

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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On The Cusp Of Even Bigger Changes, Get Ready For '94

Though 1993 was a notable year for Brunswick County on many fronts, many of us will likely remember it most for the surprise March 13 "Storm of the Century," when the water and wind just kept building on a Saturday afternoon until \$23 million in damage had occurred. It left us with something to be thankful for, as well as much to repair. No lives were lost, despite the fact that evacuations were virtually impossible, since the storm caught residents and visitors off guard.

This year saw the escalation of several issues likely to shape the near future of our communities. The South Brunswick Islands' three remaining unsewered municipalities—Calabash, Sunset Beach and Holden Beach—devoted considerable time and effort to exploring the sources of, and possible remedies for, deteriorating estuarine water quality. Shallotte, the commercial hub of the area, began discussing expanding its sewer system.

Though Brunswick County has fallen from its long-standing second place in population growth rate among North Carolina's 100 counties, there is as much reason as ever for these and other communities to continue anticipating and preparing for the inevitable changes ahead.

Toward that end, a coalition of Brunswick County governments began pushing for state aid in studying the feasibility of an integrated regional sewer and stormwater runoff control system which could serve as a model for coastal communities statewide or even nationwide.

Environmental concerns served as catalysts for two other major issues—the opposition to the proposed Martin Marietta limestone mine near Southport and the growing effort toward public acquisition of Bird Island, the undeveloped barrier island off Sunset Beach. At year's end, both showed signs of pending victory.

Some things, unfortunately, didn't change. The Brunswick County Commissioners and Board of Education suffered a budget impasse which required a professional mediator to sort out. Late in the year, the school board reorganized its central staff, eliminating locally paid administrative positions in a move which while probably pleasing the county commissioners, prompted cries of "foul" from civil rights leaders claiming the central office's racial parity had been unfavorably altered.

Brunswick County was one of only 14 school systems to rank below both the state average and below par, or below similar systems. It showed the lowest overall performance of any school system in southeastern North Carolina.

Perhaps most disturbing of all was Brunswick County's reflection of the national trend toward escalating violence and illicit drug activity among adolescents. "Operation War Paint" in the fall resulted in a sweep of suspects from the county's known crack cocaine markets. Just weeks later, 10 people were indicted—seven of them teenagers—in connection with a murder believed related not to drugs, but to "gang mentality."

Though we remain in the "rural" pigeonhole of demographers and planners, Brunswick County faces big-city problems and growing pains. We'd best be ready for '94. Our work is cut out for us.

Here Comes That Deja Vu Thing Again

Well, it's that time of year. Time for the relentless media bombardment of boring end-of-the-year reviews, unrealistic new year's resolutions and absurd predictions for 1994. Every television and radio network, every magazine and every newspaper indulges in this annual feast of year-end nonsense.

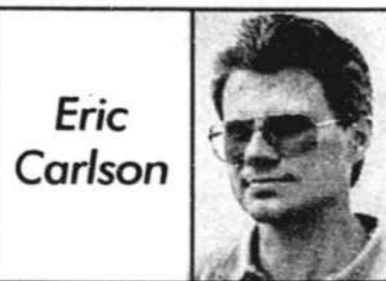
You innocent consumers probably think these accounts are lovingly crafted as a public service, encouraging us to pause and consider our circumstances, to reflect on our past mistakes and accomplishments and to chart a new course for the future.

Actually these stories are produced because the days between Christmas and New Years are what we professionals call a "slow news week." We rehash old news and make up new stuff because all the important people who do newsworthy things are at home watching TV and stuffing their faces with holiday cheer while we're stuck at the office.

As usual, the supermarket tabloids are on the cutting edge of this effort and many have already compiled their reviews, resolutions and predictions.

Thank goodness. Otherwise you might have forgotten the story of the 10-month-old baby who was found floating in the Atlantic Ocean 81 years after she fell off the deck of the sinking luxury liner Titanic. She was alive, but had aged considerably.

Or the discovery in Vermont of a small colony of bats WITH HUMAN FACES (bearing an uncanny resemblance to that batty Texas billionaire Ross Perot). And the California secretary who received more



Eric Carlson

than 20 messages on her answering machine—FROM GOD (offering her a chance to buy into a mountain condominium project).

The Globe predicts Hillary Clinton and Whoopi Goldberg will go into business together with a restaurant catering to movie stars and homeless people (Le Petit Dumpster?). There is no indication of how this will go down with Rosanne Arnold, whom the Weekly World News identifies as the first lady's long-lost stepsister.

