out of five doctors agree" (that they are about to get the short end of the tongue depressor from the Clinton health care plan).

"Nine out of ten dentists recommend sugarless gum for their patients who chew gum" (and charm school for patients who chew their toenails).

"Only 21 percent of Americans say they would trust Ross Perot to be president" (and only three of those believe his stories about NAFTA hit men and nuptial sabotage).

One of the most irritating statistics I keep hearing over and over is the one that says a handgun in the home is 5,000 times more likely to

be used against a family member than an intruder. Give that researcher a B.S. degree!

We always had handguns in our home. But there was a zero percent chance of them being used on a family member. Because as kids, we were disciplined in their use. And our family didn't resolve its conflicts with violence.

However, there was a 100 percent chance of that gun being used on an intruder who didn't kiss the floor upon being caught in the act.

No doubt that statistic was fabricated by dividing the number of domestic shootings by the number of burglar takedowns, yielding a meaningless ratio of 1:5000. This idiotic number has lots more to say about the state of the family and individual responsibility than about a person's right to feel safe in his or her home.

As dad would say, "I've told you a billion times not to exaggerate!"

Despite all the numbers, the defensive driving course wasn't such a bad way to spend an evening. Better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.

Where else would you learn that a driver who crashes at 30 mph without wearing a seat belt will hit the windshield with the same force as he would by doing a face plant on the sidewalk from the roof of a 35-foot building?

Neither course of action is recommended. Nine out of ten newspaper columnists agree.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Writers Respond To Column, Reply About 'Bubba' Shooting 'Bear'

To the editor:

In response to the guest column "When Bear Meets Bubba," (Nov. 3) please let me say I feel the same way the writer did.

I have four grandchildren that like to play in the woods. They play house and Indians and hide-and-seek. We have people in our neighborhood that like to do target practice. How do we know that one of his bullets won't stray and hit one of my grandchildren and their heads or face may be blown off, also?

Please hear our pleas for gun control before we lose a precious small child. Then what will their answer be? "I'm sorry." Well, that is not enough after the child is dead or maimed for life.

Please consider our request and plea.
 Patricia Salley
 Supply

God Frowns On Abusers

To the editor:

I would like to comment on the Nov. 3 article about the cat getting shot. I would like to express my sympathy to Linda Ingram about her pet.

I have a story to tell about a man I used to live close to. He threw gasoline on a cow and set her on fire. She suffered for two years. About three years later this man went to check his tobacco barn and a burner exploded. He almost got burned to death.

When I received the news, my comment was, "Well, I guess he knows now how the poor old cow suffered."

Another man I knew used to hunt rabbits on the beach. He said he killed every cat he saw over there hunting. Well, he had a stroke in his right side and suffered for 12

years before he died, so I hope this gives Linda some comfort about her pet.

God put man in charge of all animals when He made this earth, and I don't think he smiles on animal abusers.

Now for the man that says keep them at home in the Nov. 11 edition: I have six stray cats that I have given good homes. Their instinct tells them to hunt—not because I don't feed them. At least they are loved.

As for birds and squirrels, I feed them, also. It is very seldom that the cats bring up a bird, but they still roam out in the woods.

I just thank God I have good neighbors. Most all animals will kill from hunger or instinct. After all, humans kill to eat, also, unless they are vegetarians.

Alma Tolson
 Shallotte

Good Move For BCC

To the editor:

On behalf of Brunswick Community College, I would like to thank the many citizens who voted for passage of the community college bonds. BCC has been growing and serving more students each year in our 19 curriculum programs. Support of this important bond gives even more students the chance to get a good education beyond high school close to their homes and communities.

A \$4 million allied health building will be built on our main campus on Business 17, north of Supply, with the bond issue. This new building will complement our existing ones which were so generously provided by a countywide bond passed in 1985. In fact, that county bond issue will serve as our match, so there will be no need to seek addi-

tional funding for this upcoming building project.

Brunswick Community College, as part of the Southeastern Allied Health Consortium, plans to offer Respiratory Therapy Assistant and Occupational Therapy Assistant in the near future. We currently offer Health Information Technology, Phlebotomy and the first year of Dental Assisting, Medical Laboratory Assistant, and Physical Therapy Assistant through this regional program. Also, BCC offers Practical Nursing and Nurse Assistant programs as part of its overall health care program selections.

