

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1994

Coming Through In A Pinch

You have to give Brunswick Countians credit for coming through in a pinch.

A combination of volunteers' tenacity, citizens' support and governmental commitment appears to have all but guaranteed that there will be a temporary public library operating while the West Brunswick Branch undergoes extensive renovations. The locations are still being narrowed down, but Friends of the Library have promised that its volunteers can be counted on to staff whatever site turns out to be the most practical.

The Friends deserve the community's special thanks for taking on this project and seeing it through. The towns who have contributed also deserve a pat on the back—especially the Shallotte Aldermen, who gave \$2,500 to the effort, stipulating that the temporary library be set up in Shallotte.

Meanwhile, the Friends are planning a Sweetheart Dance next Friday, Feb. 1 at the Shallotte Senior Center to raise funds for the effort. If you haven't given, here's a good opportunity to do so, and to have some fun in the process.

Americans Right To Question Regional Health Alliance Plan

That gourmet dinner always looks so good on the menu, but when the check comes, you can't help wishing you'd ordered something a little more within your means. So you put it on the credit card, hope you'll be able to pay for it next month, and swear you'll never do it again.

Shameful familiarity with that kind of scenario may explain many Americans' cooling feet since President Bill Clinton reiterated his commitment to federally mandated universal health care coverage. It looks as if he may have difficulty getting Congressional approval to implement his plan in one fell swoop, and it may be all for the best if he's forced by compromise to slow down.

How can one not be wary of the prospect of regional health alliances? It's difficult to envision anything less than a mega-bureaucracy which, given all federal precedent, would start out too big, too expensive, and too inefficient, and then get worse.

Perhaps what Americans really want when they say they want health care for everyone is something more community-based—like more support for community health centers. Community health centers are private, nonprofit organizations which receive federal subsidy to provide health care—not just to the poor, but to anyone who needs it—on a sliding scale of fees.

Properly marketed and professionally run, community health centers can provide more bang for the health care buck than any system we've seen. They're more than a safety net, but less than a total overhaul of the health care system. Increased investment in community health centers makes much more sense than "fixing" even the components of American health care which aren't broken.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why Be Reluctant To Conduct Open Meetings Of Panel?

To the editor:
 In the Jan. 27th edition of the *Beacon*, it was reported that a meeting of The Sunset Beach Citizens' Advisory Panel on Wastewater had to be adjourned because I disrupted the meeting. This is totally false.

On January 18, 1994, three citizens who are not members of the panel showed up at the Sunset Beach Town Hall to attend the meeting of the Panel. Notice of the meeting had been posted at the town hall.

Non-member Bob Kakos entered the meeting room first. When I entered a few minutes later Bob told me that Panel Chairman George Knott had told him that we were not welcome. Chairman Knott then told me that the meeting was closed to the public and that I should leave. I replied that I had a right to attend, that I did not intend to speak—just observe—but if he wanted me to leave, he would have to call a police officer to escort me from the premises. This exchange took place before three additional members of the panel arrived.

When members Annette Odum and Al Consalvi arrived, they too questioned our reasons for wanting to attend the meeting. One of the members suggested that they move the meeting to a private residence so that outsiders could not attend. I told them that if they did so, I would contact an attorney and file a lawsuit.

At this point, Chairman Knott called the meeting to order, entertained a motion to adjourn, which passed four to one, and the meeting was adjourned. The members of the

panel then left.

The N.C. Open Meetings Law guarantees that meetings such as this be open to the public and the press. Mr. Knott should have known this, as he had attempted to keep details of earlier meetings from the public. The *Beacon* ran an editorial on October 1, 1992, saying that the meetings had to be open to the public.

In fact, John Watts, a member of the panel, tried to tell Mr. Knott that the meeting had to be open to the public and referred to the editorial. Mr. Knott refused to listen to Mr. Watts and insisted the meeting was to be closed to the public.

One wonders why the reluctance to conduct an open meeting? Why insist on violating the law? What did they have to hide?

Cletus A. Waldmiller
 Sunset Beach
 (More Letters, Following Page)

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/ mailing address or phone number.) Letters must be typed or written legibly. Address letters to:

The Brunswick Beacon
 P.O. Box 2558
 Shallotte NC 28459

Anonymous letters will not be published.

Taking Responsibility For 'Our' Children

At the "Children in Crisis" conference last week, the point all speakers seemed to make in one fashion or another was this: schools may help kids go straight or stay straight, social service agencies may help, law enforcement and the criminal justice system may help.

