

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 1994

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Leadership, Kindness Will Be Missed By All

We are seldom privileged in life to meet a truly great person—someone who has completely mastered the warmth and graciousness that lets everyone know he cares and is concerned for their well-being above his own. Such a person was Wally Ausley.

Greatness, historically, is associated with world events. Lincoln, Washington, Wellington were in positions at turning points in history so that their decisions directed the course of change. But personal greatness is an inner quality, nurtured and developed, that leads a person to consistently choose the happiness and welfare of others before self. This was the greatness of Wally Ausley.

Recently he was so concerned with the fractionalism of his council people. To a Wally Ausley, pettiness was an unknown characteristic, and it wounded him to see it in others. A fitting memorial to him would be to end the anger and the sarcasm and embrace the love and respect for others that made Wally Ausley a great man.

Individually, and most especially as a community, the people of Holden Beach and those who knew him will miss his leadership and his kindness.

—Jim Lowell

### Town Not To Blame

No one has ever successfully sued a North Carolina beach town after a family member has drowned in the ocean, but a complaint against the Town of Holden Beach is seeking to change that.

The family of a 12-year-old boy who drowned nearly three years ago in the Holden Beach surf has filed a wrongful death lawsuit claiming the town should be held responsible in his death. The boy's family claims the town was negligent in the planning, operation and management of the beach because it did not provide lifeguards, failed to close the beach when dangerous conditions existed, failed to provide adequate warning about dangerous conditions and failed to have plans and equipment for rescue and emergency use.

The complaint charges that neither the victim nor his family members "knew or had any reason to suspect that the ocean waters at Holden Beach possessed a propensity for development of life-endangering hazardous conditions such as riptides and strong undertows."

While we are terribly sorry for the family's loss, we can't help thinking that's like having no reason to suspect that mountains are high, dogs have teeth, cars can crash and lightning can strike.

The surf can be as placid as a pool or as turbulent as a tornado; people can lose their lives there either way, with or without lifeguards, with or without warning signs.

When life deals an unfair blow, it's understandable that people sometimes need somewhere to place the blame. In tragedies such as this one, perhaps it doesn't belong anywhere. It certainly does not belong with the town.

# A Much-Beloved Light Goes Dim

After listening to a police scanner day after day, you can tell when something very bad has happened.

In a life-threatening emergency, where quick action is required, a sense of urgency replaces the usual routine monotone in the dispatcher's voice.

You can also tell when it's too late.

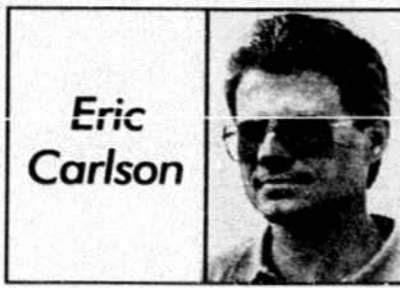
That was the voice I heard Friday afternoon when Central Communications directed rescue personnel to number 123 Clipper Ship on Holden Beach. The somber tone indicated that there would be no need to rush.

I didn't want it to be that address. I hoped I had heard it wrong. But when the dispatcher repeated the street name and said "the last house on the left," I knew that the "Voice of the Wolfpack" had been silenced.

The street was blocked by a police car when I arrived. The officer politely informed me that he could not confirm or deny anything. But he didn't have to.

I could see the ambulance outside the house, along with a fire department vehicle and the town manager's car. I strained to see if anyone was moving quickly. To see if there was still some hope. But there wasn't.

As he drove slowly up the block,



Eric Carlson

the expression on town manager Gus Ulrich's face provided the final confirmation. Mayor Wally Ausley had died peacefully in his armchair overlooking the marsh and the waterway at 123 Clipper Ship.

Staring down that road, I remembered the few hours I spent there last winter, interviewing Ausley for a story about retirees in local government. He was sitting in that same chair and reminiscing about the three loves of his life—his late wife Norma, his career as a sportscaster and his adopted home of Holden Beach.