The magazine also predicts Joey Buttafuoco will announce that he is the long lost stepbrother of Bill Clinton. Neither mag ventures a guess as to Amy Fisher's relationship to Tom Arnold (or to his other wife, Kim Silva).

It is predicted that Arnold Schwarzenegger will change political affiliations and accept a post as ambassador to some European nation. The article doesn't say which one, although Monaco seems a likely bet, since the tiny country is supposed to declare war on the U.S. next year.

Jack Nicholson will undergo a harrowing afternoon when he becomes super-glued to a door handle while playing with his children.

There was no indication what sort of game gets him into this sticky situation.

Madonna is also seen to be headed for some changes when she marries an Arab sheik and becomes the robed-and-veiled mother of his twins. Meanwhile, Princess Diana will take to reading Tarot cards as a psychic to the stars.

Country music fans may be surprised (or not) to learn that Garth Brooks will drop out of show business to embark on a career as an interior decorator. The mother-daughter singing Judds are expected to reveal that Wynona is really Naomi's mom. The two were mistakenly identified on birth records and never bothered to correct the error.

The Weekly World News also predicts that TV executives will try to sign Jeffrey Dahmer for a half-hour cooking series called "The Ghoulish Gourmet." The deal falls through when the proposed recipes are found to be "in poor taste."

Just picture the scene at the Dahmer dinner table:

MOTHER: Jeffrey, I hate to pry. But I really don't like your neighbors.

DAHMER: That's OK, mom. Try the potatoes.

For those of who find these predictions a trifle far-fetched, I can't resist reminding you of my own prognostications for 1993, which appeared in this space last Dec. 31. I said (and I quote):

"The West Brunswick High School Trojans will win the State 3-A Football Championships.

"The Brunswick County Board of

Commissioners will hold numerous meetings and make many decisions, often in split votes. The Calabash town board will do likewise.

"Thieves will break into scores of homes and steal guns, television sets, videocassette recorders and microwave ovens. The criminals will be arrested and later put in jail.

"Flea markets and pawn shops will offer bargain prices on guns, television sets, videocassette recorders and microwave ovens. The criminals will be released from jail and later arrested on similar charges.

"Earthquakes, tornadoes, typhoons, hurricanes, floods, droughts, famine and diseases will occur in various locations around the earth. Hundreds will be killed in plane crashes. Still more will perish in automobile accidents.

"Throughout the year, brightly lit daytime hours will be followed by periods of darkness. Each day, the surface level of the ocean will inexplicably rise and fall, with profound effects on both navigation and fishing.

"Birds will fly north for the summer. Flowers will bloom. Spots and king mackerel will return to our coastal waters. The days will grow longer, the weather will get warmer. The tourists will come back. Business will improve."

I believe if you check the record you'll find that I batted a solid 1000 last year. So now I plan to go further out on a limb and repeat those same predictions for 1994.

I might miss one this time. But I'd rather be wrong than be a jinx. Happy New Year.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mine Opponents Urge Passage Of Protective Ordinance

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Brunswick County Commissioners were scheduled Wednesday (Dec. 29) to consider an ordinance to prohibit deep mining within a 5-mile radius of the Carolina Power and Light Brunswick Nuclear Facility and Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point. Opponents of the proposed Martin Marietta limestone quarry in that area submitted numerous letters to the editor this week in support of such an ordinance. In the interest of space, and to avoid redundancy, those letters are excerpted here.

Good Start, Overdue

To the editor:
 An ordinance to stop all blasting and dewatering necessary for the operation of a deep mine within a 5-mile radius of the CP&L power plant and Sunny Point is being considered by our county commissioners next week. It is paramount that this ordinance be passed.

Our commissioners have the right and obligation to protect the many people and jobs that will be impacted by this giant hole. The anti-mining alliance has spent months on this project and has many reports that support their position.

This ordinance is a good start for our local government and is long overdue.

Nicole Tatum
 Southport

Vote Of Confidence

To the editor:
 What more has to be done?
 More than 3,000 people in Brunswick County, Congressman Charlie Rose, State Sen. R.C. Soles, Rep. David Redwine, Rep. Dewey Hill and CP&L have realized that a quarry is not needed and certainly not wanted.

Dan Sams, Wilmington regional engineer for the state Division of Land Resources, has asked the state to not even consider a permit due to the sensitivity of the area.

