

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Why Not Return Proceeds To Help Shelter's Animals?

Recently hired Animal Control Supervisor Greg Thompson seems to have a good plan for making his department operate more efficiently and humanely to better serve animals, citizens and the department's staff.

Last week, the county board of health went along with Thompson's suggestion for a policy change allowing vicious animals to be declared dangerous BEFORE they attack people. (The policy would not affect guard dogs on private property and dogs engaged in a legal hunt.)

Thompson also asked for and was granted permission to update his department's policy on using tranquilizer guns instead of firearms to subdue pets and wild animals in some cases, and to require that only pets vaccinated against rabies be allowed to be quarantined at home while under observation for rabies after they bite someone. Both changes make good sense.

The supervisor should have been granted his request to allow proceeds from the sale of euthanized cat carcasses to help feed and care for animals housed at the shelter. While a couple of health board members indicated they considered the suggestion frivolous, there certainly are many examples of governmental income being channeled to benefit specific related social problems.

Some citizens and groups take issue with the policy of selling the carcasses of euthanized cats to research labs in the first place. But while the process may be somewhat distasteful, the alternative—hauling them off to the county landfill—is more so. Until the world becomes perfect and every pet owner behaves responsibly, the current disposal method would appear to be the best option.

The courts direct a portion of the fines levied against batterers toward domestic violence shelter and prevention programs. A percentage of the taxes on liquor sales is returned to communities for alcohol education and alcoholism treatment activities. It seems anything but outrageous to allow the few thousand dollars a year the county earns from selling cat carcasses to help feed and attend to the shelter's cats and dogs.

Lack Of Leadership Prompts Break In Five-Year Tradition Of After Prom For WBHS

BY PATRICIA POULOS

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported in 1991 that approximately 60 percent of all high school seniors regularly drink alcohol. Car accidents are the leading cause of teenage deaths according to the National Center for Health Statistics, and over half—some 3,500 a year—are alcohol-related. Hundreds more young people perish in other alcohol-related accidents—a fall, a fire, a drowning or poisoning.

It personally saddens me that some teens mistakenly think the best way to celebrate on special occasions is to drink alcohol. But celebrating prom and graduation with alcohol has left some students with embarrassing memories, horrendous hangovers and family and/or legal trouble. Some of their friends were not as lucky and have become one of the teenage statistics on alcohol-related deaths in North Carolina.

Five years ago a few concerned parents and teachers at West Brunswick High School realized that injury and death statistics for teens peak on occasions such as prom and graduation. As a result they launched ambitious efforts to provide safe and appealing options for celebration, and organized a chemical-free, all-night After Prom Party.

Schools and public agencies gave their sanction; local media spread the word; restaurants, grocers and distributors donated refreshments; cash donations and prizes flowed in from citizens and merchants in an open-handed show of support. These combined efforts treated juniors and seniors at West Brunswick High School and their guests to a fun-filled evening, thus creating memories and establishing a tradition.

Regrettably, this tradition will be broken and, because of lack of leadership, no After Prom Party will occur on April 29, 1994. For the past two years, committee members have sought a new chairman. Many people have been supportive and hard-working, but either cannot or will not assume the leadership role.

In May 1993, after four years as general chairman, I resigned in order to provide ample time for new leadership and innovative ideas. Some people have expressed an interest in being part of the 1994 After Prom Party crew, but none feel that they can take the helm. At this time my personal commitments prevent me from resuming my previous role. I am disappointed and disheartened that our students at West Brunswick will not have the benefit of the After Prom Party safety net as an option to other activities this year. WBHS students escaped alcohol-related accidents and deaths during prom weekend over the past four years. Could the After Prom Party have been responsible?

The After Prom Committee will donate the account balance of \$263.81 to the West Brunswick Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) Club for various prom activities. This club's chief function is to promote seat belt awareness and the consequences of drinking and driving.

Thank you to all the people in our community who so generously contributed money, prizes, time and talents over the past four years. My heartfelt appreciation also to those who served as committee chairmen and members and helped make the dream a reality. I have great pride in our community.

April 29, 1994, WBHS Prom Night, should be a night to remember—with every student able to remember it. It should be fun, not fatal!

Patricia Poulos lives at Ocean Isle Beach.

Worth Repeating...

■ Good sense is of all things in the world the most equally distributed, for everybody thinks he is so well supplied with it, that even those most difficult to please in all other matters never desire more of it than they already possess.

