

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Something Cozy To Snuggle Up With

It was about 1974 and I wanted to give my sister a quilt for Christmas. Someone told me the name of a lady in Patrick, S.C., just a few miles down the road from my hometown.

I went to see her on a chilly Saturday morning in December. She met me at the door in a pink quilted housecoat and invited me to sit in one of two Naugahyde recliners flanking an old gas heater, the kind with ceramic bricks and blue flames. She brought me a cup of Luzianne coffee, blond with Carnation milk, and sweet.

As gospel music played on the radio in the background, we talked about who my kinpeople were. She proudly ran through the names of all the grandchildren whose pictures in caps and gowns, wedding dresses and twirling costumes covered the top of the console television. I'd gone all the way from first grade to graduation with a couple of them,



Lynn Carlson

which pleased her. Eventually we got around to talking quilts. She told me she quilted every weekday while she watched her stories on TV and asked whether I could figure why in the world a good woman like Mona would put up with the mess she took off that sorry Erica Kane. If one of her daughters sassed her like Erica does Mona, she'd knock the fire out of her. We finished our coffee and went into the frigid sleeping porch out

back where a bed was made up with 30 or 40 quilts. "Just peel them back until you find one you like," she said. "I'm going in the living room where it's warm."

My heart sank as I flipped through quilt after quilt. It wasn't the patterns or the workmanship—they were beautiful. The problem was, every single quilt was made of 100 percent doubleknit polyester!

One of those would be about as cozy as snuggling up inside a garbage bag, I thought to myself. Besides, the idea of using the remnants of a hundred drip-dry pantsuits as a blanket was simply too weird to be imagined.

What to do? Nothing, of course, that might insult or hurt the feelings of that sweet woman so delighted to have a visit from a stranger—even a smart-tail college girl too good to lie down under the manmade fibers whose spinning and dyeing em-

ployed half the people in the county of her birth.

"Do you have any that are kind of, well, like, more old-timey?" I called toward the living room.

"Shore do, honey, but I have to charge a little more for them," she called back. "The ones in the back room I can sell you for twenty, but I get thirty for these up here."

She took me to her room and opened a large trunk packed tightly with exactly the kind of quilts I had wanted to see, ones fashioned from dozens of patterns of REAL cloth—the cotton around which the local economy had revolved not so many years earlier.

I picked one out that had lots of red and blue and no particular pattern except that it all fit together. There were little pieces of mattress ticking and flour sack and who knows what all else. It was perfect.

My sister loved the quilt and took it off to Appalachian State University with her in the fall of 1975. It was there that a drunken roommate threw up PJ on it, and it stopped being something you'd want to burrow in on a snowy night.

She kept it around for a long time, though. We finally sent it off to the landfill a couple of years ago when we cleaned out her garage in preparation for a move.

There's something about quilts. I have two made right here in Brunswick County that were among the best-loved gifts I've ever received. One is a Dresden plate design; the other has blue boats with red sails on a white background.

One has an old cigarette burn. The other is faded from repeated washings, and you can tell the jack-leg sewing where I've repaired it from the perfect stitches of the original seamstress.

Both are just as special to me as the day they became mine—but then, neither has ever been hurled upon.

 Quilt Show '94 is going on Friday and Saturday at Shallotte Middle School, sponsored by the Brunswick County Extension Homemakers, a bunch of women who really know their stuff.

Cooperation, Prayers Are Due In This Trying Time

It's a trying time for Brunswick County government, but not nearly so much as for two county government leaders facing great personal tragedy and professional challenge.

At this writing, Wyman Yelton, Brunswick County manager of less than a year, is in serious but stable condition following a head-on collision in Durham on Sunday which took the life of his wife Kathryn.

Veteran Brunswick County employee John Harvey lost his wife Frances to cancer on Saturday, less than a week after he was replaced as Brunswick County planning director because caring for her had made it impossible for him to work full-time.