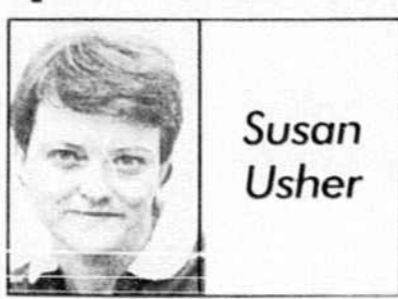
But no one of them—or even two or three of them—can do it all, though they share responsibility for the children of our community.

It takes all of us, the entire community, to make sure kids grow up with a chance of being the kind of adults we'd like them to be.

At one time, at least in small towns like ours, it must have seemed easier. We didn't need an organized "program" to show us how to care. Most people shared similar values and there was a sense of community, of shared responsibility for each other. That meant there were times we didn't exactly stay out of each other's business.

I can remember neighbors who, in the absence of a parent, would step in to say or word or two if I stepped out of line. They knew what was expected, and I knew that if I didn't behave right, my mother would hear about it, and deal with it. I may have resented that, but my mother was grateful. It made her parenting stretch farther than it might have, especially being a single mother working two jobs and trying to raise three girls.

That same caring community helped us get through some years



Susan Usher

that were really tough financially and otherwise.

It didn't end when we left Shallotte. There was the time, after my mother died, we girls were scattered, and our homeplace was vacant between renters, that an impoverished professor of mine came down with his very large family from Ohio and spent a week there, basically camping out, on their first trip to the coast. A neighbor saw lights in the house they knew to be vacant and called a relative so someone could come check. Nosy? Maybe. Caring? For sure.

And there was the high school teacher and guidance counselor who made me a part of her family and even went so far as to designate a room in their house as mine, in case I ever needed it. For all I know, that room may have belonged to a dozen other teen-agers as well.

Who made a difference in your own life? Who listened when you needed to talk? Who offered words of encouragement? Who believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself? Whose example or advice

did you follow when it came time to interview for college or that first job?

It may have been your own parent or the parent of a friend. It may have been someone associated with an institution—a teacher, a camp counselor, a guidance counselor, a Youth Fellowship leader at church, the old guy down at the pool hall or the neighborhood gas station.

Yes, it was an individual who cared enough to share himself with you. You may not always have liked what they said, or followed their advice. Chances are you still returned, again and again, to the spring that nourished you.

Chances are you consciously or unconsciously influence some young person. Tell me, what kind of role model or mentor do you make?

More and more these days coordinated programs attempt to provide what multigenerational communities once seemed to do without being told to.

One thing hasn't changed. The programs rely on availability of caring people.

Communities in Schools, a program introduced last week at the "Children in Crisis" conference, is a vehicle that has been used in more than 130 communities of all sizes to organize reaching out to the people most in need of care: children and families in crisis. The project tackles symptoms, such as low school attendance and drop-out rates, but

also tries to get at the home or family problems that help create the symptoms, and to make sure school is a place worth going to.

The idea is to mobilize all resources in the community. The only limit is the willingness of individuals, businesses, agencies, churches, civic groups and others to give of their time, their money and whatever else they have to offer. It's a continuing test of commitment, a litmus test of our priorities.

