

Strange Evergreens, Cypress Trees

BY BILL FAVER

A sight to many of us is the southern swamp with its cypress trees standing tall, sometimes covered with Spanish moss, and sharing its watery habitat with a variety of other plants and wildlife.

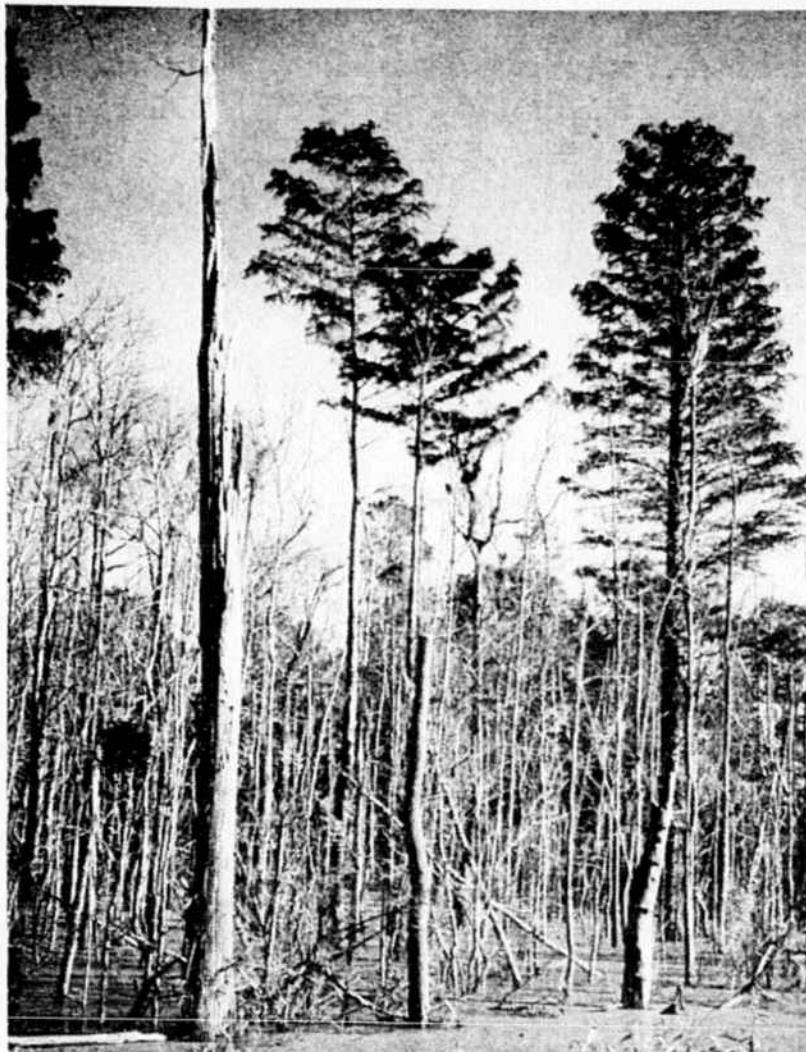
We have excellent examples right here in Brunswick County, and a drive in almost any direction will lead us to the cypress trees.

There are two main species, the baldcypress and the pond cypress, both members of the pine family, with the scientific name of "taxodium." The baldcypress is the larger and grows to 80 to 100 feet tall, and even to 140 in some places.

These tall trees have horizontal or drooping branches, starting high in the tree. The large bases are buttressed and surrounded with "knees," which send down long roots to help give the trees support in the soggy swamp bottom. The bark is thick, pale reddish-brown, divided in ridges with long, thin scales.

The slender branches have yellowish-green needles about one-half to three-quarters of an inch long. As the needles age, they turn reddish-brown before falling in the fall. The lack of winter leaves on this strange evergreen give it the "bald-cypress" name.