An ordinance to stop all blasting within a 5-mile radius of CP&L's power plant and Sunny Point...will be a vote of confidence for our commissioners.

Karen Z. Perry
 Southport

Why Not Unanimous?

To the editor:
 The majority of our Brunswick County commissioners have realized the potential dangers that Martin Marietta's proposed mining operation imposes on Brunswick County. I do not understand why this realization is not unanimous...

I do not congratulate (Commissioner) Jerry Jones for voting against the ordinance that would protect us from these potential dangers. Rather, I ask him why.

Sharon Sykes
 Southport

MM Invested Too Soon

To the editor:
 The same company that stated it wanted to be a "good neighbor" to us is now threatening you and our county if a new ordinance prohibits them from blasting at their proposed limestone mine...

Martin Marietta also said that an ordinance like the one proposed is illegal because they have invested at least \$2 million in their proposed operation "to prepare the site for mining." I ask, two million on what?

As of today, Dec. 22, I have looked as far as you can see—nothing worth \$2 million in sight. Perhaps they are speaking of the cost of studies or legal fees. Well, they took a

risk by investing before they knew if they could obtain a state permit to operate.

Also, if before they invested one dime, they had held a county-wide meeting with property owners, they would have known the opposition before they spent money. It was their decision to keep things quiet.

Deborah Bolduc
 Southport

Vote For Protection

To the editor:
 ...All of the expert evaluations of this mine proposal indicate that it would be hazardous to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Brunswick County. If our county commissioners aren't willing to vote in favor of our protection, then we desperately need some changes made in the next election.

Dean Jones
 Southport

'We Must Insist'

To the editor:
 We must insist that the county commissioners vote in favor of this ordinance for all of our protection. Otherwise, we need new commissioners that are willing to protect us against such companies coming in to destroy our county and its people.

Warren M. Rhodes
 Southport

County Attorney Capable

To the editor:
 In all the fuss over an ordinance designed to protect the citizens of Brunswick County from the dangers of a proposed blasting operation with associated de-watering called a quarry, we have left out one basic ingredient. We have an excellent county attorney,

Michael Ramos, who is more than competent to draw up a protective ordinance.

...We are not lawyers, nor do we want to be. We don't have to worry as long as we are in his capable hands. With the commissioners' input, and his direction, we can trust that the public health, safety and welfare will be protected.

Suzanne Osborne
 Southport

Cannot Take The Chance

To the editor:
 ...The dangers that the proposed quarry presents are well known. To allow such an operation would be a crime.

No one can accurately determine the extent of damage that would result from mining. It could be calamitous. We just cannot take that chance!

There is overwhelming public support that there should be no mining at this location.

Louis F. Welcker
 Boiling Spring Lakes

Can't Handle Traffic

To the editor:
 ...I would hope the ordinance could be rewritten in such a way that local businesses could continue to extract marl and other such materials as they have in the past. I would also hope that blasting, dewatering and destruction of the environment, such as endangered species and wetlands, would be the primary thrust of the ordinance... Why encourage a potential disaster?

If 200 trucks a day go through Boiling Spring Lakes, I shudder to think what might happen with hundreds of school children sharing N.C. 87, a two-lane road with those heavy, possibly overloaded trucks.

Highways 87, 133 and 211 were not built for heavy traffic, and the taxpayers will have to foot the bill to keep them up. Martin Marietta will pay somewhere in the neighborhood of \$23,000 to \$30,000 in taxes, and that wouldn't pay for enough resurfacing from the mine site to Boiling Spring Lakes or from the mine site to N.C. 211.

Bert H. Buckbee
 Boiling Spring Lakes

Area Prone To 'Pot Holes'

To the editor:
 ...The drawing of a large volume of water daily may very well cause many pot holes, hence becoming a hazard to the plants and the population... One has only to review Sunny Point's problems with pot holes as this facility and the railroad were built.

This area is prone to pot holes developing without the removal of great volumes of water. Pot holes could develop many miles from the mine site.

A great percentage of the population within several miles of the mine may lose their water supply or have a salt water intrusion.

Nell S. Mayberry
 Boiling Spring Lakes

Bury This Problem

To the editor:
 ...For several months we have been in a battle for our sanity, quality of life and safety. It seems a company has spent \$2 million to put a quarry between a nuclear power plant and an ammunition depot. This is insane!...Let's bury this problem and move on.

Roy C. Meares
 Southport

(More Letters, Following Page)