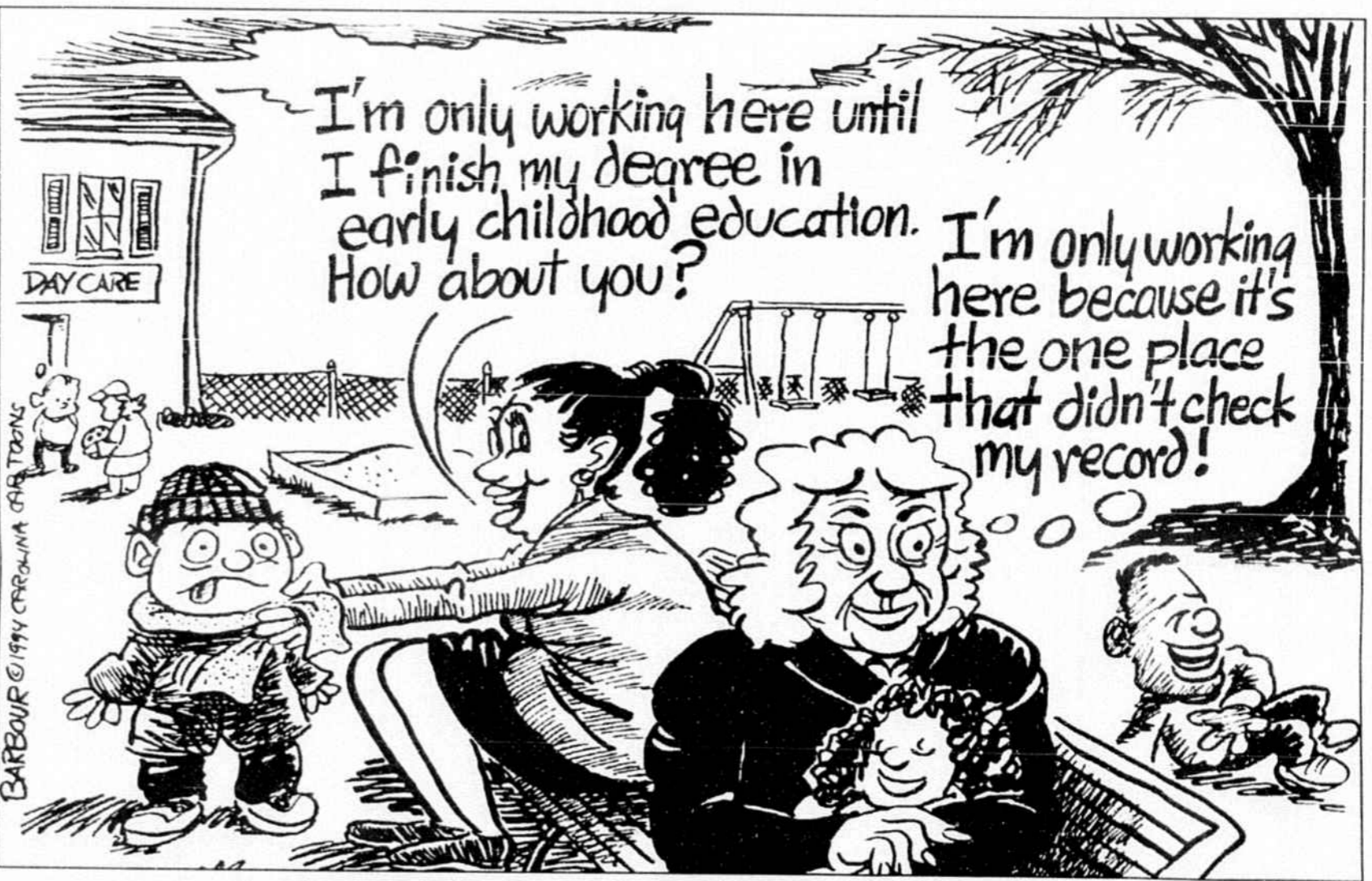
What's possible? Anything. A teen-ager returning to the community from a juvenile detention center could have a Mentor at the Gate, a friend to help them adjust to being back in the same community, to talk to when the pressure is on to return to old habits and the old gang.

A summer "Kids' College" on a local community college campus for sixth graders considered "at-risk" of failing in school or in life, followed by a six-year program of support and training, and a guaranteed two-year college education at their local community college.

A support group of "people who have been there" for parents who have difficulty in disciplining/managing their child or who face having a child sent away.

Could this happen in Brunswick County? Yes.

It takes people who care and a vehicle that provides organization and leadership. For the first time, with Communities in Schools, we're going to have both.



A Swim In The Morning, Death In The Afternoon

Boy, am I glad to be back at work. That was one rough vacation.

Every day, we would wake up at the crack of ten, then head down to the beach for an hour of sun and a swim. Returning to our porch 100 feet above Acapulco Bay, we'd enjoy a breakfast of freshly squeezed orange juice, coffee, spicy scrambled eggs, pancakes or French toast and fresh fruit prepared by our Mexican housekeeper, Mercedes.

To facilitate digestion, we usually spent the next several hours lounging by the pool, testing the effectiveness of various sunscreen products. By 3 p.m., the temperature reached its peak of about 103 degrees.

So we'd retreat to one of the many palm-roofed shelters lining the beach, where a steady sea breeze slowed the melting of ice in the frosty margaritas that magically appeared on the arms of our chairs.

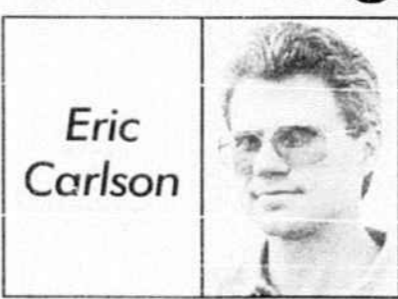
At precisely 5 o'clock each evening—give or take an hour—we gathered for one of Mercedes' special dinners: arroz con pollo, tacos, carne asada, enchiladas Mexicanas; always with salad, frijoles, homemade salsa verde, warm tortillas, freshly-squeezed limeade and a dish of tropical fruit.