I met Ausley at some social function years ago and had spoken to him only briefly since then. Still, he greeted me that morning as if I were an old friend. Within a few minutes, that's the way I felt. People tell me he made everyone feel that way.

Ausley talked excitedly about the

town's 25th birthday celebration, for which he had helped organize a re-enactment of the first town board meeting in 1969. He asked me if I knew where he could find an old rotary-dial telephone to use as a prop. He wanted everything to be just right for an event that was obviously dear to his heart.

Looking back at those few hours, I can't recall ever meeting a kinder, gentler, more warm-hearted man than Wally Ausley. It was obvious from the lines on his face that his ever-present smile must have been there for most of his 65 years.

In his own small way, "Mayor" Wally Ausley was the perfect definition of a statesman: a person who agrees to take on the role of a leader, not to help himself but out of love for his constituents.

When he finally retired to Holden Beach after spending summers here since childhood, Ausley planned to relax to go fishing and to play a little golf. He had no intention of becoming the town's mayor. But his many friends insisted.

"I said, OK, as long as you don't expect me to make decisions," Ausley said. "I told them I don't know anything about running a town and I don't intend to learn. But if you want me to sit with the commissioners and run the meetings, I'll do it."

He won with 75 percent of the vote. He didn't want to run for mayor or the second time either. Ausley made it clear that he would happily drop out of the race if anyone else decided to run against him. But no one did.

Because everyone liked Wally. They always have. For more than 30 years his deep, melodious words wafted into homes across North Carolina as the "Voice of the Wolfpack," broadcasting the play-by-play action of N.C. State football and basketball games.

Governors Jim Hunt and Jim Martin both proclaimed "Wally Ausley Day" in North Carolina (in 1983 and 1990 respectively). And in 1966, Ausley was honored with the state's highest award for citizenship, the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, by Governor Dan Moore.

There is a room filled with such awards at 123 Clipper Ship. Dozens of plaques and framed certificates hang on the walls beside photos of his children and his beloved yacht, the "Norma A," where Ausley and his wife spent several winters on Ocracoke Island.

And then there were the lighthouses. Ausley collected photos and drawings and other artwork depicting the many famous lighthouses along the North Carolina Coast.

As I was saying goodbye after a morning of delightful conversation, the mayor walked me outside for a closer look at his imposing yard ornament—a 10-foot-tall replica of the candy-striped Cape Hatteras light.

He told me about the day he saw a flatbed truck parked with a lighthouse twice that size strapped to the back. He took one look and knew he had to have one.

He talked to the manufacturer, who makes the lighthouses for miniature golf courses, and asked if he had any smaller models. He said he didn't. But Wally was so enthusiastic about the idea that the man agreed to make a special lighthouse just for the mayor.

And so it sits, beckoning visitors to the last house on Clipper Ship.

It seems fitting for such a man to be fascinated with the comforting beacons that give hope and solace and guidance to those afloat on darkened seas.

For Wally Ausley was a light unto this world.



## Don't Offer Excuses For The Inexcusable

Bart Simpson gets an appearance on his beloved "Krusty the Clown" show. As he bursts through the stage curtain, he bumps into the backdrop and the entire set crashes to the floor. The cartoon kids in Krusty's audience howl with laughter.

Bart pauses for half a second. "I didn't do it," he says passionately, though dozens of cartoon children and several million real people just saw him do it. The kids laugh even louder... Any resemblance to the modern American criminal justice system is purely ironic.

Here's the basic defense employed by attorneys for Lorena Bobbitt, the Menendez brothers, North Carolina's own Kenneth Junior French, and heaven knows who else: "Okay, I did it, but I'm not guilty of doing it."

It worked for Lorena; she was freed after a quick tour of duty in the



Lynn Carlson

psych ward. An "irresistible impulse" was determined to be the culprit who mutilated her husband, and you can't punish one of those.

