

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Edward M. Sweatt and Carolyn H. Sweatt.....Publishers
 Edward M. Sweatt.....Editor
 Lynn S. Carlson.....Managing Editor
 Susan Usher.....News Editor
 Doug Rutter.....Sports Editor
 Eric Carlson.....Staff Writer
 Mary Potts & Peggy Earwood.....Office Managers
 Carolyn H. Sweatt.....Advertising Director
 Timberley Adams, Cecelia Gore
 and Linda Cheers.....Advertising Representatives
 Dorothy Brennan and Brenda Clemmons Moore.....Graphic Artists
 William Manning.....Pressman
 Lonnie Sprinkle.....Assistant Pressman

PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1994

Clear Choices, Real Issues—Good Time To Become Involved

The day of reckoning is almost here—the first one, anyway, for candidates in the upcoming elections.

In some circles, Tuesday's primary elections have been the increasingly dominant topic of conversation for months. From now until Tuesday, the varsity political players will get the hardball game under way in earnest. Politicking will reach a crescendo this weekend with fish fries and pig-pickins and all sorts of fundraisers scheduled too late to make the final pre-primary financial reports.

It may seem hard to believe to those in the thick of things, but there are many Brunswick Countians out there who won't have shaken any candidates' hands come Tuesday and who might be inclined to sit out this off-year election. That's a shame. This is one election in which candidates can be chosen by means other than who is the least mud-covered by primary day.

There have been few dogfights this political season, but that's not an indication that the issues aren't there. The Democratic primary for sheriff has generated the most interest of any county-wide race. The candidates have, for the most part, conducted themselves as the experienced law enforcement professionals they are, confining their campaigning to their personal ideology and leadership skills rather than finding fault with the department's past operation or with their opponents. They are to be commended for taking the high road and offering the voters a choice not tainted by political back-biting.

While there have been public spats between and among the candidates for county commissioner and school board, the real issues have not been obscured. Foremost among is them is doing something to repair the relationship between the two boards, even if it only improves from acrimonious to adversarial. Voters have a chance Tuesday to make an early and loud statement to this effect: It's time the preparedness of Brunswick County children to face the adult world supplanted money, skin color, personalities and petty power struggles as the center of attention.

There are other issues on the agenda and other races on the ballot—and there's sufficient information in this issue and throughout the community to help you choose between them.

To tell some Brunswick Countians to get out and vote would be preaching to the choir. But for the others—newcomers, perhaps, or those whose who have followed national and municipal politics, but not Brunswick County issues—there couldn't be a better time to take a stand.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sewers Are Coming—'Pay Me Now Or Pay Me (More) Later'

To the editor:
 As Yogi Berra would say, "It seems like deja vu all over again." I refer to the efforts of the Sunset Beach Tax Payers Association and their attempts to postpone the much-needed sewer system, closely paralleling our experience over 1980s with "Del-Aware."

Long before Del-Aware was an embryo, a referendum was passed in Bucks County, Pa., to issue bonds and proceed with engineering, construction and installation of a pump to be located at Point Pleasant, Pa., for the purpose of pumping water from the Delaware River to reservoirs for domestic use, with about 50 percent going to an existing nuclear power plant for cooling purposes (then into the ocean). For their part, Philadelphia Electric paid well over their pro-rated share.

The real need, of course, was to provide water to the thousands of houses in the area (Montgomery County, who contracted to buy some of that pump's output) as well as Bucks County.

Now along comes Del-Aware (in the cloak of environmentalists) AFTER completion of engineering, manufacture of the pump and construction contracts were let. Their logo was a fish skeleton, but as in my opinion is the case with SBT, the true forces were at work to halt development.

They would have succeeded, too (for a while), since some of the municipal wells were either remaining dry or were contaminated due to low water tables. The real tragedy was the multitude of individual homeowners whose wells were already unusable.

"Del-Aware" cared precious little

for these people—just stop development at all cost. To that end they recruited a sizeable army of reactionaries including: Anti Nukes, sport fisherman, honest environmentalist dupes, antidevelopment and the usual group of crazies who are looking for a cause—any cause.

They even hired Abbie Hoffman (remember him?) to come and camp out with them at the proposed pump site.