Sunset was spent on the beach, watching the encircling bowl of mountainsides come alive with glittering lights as giant cruise ships steamed out the horseshoe harbor and into the vast Pacific.

Renewed by a quick shower, we'd hit the street, grab a cab and make the rounds of the Copacabana, the El Presidente, the Acapulco Plaza and other night spots where dark-eyed ladies in low-cut blouses wove passionate love songs around rollicking Latin rhythms while crowds of tireless young Mexicans danced the salsa and the merengue late into the night.

Then it was back to the condo to start all over again...and again...and again. It was tough. But somebody had to do it.

Now, to answer your questions:



Eric Carlson

No, we did not drink the water. Yes, we all got sick anyway (but only briefly). No, I didn't dive off the cliffs. However, we did watch them do it and were suitably impressed. Yes, I went parasailing. Yes, it was definitely cool. And of course I brought back liquor and cigars.

"No sir, Mr. Customs Man, sir. Those 25 Partagas Perfectos buried deep in the bottom of my suitcase were definitely not made in Cuba. No way."

Still, the most memorable experience of the trip, in an unsettling sort of way, was our visit to the Plaza del Toro, the arena of the bull.

I had no particular yearning to see a bullfight, but then I never had the opportunity before. It promised to be one of those grand spectacles that immerses a traveler in the history and mystique of a foreign culture. Which it was.

The arena was a small one, with only a couple thousand seats rising in concentric rows almost vertically above the 150-foot circle of sand. We had just gotten settled when the haunting trumpets of the "pasodoble" echoed off the concrete walls, proclaiming the arrival of the matadors and their entourage.

Each was dressed in a "traje de luces," or suit of lights, the brightly colored, elaborately sequined and embroidered waistcoat and calf-length pants worn by bullfighters throughout the centuries.

As the parade withdrew, a wooden gate opened and the bull appeared, snorting and pawing the sand and dashing defiantly back and forth across the ring. This was no

Holstein or Angus, but a half-ton of muscle and horn bred for one purpose—to attack.

The "toro de lidia," or Spanish fighting bulls, are carefully bred descendants of revered bloodlines, raised on huge, open ranges where they rarely see a man before they are shipped to the arena. By law, the toro cannot be shown the "muleta," or matador's cape, until it enters the ring for the first (and last) time.

First to face the bull were the matador's assistants, called "banderilleros," who took turns taunting the animal into charging the muleta. This allows the matador to observe how the bull turns and uses its horns.

With another blare of trumpets, the "picadores" arrived on horses draped with thick padded blankets. As the bull charged, the horseman drove a sharp lance into its back to weaken the animal's neck muscles, making it attack with its head and horns lowered.

Next the junior matadors teased the bull into repeated charges. At the last moment, just as the horns passed within inches of their bodies, they plunged pairs of brightly colored darts into the bull's shoulders. This is said to enrage the animal and awaken it from the shock of the picadore's lance.

Again the trumpets sounded. All but the senior matador exited the ring. With graceful pirouettes and

swirls of the cape, he lured the bull into a series of closer and closer passes to demonstrate his skill, courage and mastery over his adversary.

So composed was the matador that the performance almost looked staged and not particularly dangerous. Then the bull's horns caught the cape as it passed, sending his tormenter tumbling into the dirt. The great beast whirled and charged again.

But the matador quickly regained his feet. At the last moment he flourished the cape to lure the bull's head away from his midriff as the horns brushed open his jacket. The bull's giant ribcage scraped along his chest, leaving a red stain of blood from the wounds on the animal's back.

"Ole!" the crowd roared. Finally, he called for the sword. With the blade hidden beneath the cape, the matador lured his quarry into a quick series of tighter and tighter turns. Tired, pained and frustrated, the bull squared off for a final lunge.

With the cape held low, his sword overhead, the matador stood his ground as the bull rushed toward him. Reaching across the approaching horns, he let the force of the charge drive the blade through the bull's back and deep into its chest.

Not something you'd want to see every day. But when in Mexico...

Worth Repeating...

- I advise you to go on living solely to enrage those who are paying your annuities. It is the only pleasure I have left. —Voltaire
- See, Winter comes to rule the varied year, Sullen and sad. —James Thomson
- The Lord God is subtle, but malicious He is not. —Albert Einstein