

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1994

## Six Weeks, Four Violent Deaths —Sad New Year

The year is six weeks old, and this county has already experienced three murders and a murder/suicide in 1994. But all the money, special legislative sessions, gun control and structured sentencing acts our elected officials can conjure up wouldn't have saved a single one of those four dead.

■ A Wilmington woman's body was found in a Belville park. She was slashed to death with a hunting knife. Her former boyfriend and companion for that evening has been charged.

■ A migrant farmworker's body was discovered in the front yard of the Leland trailer where he lived. He had been beaten to death with a chair leg. No one has been arrested.

■ Following an argument, an Ocean Isle Beach man killed his wife and then himself—not with an assault weapon but with an ordinary single-shot shotgun.

■ Last weekend, a Leland man's throat was slit with the type of box-cutter you can find in any grocery-store-stocker's apron pocket. His female roommate has been charged.

It's a fact in modern America and the State of North Carolina that there's a terrible crime problem. Too many people take and sell drugs. Too many evil and irresponsible people own and use guns. Too many young people have too little disregard for human life and property. Too many criminals get out of jail too soon.

But Brunswick County's first four violent deaths of 1994 sadiy illustrate an ugly truth. The most common crimes are committed in the heat of anger and hatred, by and against people who know each other, with whatever kind of weapon happens to be at hand. Their seeds are in ignorance and moral bankruptcy.

And we can't spend or legislate that away.

## Great Expectations

Yes, as County Commissioner Wayland Vereen was quoted this week, two-year terms do strange things to people. But whether the motive was political or egalitarian, the commissioners did a good thing for Brunswick County's public school students in allocating \$250,000 for supplies.

After all, the best science book in the world can't impart the understanding, or create the intellectual spark, that a few minutes looking into a good microscope can.

Even a self-serving act can serve others as well. The county's school children need and deserve more and better equipment if any progress is to be made to bring education in Brunswick County closer to par with the rest of this state and nation.

Question the rationale and argue about the method if you wish. But that won't diminish the fact that these funds are one good step toward showing Brunswick County public school students that we have great expectations for them—not just on the playing field but in the classroom, too.

## They're Welcome Guests

Don't let it be said this week that there's never a cop around when you need one.

Sunset Beach has been crawling with them. Nearly 300 members of the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police have been meeting at Sea Trail Plantation this week, combining a little R & R with a chance to swap ideas, do a little business and let vendors show them the latest in law enforcement equipment and technology.

Sunset Beach Police Chief J.B. Buell is to be commended for his part in bringing the chiefs to the South Brunswick Islands. It's the kind of gathering we can all be proud to host.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't Confuse Groups Providing Hospice Care

To the editor:  
 As a member of the board of directors, Lower Cape Fear Hospice, there is increasing concern regarding the identification of our organization versus Comprehensive Home Health Care.

Comprehensive Home Health Care was recently granted permission to provide hospice service for the terminally ill. This organization is a "for-profit" company in the business of providing health care. It is important that doctors, nurses, hospitals and other health care providers not confuse Comprehensive Home Health Care with Lower Cape Fear Hospice.

Lower Cape Fear Hospice is a nonprofit organization. We take pride in the fact that all terminally ill patients, regardless of their ability to pay, are cared for. This service is made possible by the generous support of the people and businesses within the counties which comprise the Lower Cape Fear region.

It is felt that it would be a disservice to those people and organizations supporting Lower Cape Fear

Hospice to allow any confusion to exist between the identification and volunteer services provided by Lower Cape Fear Hospice and the "for-profit" services provided by Comprehensive Home Health Care.

Thank you for permitting me to clarify this for your readers.

Bobbie Mumford  
 Board of Directors  
 Lower Cape Fear Hospice  
 (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/mailling 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.

# Gross-Out Journalism At Its Most Impressive

A reader called a few weeks ago to express her concern that some of her favorite restaurants had lower sanitation scores than she thought they ought to have. "What do the grades really mean?" she wanted to know.

I'm probably not the most objective person to ask, I answered. I've been in the restaurant business, where seeing the health inspector at your kitchen door gives you the same feeling you get when you open your mailbox and find an envelope from the IRS—the kind that obviously doesn't contain a check.

I've had the health inspector show up on slow days when the kitchen had just closed and all the food was stored neatly away, the garbage cans emptied and washed, the floors and countertops glistening and smelling of soapy bleach-laced water, the dining room vacuumed and restrooms freshly scrubbed.