A variation of that defense resulted in mistrials for both Eric and Lyle Menendez. Twelve people couldn't agree on their guilt in the murder of their parents, though the boys lied repeatedly, obviously premeditated the act, committed a definite overkill, and then went through their inherited millions like Grant went

through Richmond. Nobody knows the trouble we've seen, they wept.

Kenneth Junior French was convicted, but as I write this his lawyers are arguing that, yes, poor knee-walking drunk Kenny shot a dozen strangers and killed four (for no transgression greater than choosing the wrong day to go out for lasagna) but his life is worth saving. You see, this whole thing would never have happened had the boy not been incited to murderous rage by a lethal combination of Wild Turkey bourbon liquor and a Clint Eastwood cowboy flick.

It would be too easy here to launch into a tirade about lawyers, but that would be as foolish and short-sighted as blaming the reporters when the news is bad. If I were an attorney appointed or hired to represent any of these characters,

I'd have done the same—whatever it took to keep the client out of prison and breathing. That's their job.

If it didn't work, this devil-made-me-do-it defense wouldn't get recycled so often. After all, when a grown man or a petite woman breaks down on the stand and tells tales of incest, brutality and ritual abuse, anyone with a heart is moved.

But anyone with a brain should remain mindful of the fact that adult men and women are responsible for their own actions. Period. No excuses. Not low self-esteem, dysfunctional family, wounded inner child, chemical impairment, exposure to second-hand smoke or diet too high in refined sugar and saturated fat.

Anything less is a far slap in the face to the millions of women, men and children who have survived abuse and don't turn back to it as an excuse for the inexcusable.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Boosters Respond To Letter Critical Of WBHS Marching Band

To the editor:

It is indeed unfortunate that this letter has to be written but Mr. Ellis expressed far too much opinion and too little substance in his letter to the editor last week. His remarks did nothing to honor the efforts of the West Brunswick High School Band students. What's more, Mr. Ellis brought no honor to himself by hurting the feelings of those young people. The Executive Committee of the West Brunswick High School Band Boosters would like to address each of Mr. Ellis's opinions.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis admits that, as a member of the chain crew at home games, he stands on the opposing team's sideline during the half-time show and cannot hear the band. He attributes this to low numbers of bond members and a general lack of enthusiasm by the members who are there.

**Fact:** At home games the band plays to the home side of the field, not the side on which Mr. Ellis is standing. If Mr. Ellis drops his measurement chain for a few minutes and walk to the other side of the field, he will be amazed at the "improvement" in the volume from the band.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis said the Bad Boosters operated the concession stand this year and received the majority of the profits.

**Fact:** Mr. Ellis is partially correct. At the request of the Athletic Boosters, the Band Boosters operated the concession stand this year and kept one half the profits from regular season home games. At the suggestion of the Athletic Boosters, the Band Boosters kept three fourths of the profits from the playoff game's concessions. The remaining profit, a total of \$1,958.96, was presented to the high school for the benefit of the athletic fund. Additionally, Band Boosters has presented the school \$465.77 as profit from home basketball games.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis said the band did not attend a single road game this year.

**Fact:** The band attended the away games at Whiteville and Chapel Hill. The policy of the band director is to perform at all home games and at least two

away games. This year, the band performed at six regular season games, four home playoff games, the Whiteville away game and at Chapel Hill. The band would like to perform at all away games but transportation and funds are not always available.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis has a problem with spending \$1,500 of hard-earned athletic department funds to send the band to the state championship in Chapel Hill.

**Fact:** The gate receipts from the playoff games sends the team and the band to the state championship. These expenses are paid by the N.C. High School Athletic Association and not the school's athletic fund. In addition to sending the football team to Chapel Hill, the NCHSAA pays the expenses to send the cheerleaders, all support staff and two activity buses which carry fans. There is no "hard-earned" fundraising effort involved here to "siphon" funds from.