—Rene Descartes

■ Many men are like unto sausages: whatever you stuff them with, that they will bear in them.

—Alexei Tolstoi

Pound The Stars Who Mangle The Marketing

I guess I'm not a people person. I use the automated teller machine to get cash even when the bank is open. I'll buy a book of stamps out of the machine in the post office even when there's someone working the window.

I appreciate the clean, quick efficiency of it all, and I don't feel even the least bit deprived by that lack of human touch.

Automated telephone answering services are a different matter.

I don't call places of business unless I have business to do. When I call, I expect to be able to ask a question, get an answer, hang up and get back to my own business.

Just minutes ago, I disconnected from trying to find out why there was a balance forward on a bill I received yesterday; my records indicated I paid it on time.

I found the conversation a trifle one-sided. After ten full minutes of pushing the pound and star buttons, redialing and choosing the wrong "menu items," I got my answer—from one of those disembodied computer voices that sounds the way a ransom note pasted together from newspaper headlines would sound if it could talk.

To get from here there went something like this:



Lynn Carlson

"Thank you for calling the Knucklehead Company's Customer Care Service. You may (as if you have a choice) use our automated answering system to choose from one of the following customer service departments. Note that at any time you can interrupt any message or skip ahead to the next menu item by pressing the pound button.

"For questions about billing, an explanation of your first bill or the payment mailing address, press 1. To learn the nearest sales office location, press 2. For information on company services, press 3. To disconnect service, press 4. To speak with a customer service representative, press 0 or stay on the line (until the end of time). To repeat this menu, press the star button.

Not wanting to commit until I heard all my options, I listened the whole menu before pressing 1.

"For an explanation of the charges on your first bill, press 1. For the billing payment address, press 2. For information about your account, including your current balance, press 3. If your account is past due and you have been advised to speak with an accounts receivable representative, press 4. For all other billing inquiries, press 0 to speak with a (living, breathing) customer service representative. To repeat this menu, press 9. To return to the list of departments, press 7."

After pressing 9 to peruse the menu one more time, I pressed 3, which then told me to enter my ten-digit invoice number or my eight-digit account number and then the pound sign. I did so.

"That's more than ten digits," said the Disembodied Omnipotent Ruler of Knuckleheads. "Please enter your number again and then press the pound button."

Finally! Out of the mouth of a digital babe came my current balance and the amount and date of my last payment. Maxine Headroom indicated my account was in good standing.

These folks must choose their marketing advisors from the White House's rejects. I'm just a lowly small-town newspaper flack, but

I've got sense enough to know that a rigmarole like that is bad for customer relations, even with clients who are more...well, mellow than I am.

Remember the meeting in the movie "Big," when someone designed a new robot toy that transformed into a skyscraper? Tom Hanks innocently asked, "What's fun about that?" Everyone in the audience knew he was right, even if the notion hadn't occurred to any of the "experts" populating the boardroom.

If I were in one of those meetings and someone said, "I know, let's spend thousands of dollars on a machine that'll answer our phone and alienate, confuse, delay and annoy our customers," I'd have to say, "What's smart about that?"

When someone said, "Hey, when we all sneak away after lunch on Fridays, we can have the machine say, 'All our customer service representatives are busy helping other clients at this time; please stay on the line and your call will be answered in the order in which it was received,'" I'd blurt out, "They didn't just fall off a turnip truck! They'll know you're lying!"

You, the audience, surely know I'm right.



Mystery Meat, Death Missiles And Door Dogs

Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam, Spamiity-Spaaaam... Wonderful Spam!

—Monty Python

You may have noticed a lot of columns and food articles recently about that well-known luncheon meat known as Spam.

The reason for this sudden notoriety has nothing to do with any earth-shattering development (or health advisory) regarding the consumption of "this time-honored product."

Rather it is the result of a marketing campaign by the Hormel Foods Corp. of Austin, Minnesota, makers of Spam and other "time-honored products" such as "Dinty Moore" beef stew, "Mary Kitchen" hash, "Top Shelf" unfrozen entrees and "House of Tsang" Oriental food things.

Newspapers all over the country are receiving packets of information about "this time-honored product," including a gift catalog, a cookbook titled "The Great Taste of Spam" and a lovely 4-by-6 photograph (suitable for framing) of assorted Spam-embellized gifts.