And I've had him show up at 12:30 on Friday afternoon, when every table was full and there were people waiting in line, dirty dishes piling up beside the dishwasher that just conked out, garbage cans overflowing, and a steady stream of truck drivers dumping boxes of meats and cheeses despite the sign that said "no deliveries between 11 and 2."

In most cases—though I don't have a clue as to why—I'd get a higher grade on the bedlam day than on the under-control one. Seven years later, even the memory is still strong enough to give me a Maalox



Lynn Carlson

moment.  
 So I was recently amused to read a five-part series of daily newspaper articles investigating the restaurant sanitation grading process in North Carolina. Its conclusion was that the procedure is "outdated and riddled with loopholes," the standards are lax, and it's a wonder we're not all poisoned.

It was gross-out journalism at its best. The first paragraph of the first story began with a guy who said he found two bagworms on the lettuce in a sandwich he ordered at a Lake Wylie restaurant. It continued with a woman who claims to have bitten into a dead mouse that had been cooked into a fast-food breakfast muffin she ordered in Statesville. And that was just the first day.

Day two: a front-page color photo of a freshly slaughtered hog hanging from a hook in an Anson County abattoir. Flip to the continuation, and there's a close-up shot of the evisceration process. Now, that'll make you put down your sausage biscuit...

Day three: the account of the death of a Shelby physician from a rare bacterial contamination two

hours after eating a piece of tainted tuna in a Hatteras Island seafood restaurant.

Day four: a child eats a piece of poorly handled beef at a West Jefferson street fair and infects at least five toddlers at her day care center with *E. coli* sickness.

Day five: a wrap-up of what was learned in the course of this investigative report. The lead paragraph is a collage of consumer complaints filed in Mecklenburg County: "Band-Aids in the chili, blood on a napkin, bugs in the beef and broccoli and a cook who dipped snuff while she rolled biscuits."

Titillating? You bet! Fair? Probably not. These stories are rife with extreme examples of freak incidents culled from hundreds of thousands of meals consumed over a period of years.

The two complaints from the first article have never been substantiated, even though those restaurants' reputations have been besmirched. And there's no mention of the fact that restaurants are easy targets for false allegations from sleazoids looking for an easy cash settlement.

There are dirty restaurants and clean ones. There are food handlers who know what they're doing, and ones who don't. The inspection process may not be flawless, but it's the only game in town.

These days especially, the idea of doing anything to tighten the government's choke-hold on private business makes me uneasy. The average restaurateur knows more about

how to run his/her business than the average bureaucrat does. For that matter, the average restaurateur probably knows more about how to run a government agency than most bureaucrats do.

Of course I want the health inspector in there poking thermometers in the chicken salad and checking behind the plates for rodent-leavings. And I count on him to be my eyes and nose in the kitchens of places where I eat.

But I don't want my taxes going toward doubling the size of the inspection department so someone can check out my favorite eatery eight times a year instead of four.

I'll do my part by never going back to restaurants where the bathroom is dirty even though I'm the first customer of the day. And I'll never eat at a salad bar again after I've watched a waitress dump fresh cottage cheese on top of what was already in the bin.

The missing link in all those investigative stories was how most home kitchens would bear up if subjected to restaurant sanitation standards. Do you mop your kitchen floor and scrub out your garbage cans every day? Wipe your table and countertops with bleach water? Monitor the temperature of your refrigerator, freezer and dishwasher?

Sure you do...  
 "We've all gotta eat our peck of dirt," a friend of mine used to say. I'd be willing to bet the average family eats more of it at home than in restaurants.



## Avoiding A Bummer In Lee La Hummer

Can you believe all this hubbub about Tonya Harding? Top story on the evening news. A front page item for practically every major newspaper in the world. Her face on the cover of national magazines?

Remember folks. We're talking about figure skating here. That deal where real prissy guys and gals put on tight waiter suits and ballet outfits and spin around in circles on hockey rinks.

When was the last time anybody but Ice Capades fanatics gave a rodent's hindquarters about figure skating? Go ahead. Name five gold-medal figure skaters.