The pond cypress are similar except for being smaller and found usually in upland swamps. They are more flat-topped and can have much vegetation, such as grasses and flowering plants, beneath them. Both varieties are slow-growing and sometimes a 200-year-old tree will have a trunk just above the base of no more than 20 inches diameter. Large trees pro-



CYPRESS TREES are strange evergreens because they lose their leaves in winter. PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

duce excellent wood which is straight-grained, easily worked, and equal in beauty to some hardwoods. Its resistance to insects has made it a popular wood in the South for both interior and exterior uses.

Cypress trees help produce habitat for many birds such as the herons, storks, warblers, woodpeckers, osprey, eagles and hawks. In very wet areas, alligators may

glide among the cypress knees along with snakes, fish, and frogs. Foxes, raccoons, opossums, wildcats, otters, deer and squirrels also may enjoy the cypress swamps.

A great deal of the romance of the Old South is tied to such scenes as the mossed-draped oaks and cypresses along our coasts. We can appreciate this each time we see these interesting trees in our surroundings.

Exposing A Piece Of The Soul

Lewis is dead and I ain't feeling so good myself.

I wasn't a big fan of Mr. Grizzard. He usually made me mad.

When I owned a restaurant in the North Carolina mountains, the retired Yankees who constituted the bulk of my clientele would make conversation about how funny they thought "Lewis Grizzard" (like the chicken part most of them wouldn't have been able to identify) had been in the *Times-News* that day. In the interest of good manners, I'd smile politely and not let on that I thought they were crazy.

Nothing would have pleased him more than to insult every one of them to the point that they'd pack up and go back Up There and let us have the Old South back—the one where Mama was in the garden picking butterbeans, children said "yes ma'am" and a pan of perfect homemade biscuits complemented every meal.

I rolled my eyes this week as I read post-mortem comparisons to Mark Twain and Will Rogers, and this scholarly supposition about Grizzard's popularity during the 1980s and early '90s:

"In a nation grown overly complex and jaded, the South was seen as a cozy corner where it was still OK to express unabashed sentimentality about God, family, country or anything else near to the heart. Grizzard was never too proud to coax tears with an ode to small towns, dogs—regular or Georgia Bull—or Mama."

Yeah, whatever...
But I appreciated the fact that



Lynn Carlson

Lewis Grizzard was there. I'm sorry he's gone and I'll be among the millions who'll miss reading his work. It's not an easy thing to do, sitting down to write something from your own heart and mind every week, something with not only your name but your picture on it. It's much more revealing and personal than gathering the news and presenting it, all tidy and objective, with quotes and background information, to your readership.

"It's easy to write a column," said an old friend who wrote for a newspaper I used to edit. "You just sit down in front of the keyboard until beads of blood appear on your forehead."

That may seem like so much hyperbole when you compare it the average workday of, say, a cop or a social worker, but there's some truth there. It can be deadline time (or past it) and you still don't have a clue what you're going to say. But you have to anyway. And sometimes it shows.

Write a column when you're furious and you might go back and read it to discover that you came off sounding like a raving lunatic. Write something you think is funny and

you might find out after it's in print that you went too far and hurt some feelings. Spend three hours trying to get the idea out of your innards and onto the computer screen and realize you only have three paragraphs that even your own loving mother wouldn't read past.

Most importantly, there's the knowledge that your peers and many of your readers can't be fooled. They can tell the difference between an "I've-got-to-write-a-column" column and an "I've-really-got-something-to-say" column.

Even a fellow as rich and famous as Lewis Grizzard wrote some throw-aways, mostly in recent years as his chauvinism for the white male South seemed to grow more gratuitous and mean-spirited. But there were some real gems among his columns, too.

My favorite was a piece about his childhood. Lewis's father had sent him a bus ticket to come for a visit, but when Lewis got to the bus station his daddy wasn't there to pick him up. He was drunk in a bar somewhere and forgot about his boy being on the way.

It wasn't the story that was poignant—many parents routinely let their children down. It was the way Lewis told it, with just the right mix of pathos and unconditional love, both terms he probably would have smirked at being used to describe his work.

Reading that column, I caught a little glimpse of Lewis Grizzard's soul—not his opinion, his prejudices or his mood for the day. And that's what it's all about.