This time last year, Mr. Harvey was serving as interim county manager and preparing a proposed annual budget for deliberation, a task which no doubt has kept Mr. Yelton busy in recent weeks. Though Mr. Yelton is expected to fully recover from his physical injuries, the process is certain to be arduous and its timetable uncertain. For the time being, Commissioners' Chairman Don Warren will act as county manager until a temporary replacement.

The question of where these cruel twists of fate leave Brunswick County government seems inconsequential when compared to the healing process both men's families have ahead. But daily life goes on, and with it, the business of government. Those who will be working to fill the gaps deserve all the cooperation citizens can give them.

May Mr. Yelton and Mr. Harvey derive some comfort from knowing that they are in the thoughts and prayers of thousands of people who care.

If Issue Is Pivotal To OIB, Stand Up And Be Counted

Some folks say it's going to be showdown time when the Ocean Isle Beach Board of Commissioners meets this Tuesday, April 12, at 8:30 a.m. for a public hearing on changes relating to the town's planning board and how it functions.

Only at Ocean Isle Beach is that not a peculiar time for a public hearing. But that's when commissioners will seek comments from citizens on draft bylaws that would keep the planning board's membership at its current number—three people who live in the town limits—and call for replacement of members who are absent four times without excuse during a calendar year.

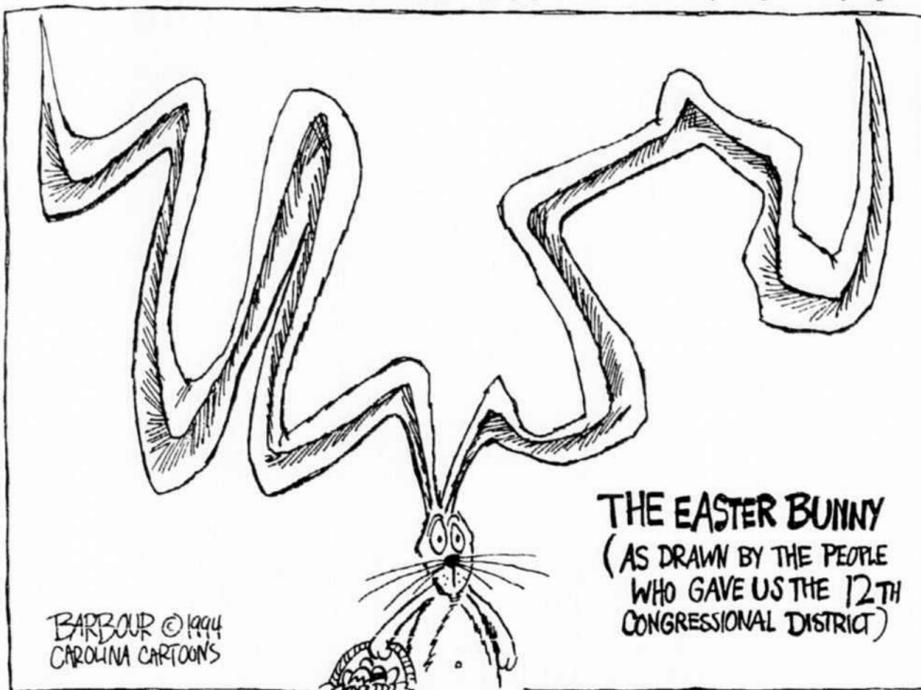
Commissioner Ken Proctor, who served on the planning board until his election to the board of commissioners, argues that the proposal skirts the real issue: the fact that a three-member planning board is simply too small to adequately represent the growing town. The public hearing is the appropriate place for citizens to demonstrate whether they feel that way, too.

Judging from phone calls to our office, at least a handful of private citizens consider this a pivotal issue for Ocean Isle Beach—an opportunity to diffuse political power and infuse the municipal system with a fresh perspective. They need to rely not only on this newspaper but on themselves to accomplish that.