We appreciate your vote of confidence in our future plans at Brunswick Community College.

W. Michael Reaves
 BCC President
 (More Letters, Following Page)

Money, Matrimony: Don't Call The Whole Thing Off

Lynn Carlson



Every smitten couple ought to be required to pool their pay and live

out of a joint checking account for six months before they're allowed to apply for a marriage license. The result would be a brand of reality guaranteed to smack the blinders off true love and do wonders for the national divorce rate.

I know a wife who phoned the IRS to put a trace on the \$800 income tax refund check that never came. She learned that it had been cashed and was about to make a big fuss about the mailbox having been robbed when her husband sheepishly admitted he spent it on a suit. One suit.

I've heard of a husband who requires his wife to bring him the empty deodorant container (along with a 50-cents-off coupon) before he allocates the money for her to buy some more.

It used to be so easy back when dads were company men and moms were homemakers. Mom got a household allowance out of dad's paycheck and would feed the kids beeny-weenies from dented cans to

save a little pin money and buy herself that darling new hat.

Then everything changed. Not only did both spouses in most homes take outside jobs, but spending money got to be so easy!

For example, it doesn't feel like spending at all when I fill out the Zabar's order blank, fax it to New York City, and find the goodies at my door five days later, courtesy of our reliable friends at UPS. It's more like...magic!

As I feed the form into the fax, I'm overwhelmed by the technological wonder of it all. My order will get there in less than five minutes! In my mind's eye I see a handsome-but-crude Italian guy packing those five pounds of coffee beans and marking them to go to "some f#\$!@# place in the sticks called Holden Beach."

I've never been to Zabar's and he's never been here. We haven't exchanged legal tender. We've done business without ever having touched, seen or talked to each other.

It's nothing short of a miracle!

I am not particularly extravagant, but I might be if I could afford to. My furniture is mostly hand-me-downs. Expensive clothing has no particular allure for me. I drive a dirty Volkswagen with 80,000 miles on it.

But I do seem to buy a lot of little things, as my mate is quick to point out. He tells people about riding in my car for the first time, opening the glove compartment and counting eight pairs of cheap sunglasses.

It's a congenital defect my sister shares. Her fiancée, on his first trip to the powder room in her home, was overwhelmed by the array of "lotions and potions" (i.e. every product available from Clinique, Lancome, Neutrogena, Nivea and Johnson & Johnson) on her shelves.

I think it all goes back to growing up in a small town where no stores were open on Sundays except Revco, and there was nothing else to do after church and the midday meal except to go there. It was a

weekly ritual for Sister and me, filling our red plastic handbaskets with health and beauty aids, school supplies, costume jewelry and assorted stuff on sale.

Sister and I are both fortunate to be paired with men who don't make it their business to police our spending habits. (Translation: we both bring home a big enough percentage of the family bacon to have a little economic autonomy.) Many are not so blessed.

If you don't believe me, pop into any supermarket and watch couples shop together. It's a lot like watching "Seinfeld."

Eavesdrop on a retired couple. You'll be pretty sure the wife singularly managed the household finances for 30 years or so while raising 3.2 successful kids, all the while staying within the family budget and saving enough here and there for the aforementioned hats.

And now she has this Siamese twin—they're joined at the pocketbook—to point out those unit pric-

ing labels he assumes she never noticed before. (And to walk along beside her, jingling the change in his pockets and whistling along with the Muzak in that helpful way.)

These are the same men who swear that you get what you pay for when you buy lawn tractors, sporting equipment or audio components, but fail to understand why you've gotta have the nice, new cucumbers instead of the furry ones marked down to half-price.

I once saw a punk couple arguing in a Winn-Dixie. She had pink spiked hair; his was blaze orange. They were dressed in leathers and ripped undershirts and had safety pins for earrings and gold hoops in their nostrils. He was intent on Heinz ketchup, but she insisted only Hunt's would do. For days, I kept playing the scene in my mind, turning it into a musical. "You say toemay-toe, and I say toe-mah-toe...Let's call the whole thing off!"

Some things you just ought to do alone...