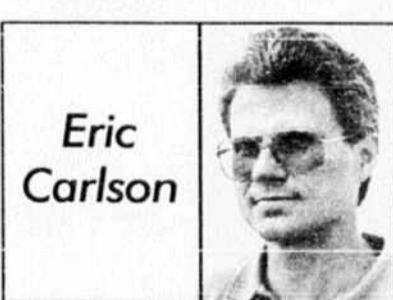
Peggy Fleming?...Good...That makes one...Dorothy Hamill?...Uh, huh...That's two...Go on...Sonja Henie?...Goooh, showing your age a bit. Well? Well? I told you so.

You can bet nobody will soon forget Tonya Harding. But not because of her skating. She will earn a spot in sports history because her very strange and allegedly estranged husband hired a big hit man to hit her rival, Nancy Kerrigan, with a stick.

As a result, more people will watch the 1994 Winter Olympics than any previous games in history. With millions of dollars on the line, you can bet CBS is applying some heavy pressure (and maybe some serious cash) on the folks who will decide whether Harding and Kerrigan will face each other in Lillehammer, Norway, next week.

Americans usually don't take that much interest in the Slip-and-Slide Olympics. Mostly because American athletes usually don't do too well in all those traditional Northern Exposure events like skiing, skating and sledding.

In the summer Olympics, we get to enter our all-star professional basketball team to "compete" against



Eric Carlson

the rest of the world in a sport that we invented. This pretty much guarantees a U.S. victory and big TV ratings.

In the winter games, our flaky, spoiled-brat skiers crumble against all those serious German and Austrian and Swiss kids who grew up in the Alps and skied to school every day. Americans have captured only eight gold medals in the 70-year history of Olympic skiing.

This time, in an effort to attract American viewers by making sure we win something, Olympic officials will award medals in a new group of events (that we invented) called "free-style" skiing. This is that skateboard-inspired, jump-and-flip skiing you see on MTV soft drink commercials.

If the Olympic Committee is willing to dilute the competition with silly sports like that, they should take a lesson from all this Harding-Kerrigan hoopla and give people some events they'd be sure to watch.

For instance, they could spice up the figure skating competition by adding a little danger and drama to all that spinning and jumping. Why not have the skaters do their routines while being pursued by fat men in trench coats who try to hit them in the knees with big clubs?

other skaters.

The Alpine skiing events could be greatly improved by getting rid of all those stupid poles with the flags on them. If you really want to find out who the fastest skier is, just gather them all together at the top of a really steep mountain.

Then have somebody yell, "Go!" and the first one to the bottom wins.

Two of the more intriguing Nordic events are the ski jumping and the biathlon. In the latter sport, competitors ski through the woods with rifles on their backs, stopping every so often for a little target shooting.

The problem for the viewer is that the ski jumpers hardly ever crash and burn (which is what everyone really wants to see). And you can't tell if the biathlon skier/shooters ever hit anything.

So why not combine the events. Have the competitors ski through the woods and fly off the jump while other skiers on the course take shots at them in mid-air. "Pull!"

Another interesting combined event that would surely attract an audience would be four-man bobsled jumping. Consider how high those babies would fly after careening down that icy course and lofting off a 120-meter ski jump. Imagine the impact!

Olympic ice hockey is pretty tame compared to the professional variety. That's because they don't let Olympic players smash their rivals into the walls and beat each other

over the head with sticks.

Which is OK. Because NHL hockey has a deserved reputation for being too violent. (You know the old joke: "I went to a fight the other night and a hockey game broke out!")

So how do you attract a bigger audience without the violence? Imagine flipping through your TV Guide and spotting these three words in the listing for Thursday night at 9 o'clock:

"Nude Ice Hockey."

Come on. Wouldn't that make you think about taping "Seinfeld?"

Here's an idea for a truly American event called "Skate or Litigate": Elderly couples attempt to negotiate a winding course through the aisles of a newly waxed supermarket floor. Store employees with mops try to keep the pairs upright as attorneys toss buckets of soapy water in their paths.

First one to win a "slip-and-fall" lawsuit gets the gold medal.

Now that's entertainment.  
 P.S. My dad (whose wife Gerd was born in Norway) informs me that the correct way to say Lillehammer is "LEE-la-HUMM-ehr," not "Lilly-Hammer."

I told Lynn about this and asked her to repeat the proper pronunciation. But she refused and inquired, "Why can't they have the Olympics in a place that's fun to say...like Gillyooly or Buttafuoco or Tagliabue?"

## Worth Repeating...

■ There comes a time in a man's life when to get where he has to go—if there are no doors or windows—he walks through a wall.  
 —Bernard Malamud