At Ocean Isle Beach, too many town meetings take place with too few citizens attending—and too many public hearings are called without the offering of a single comment. If this is indeed a pivotal issue, it is indeed time for citizens who feel that way to stand up and be counted.

Worth Repeating...

■ *The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.*
 —Francis Bacon



So, What Is Uncle Sam's Handshake Worth?

Not our problem. That's what every community under consideration has told the U.S. Department of Energy, DOE for short, when it comes to 448 spent fuel rods the U.S. Government wants to let a handful of foreign research reactors ship into one or more ports on the Eastern seaboard—perhaps Wilmington or Sunny Point. The companies are to pay for the movement of fuel, unless the price gets too high, then they may look to reprocessing for a solution instead.

The fuel elements would be taken by truck or rail to the U.S. Government's Savannah River nuclear site at Aiken, S.C., then placed in an underwater "receiving basin" until long-term storage questions can be resolved.

Not our problem. Once upon a time (before a Sierra Club lawsuit in 1988), DOE simply did what it needed to do, without asking for anybody's opinion or approval. Not any more, and the agency has had a little trouble learning to operate in the fishbowl. So much so residents of the proposed receiving port communities thought the proverbial wool had been pulled over their eyes.

That's why a panel of DOE representatives showed up in Brunswick County last week to apologize, to explain what's going on and to hear a group of residents echo the refrain,



Susan Usher

"We understand you have a problem, but no, not here. No thanks."

Lawyers say the government (which is us, whether we like the reflection or not) isn't legally bound to take back the rods, despite reams of paperwork that have accumulated reassuring reactor operators it would happen.

The U.S. leased, sold or otherwise distributed the fuel to the reactors a number of years ago. As part of a deal to get the reactors to switch to a less than bomb-quality fuel, we agreed to take back the old stuff and help them regear their plants to use low-enriched fuel that is less efficient, but has a lower percentage of uranium—the kind of fuel terrorists can't use for bombs.

Time's running out and this administration is trying to work things out.

For plenty of good reasons, taking back the spent fuel isn't very welcome. These rods may be the first of many more. DOE is preparing an

environmental impact statement that addresses returning 15,000 or more over a longer period. Taking these 448 offers the reactors temporary and "urgent" relief while we work out problems accepting the others. When the deal was made storage of spent fuel elements wasn't a significant environmental issue.

The fuel that's coming in isn't any more of a threat than radioactive waste shipped across this country regularly by the U.S. government from its research reactors, most of which also use the highly enriched uranium fuel. Our fuel even goes to the same Savannah River site at Aiken.

Legally we may be off the hook if we choose not to take the elements back, but diplomats say the country's honor and credibility are at stake, as well as our overall relationship with certain countries.

If we renege, or take too long fulfilling our part of the bargain, the reactor operators say they haven't many choices because their federal regulators are threatening not to re-new operating licenses.

If these plants shut down, hundreds of people lose their jobs. Hospitals across Europe could face a shortage of the radioisotopes whose use in medical treatment we take for granted.

Operators can send the spent fuel to Dounreay, Scotland, for costly re-

processing, most likely into the highly enriched uranium (HEU) again. They can switch their reactors back to HEU, and start buying it from places like Russia and China. They can't buy it from us. We don't process it any more and are trying to get everyone else to follow that example.

What it boils down to is this: What's our collective handshake worth? Just how good is a made-by-the-USA promise?

Last week local speakers sounded like they could be talked into a compromise. No one wants the stuff coming in their port and there's always the fear of becoming DOE's "preferred nuclear port" as one resident put it. But if it were brought in at Sunny Point and shipped overland by rail, guarded and with a trained response team available, maybe it wouldn't pose too extraordinary a risk. That seemed to be the message DOE heard.

Maybe we could we strike a deal with DOE. If we get the country off the hook by accepting the 448 rods now, under the urgent relief program, it would take our name permanently off the list of ports suitable for shipments of spent fuel elements and anything else of that sort that comes along.