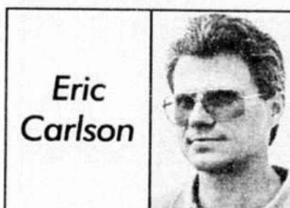
"Spam luncheon meat fans around the world are now able to display their loyalty to this time-honored product, thanks to a first-ever mail order gift catalog," writes V. Allan Krejci, director of public relations.

And what a catalog it is! Imagine being the first one on your block to erect a bright yellow basketball backboard with SPAM written on it in giant blue letters!

Watch your golf partners drool with envy as you tee up for the first hole with your very own SPAM golf ball! Then invite them over for a game of poker with a deck of SPAM playing cards.

And won't the girls be impressed when your boxer shorts ride up above your belt to display the words SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, SPAM around the waistband!

This catalog has it all: Spam hats,



Eric Carlson

Spam shirts, Spam clocks and watches, Spam sunglasses, Spam tote bags, Spam fanny packs, Spam cups, Spam banks, Spam aprons, Spam water bottles, Spam pocket knives, Spam pencils, Spam wind socks, Spam wooden airplanes and even "HO" scale railroad cars with (you guessed it) printed on the side.

Those who can't get their fill of luncheon-meat lore will want to order the 232-page "Hormel 100th Anniversary Book" or "In Quest of Quality," a 357-page volume outlining the first 75 years of the Hormel history. Both books are "filled with historical photographs."

Personally, I'm not a real fan of processed animal-flesh products. Even "time-honored" ones like Spam, bologna, potted meat, Vienna sausage and even—I hesitate to admit—hot dogs.

I love the taste of hot dogs. And I would probably enjoy other molded mystery meats. But whenever I eat them, I get headaches, my vision goes blurry and I break out in a cold sweat. Then I feel an irresistible urge to visit the bathroom.

It wasn't always that way. In fact, I survived for several years of my childhood on little more than hot dogs, bologna and Franco-American spaghetti. Not because we were poor. But because those were the only foods my little pea-brained palate would accept.

My mother did her best to inject some variety into this dreadfully monotonous diet. She fried thinly-sliced wieners into a dish that came to be known as "hot-dog pennies." She also introduced me to the vast

culinary possibilities of fried bologna.

She seemed sympathetic to my addiction. When the school lunch program failed to offer my minimum requirement of at least one hot dog per day, she would drop an Oscar-Meyer into a thermos full of hot tomato soup and wrap up a bun with lots of mustard and ketchup to include in my lunch box. Every day.

I don't remember eating much Spam, however. I think perhaps my dad might have overdosed on it in the Navy.

Which must have been what happened in my relationship with tube steaks. One day, back in the '70s, I was on a road trip and stopped at a 7-11 to grab some lunch. There in the refrigerator section was a beautiful, iridescent red 12-inch hot-dog, just begging to be popped in the microwave.

Undaunted by the tell-tale red dye staining the bun, I wolfed that baby down with gusto (along with some mustard and onions). Twenty minutes later my palms began to sweat, my vision started shimmering and my innards were tumbling like a commercial clothes dryer.

Without going into detail, let's just say I got rid of the problem. But I never again ate another microwave hot dog, which henceforth came to be known in my mind as "death missiles."

I figured my body had finally reached the point of saturation with all those helpful chemicals that al-

low processed meats to remain in cans and refrigerator sections for several generations. I had overdosed on nitrates.

This self-diagnosis was reinforced during our sojourn in the restaurant business, where I performed an interesting experiment.

One day I was throwing away the empty box from a shipment of frozen franks and found half a dog stuck to the bottom. Being the mischievous sort, I went outside and impaled it on a rusty nail over the restaurant doorway—like one of those Jewish good-luck things.

Months went by. Lots of months. Hot summer months. So many that I forgot the decorative doorway dog was up there. Until I climbed up a stepladder to string Christmas lights and found it pointing at me like an accusing finger.

After nearly a year, the little guy was still intact. Maybe a bit shriveled, like it had been slightly overcooked. But it didn't look much different from the ones we served every day with chili and slaw.

I pondered the implications, considering that any other food product left outdoors for that period of time would have succumbed to the forces of decomposition long ago. But even bacteria wouldn't eat a hot dog.

And so I continue my abstinence from the "time-honored" products of the meat processing industry, secure in the notion that a kajillion microbes can't be wrong.

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.

Letters received after noon on Tuesday cannot be considered for publication in that week's edition.

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The Brunswick Beacon, P.O. Box 2558, Shallotte NC 28459
 Anonymous letters will not be published.