MORE LETTERS

Fishermen Trying To Save Their Industry For Everyone's Benefit

To the editor:

I am a member of the Carolinas Fisherman Association that we have started again. It has been started for eight weeks now and we have invited the *Beacon* to come and cover some of our meetings, but you haven't. Are you afraid of the commercial fisherman in some way, that you don't want to give us any support on what we are trying to do?

(We are) trying to save our seafood, not just for the commercial fisherman, but for you the people, your children, grandchildren and their children. If we all sit on our butts and do nothing, all of the waters will be closed with polluted signs sticking everywhere. It is almost that way now.

We are afraid if we don't do something quick, all of our seafood bottoms will be closed. We need to know where all the polluting is coming from, what is polluted and what isn't so we can get it stopped.

We have polluted signs up where they (Division of Marine Fisheries) say there is a housing development there. But everyone knows that has been to Ocean Isle Beach, there is not a housing development on the right side of the bridge after you cross it going to the beach. But yet they put polluted signs there. Why?

I would like to know that my grandbabies and great-grandbabies could go on the Carolina coast and gather them some fresh seafood if they wanted to and not have to depend on other countries to ship it in. How fresh is it then?

All the tourists don't come this way just to play golf. They like to take their children down to the river and let them catch crabs, clams and fish. But when they see a polluted sign it takes a lot of fun out of their vacation.

So all that closing our waters and putting so many restrictions on the commercial fisherman is not only hurting us, it's hurting all of you that depend on renting your cottages, condominiums. Wise up and let's try and get to the bottom of all this pollution so our waters and seafood will be safe for everyone.

You don't have to be a commercial fisherman to join our association. Everyone can join. We could use all the help we can get. We need and welcome you. The waters belong to you, too!

Pauline Hewett
Ocean Isle Beach
Ash

Sorry For Sell-Out

To the editor:
Holden Beach VFW Post 8866

expresses our appreciation to all the customers we served barbecue plates to at Day at the Docks. The volume of people overwhelmed our expectations.

Post 8866 apologizes to the many people we could not serve, due to selling out so fast.

Day at the Docks was a vast learning experience for us. Thanks to everyone for their support, and next time we will look forward to serving them all.

Fred Dilley
Post Commander

More On Noise

To the editor:

I would like to respond to the article in *The Brunswick Beacon* of March 24 by staff writer Eric Carlson (about the proposed county noise ordinance).

Among the noise-generating activities specifically prohibited by the law are the use of construction machinery, chain saws or garage machinery between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. Not so stated in Eric Carlson's article as from 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.

The use of lawn mowers and other domestic tools would be outlawed between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. Not so stated in the article as from 9:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m.

The article also deleted the time that you would be prohibited from allowing your dog, bird or other animal which, by frequent or habitual howling, yelping, barking or otherwise cause loud noises and produce seriously annoying disturbance to

any person or to the neighborhood. The time you would be in violation of the noise ordinance is 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The article also states it will be unlawful under the noise ordinance to yell, shout, whistle, sing, play musical instruments or any sound-magnifying device such as radio, television, stereo or tape deck with such volume as to reasonably annoy or disturb the quiet, comfort or repose of a person. The article should have also stated you would be in violation of the noise ordinance between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

I concur with the rest of the article.

Commissioner Wayland Vereen says the county doesn't have enough deputies to enforce a noise ordinance if enough people complained about loud neighbors. He also stated if a noise is irksome enough it can be dealt with in the courts as a nuisance violation.

Commissioner Vereen needs to talk to Sheriff Davis and County Attorney Michael Ramos about how to enforce a law that is not on the books in Brunswick County at the present time. I was told we have to live with it. My call to 911 can be verified by the dispatcher.

I have a petition circulating around Brunswick County and I have hundreds of signatures. If you are in support of the county having a noise ordinance, let your county commissioners know.

Tom Singleton
Seaside

J. MARK SAUNDERS, O.D.

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