**Fact:** In addition to the \$1,958.96 concession profit presented to the athletic fund by Band Boosters this year, each band parent who attended the football games to support their child in the band paid full gate price to get into the game. I think if Mr. Ellis considers the financial contribution made by the Band Boosters this year, he will realize that we put a whole lot more in than we took out.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis said the band showed up at the state championship this year late because we couldn't find the stadium.

**Fact:** The band bus arrived at the stadium 20 minutes before kickoff. When they tried to park the bus at the bus parking lot, they were directed by stadium attendants there to another area. Finally, after much unnecessary misdirection, the bus parked, unloaded and the band students rushed through the mud and rain to the stadium. There they sat and played, in the rain for the benefit of the Trojan football fans.

**Opinion:** Mr. Ellis is "doggone" proud of the West football team players, coaches and boosters for their fine accomplishments. He is "deeply embarrassed by the school's band director and boosters." He concludes by

proclaiming, "Let the recognition fall where it is deserved."

**Fact:** Everyone in the 3-A Eastern Division should be "doggone proud" of our Trojans. They are true champions, and we are proud to be associated with their efforts. We are also proud of the golf, baseball, tennis, track, volleyball, softball, basketball, soccer, wrestling and ROTC rifle teams, their coaches, the cheerleaders and all students and teachers at WBHS who are involved in sports. These young people are finding something constructive to do with their time and energy just as the band students are. Would Mr. Ellis rather see these you a people involved in crime, drugs or other destructive activity? Is he so narrow-minded that you he only be proud of the football team?

As far as being embarrassed by the band director and the Band Boosters, he is certainly entitled to his opinion. Craig Morris has more character and dedication to the development of the musical talent of high school students than you can ever imagine. He is a fine Christian gentleman who has earned the respect of the band, Band Boosters and everyone in the community.

Band at WBHS is an academic program, not extracurricular. Students are graded for band work. Their commitments do not stop after football season. During and after football season the band prepares for and attends 40 required performances which include local festivals and parades, concert and regional competition. At the competition held recently, they received a superior rating by nationally recognized judges.

We thank everyone who supported our fund drives this year and had kind words of support for our band students and their efforts. We are really proud of them!

Ben DeBlois, President  
WBHS Band Boosters

### 'Doggone Proud,' Too

To the editor:

I am writing in response to the letter printed in the Beacon April 7 in which Earl D. Ellis claimed he was

"Embarrassed By Band."

I think he must be watching a different band. I am in the ninth grade and a member of the band. Not only were the statements Mr. Ellis made disrespectful, they were just plain untrue.

The members of the band are not unenthusiastic. I know because I was at all of the games. We cheered with the cheerleaders and even started cheers ourselves. As far as our appearance in Chapel Hill, the band was there on time. We heard the national anthem and the announcing of the kick-off. We were not seated to play because the gates leading into the stadium were locked, and we couldn't very well unlock them ourselves.

I would also like Mr. Ellis to know that we made appearances at our share of away games, also. The band was scheduled to go on many others, but we either could not get a bus or the games were rained out.

On the subject of the concession stand, I also disagree with Mr. Ellis. My parents both frequently worked in the concession stand, and it is very hard work. Band Boosters rightfully earned their share of the money they got from concessions because Band Booster members were the only ones that volunteered their time. Not once did anyone from the Athletic Department volunteer their help; neither did Mr. Ellis.

I am doggone proud of the West Brunswick Band, Mr. Craig Morris and the Band Boosters, but I am deeply ashamed that a Trojan fan would "dump" on their band. There are many other ways to get your name in the paper.

The band members, parents and Mr. Morris have devoted a substantial amount of time, practice, patience and money to make this band a success, and we think we have accomplished this task.

Mr. Ellis should get a life. If he is so ashamed of the West Brunswick Band and disappointed that we are late to our games because we "can't find the stadium," then maybe he should consider driving our bus next year.

Jamie R. Hewett  
WBHS Band Member

(More Letters, Following Page)