Then, of course, we get back to the question first asked. How good is a made-by-the-USA promise?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Media Said Not Interested In Commercial Anglers' Concerns

To the editor:
 My name is Carrie Reaves and my husband's name is Bennett Reaves. We are commercial fishermen of Brunswick County. We are not on welfare and we pay state tax and federal. We are 50-plus years old, and we have commercial fished all of our adult lives.

If the Atlantic Coast Conservation Association of North Carolina and the sport-fishermen succeed in having their way to closing the coastal rivers and sounds, this will reduce small commercial fishermen to 50 percent of their annual income, since shrimping is their prime income.

In 1978, the Brunswick County Fishermen's Association was formed. At that time Bob Benton, director of health and sanitation in North Carolina, had closed, due to pollution, (shellfishing areas) in western Brunswick County to the Ocean Isle Beach bridge.

The Brunswick County Fishermen's Association, with the help of Carolina Power and Light, took samples of water, clams, oysters and mud and had it tested. To make a long story short, they moved the pollution signs back to the Sunset Beach area—approximately 15,000 acres of clean water

This tells the people that it was a political move, as 16 years have passed and approximately 40 percent of this area remains open.

At that time the commercial fishermen's association had tremendous coverage of local newspapers and television, but it seems in the past 16 years that the media have no interest in the pollution in Brunswick County for the commercial fishermen.

Carrie Reaves
 Ocean Isle Beach

Embarrassed By Band

To the editor:

I am writing in response to a letter which appeared in the March 31 issue of the *Beacon*, in which the writer felt the West Brunswick Band had been slighted by your paper.

Evidently she has been watching a different band than the one I have seen at Trojan games. The purpose of having a band at a football game is to excite the team and the crowd.

As a member of the chain crew at home games, I have stood on the opposing team's sideline during the halftime show for years and cannot hear the West band due to a lack of volume, usually attributable to low num-

bers of band members and a general lack of enthusiasm by the members who are there.

In 1992 at their appearance in Chapel Hill, which incidentally was entirely financed by athletic department funds, they did have the courtesy to show up just prior to the kickoff. That's hardly enough time to excite the team or the West supporters.

This past season the Band Boosters operated the concession stand at all home games and rightly received the majority of the profits from same. The band did not attend a single road contest this season (excite yourself) until the state championship game in Chapel Hill, and once again received \$1,500 of athletic department money to make this trip.

Anyone who attended the four playoff games held in Shallotte and saw the size of the crowds should wonder where the money from concessions went, and why they need to siphon badly needed and hard-earned money from the athletic department.

Oh, by the way, our enthusiastic and hard-working band showed up at the state championship game just before halftime. They couldn't find the stadium.

I am doggone proud of the West Brunswick football team players, coaches and boosters for their fine accomplishments. I

am deeply embarrassed by the West Brunswick Band director and boosters of their accomplishments. Let the recognition fall where it is deserved.

Earl D. Ellis
 Shallotte

Too Much Favoritism

To the editor:

I'm hoping when the election is over that maybe we can get someone in the landfill department that won't let the laborers run it. Maybe they will be fair and everyone will do their job like they should.

We need more and better department heads that won't play favoritism. We seem to have laborers that can tell everyone what to do but yet can't do their own job or, better yet, don't think they have to.

This is getting overlooked day after day. Why?

J.D. Horne
 Supply

Help Appreciated

To the editor:

Supply Elementary School faculty, staff, students and administration would like to thank you for the manner in which you sup-

ported our PTA's Barbeque for Books.

We are thankful to each person who sold tickets, gathered supplies, cooked, sold plates and cleaned up. A special thanks to the Supply Volunteer Fire Department for the use of their building and all the assistance they provided.

The money raised in this event will be used to purchase reading materials for our classrooms and media center.

Carolyn S. Williams
 Principal

(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:

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Anonymous letters will not be published.