Well, Del-Aware succeeded in postponing the installation of the pump through legal maneuvers similar to those being used against the sewer system. They succeeded in spending all of the money the collected from the innocent as well as the believers and legal fees, additional construction costs (because of delays), etc., cost the county just about all of the money raised by the initial bond issue (around 10 million, I believe).

Additional debt was incurred to finish the job, and the people of Bucks County are paying for the pump the second time.

The anti-developers cost us all and served absolutely no purpose. The pump is installed (several years ago) and serving the citizens well. Fishing is as good as ever. The flow of the river is the same. There has been no discernable or measurable drop in water level of the river and, most importantly, the water companies who provide for the existing as well as future residents are amply supplied.

The sewers are coming, folks. As the old saying goes: "Pay me now or pay me (a heck of a lot more) later."

Raymond W. Patridge
 Sunset Beach
 (More Letters, Following Page)

Schools And The First Amendment

For months now, Brunswick County school system policies have been under re-examination. A policy committee of staff members plus school board members Thurman Gause and Polly Russ have been reading their way through county policies with the help of attorney Richard Schwartz, a school law consultant.

They've been looking to see if the county has all the policies it needs and/or some it doesn't need; and whether existing policies (1) conform to current state and federal law and (2) are reflected in local practices and procedures. If they don't meet No. 1 that's easy enough to fix. No. 2 is another story: Do you change procedure to fit policy or policy to fit procedure? It depends on what's working or not working.

Most policy discussions are, by their nature, very boring. Not so last week when the school board met with principals to discuss some of the policies that directly affect their schools. Students' rights—and infringement of them—are big issues these days.

Principals had lots of questions of the nuts-and-bolts type, not high-flung what-ifs, as they tried to identify guidelines or policies for situations they've encountered or can imagine encountering.

Many of those issues relate to students' First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion. It's more complex than you might imagine. School is constantly changing.

When I was in high school the big questions related to how much hair and skin we could show. The skin question's still around but there are plenty more to go with them.

I think I caught the gist of some of the discussions, if not all. Remember, they were talking about



Susan Usher

policy needs, not necessarily setting a specific policy. That comes next.

"Can we regulate the wearing of bandannas as gang attire?" Yes, if it is truly gang attire and not just the latest dress fad among teens.

"What about hats?" Some teachers at my school get really bent out of shape when students wear hats in the classroom.

Yes. And a countywide policy isn't needed. A school can set its own headwear policy, or a teacher can adopt a class rule regarding wearing of hats. The important thing: the rule should apply uniformly to males and females and to all hats.

The school system also has the authority to generally ban stuff because it is violent, offensive, vulgar, etc.

"What about Malcolm X and Confederate battle flag T-shirts?" That becomes a First Amendment question relating to free speech, Schwartz advised. The shirts become symbolic speech, a right not to be infringed upon.

However, if one set of shirts is being worn in response to the other, and people are getting ready to square up, to the tune of "The rumble's on at 3 on the ballfield and wear your shirts," yep, you can do something about it.

The free speech right is giving up to a disruption.

You can respond to the behavior of the people wearing the shirts, not the shirts themselves. "You cannot ban the symbols until after the disruption or the imminent threat of disruption."

"What if a child repeatedly draws religious symbols at school?"

Depends, says Schwartz. If, during free time in art, a student draws crosses, etc., no problem. But if the assignment is to draw a realistic representation of a chicken, etc., and the animal is drawn with the feet made into crosses, that's another story.

"What about if a student is drawing Satanic symbols?"

Contrary to popular myth, says Schwartz, the Supreme Court has never ruled that Satanism is considered a religion in the United States. It's mentioned in one minority opinion footnote among a list of things that might be considered religions.

If a kid is drawing Satanic symbols during free expression time in art class, he wouldn't bother that kid. If the same child is drawing Satanic symbols or pictures of naked women, etc., etc., in social studies or English class, that's another story and the school could regulate it under the "anything it deems violent, offensive, etc..."

When it comes to prayer in school, Schwartz notes two major themes: prayer—the invoking of divine presence or divine blessing—should not be school-sponsored, but voluntary. If, during a moment of silence at a school function someone in the audience begins an audible prayer and others join in, that's not school-sponsored prayer. Ditto if someone is invited to the lectern for remarks and, in an unscheduled, unplanned move, invites others to join him or her in prayer. That's all right,

so long as school officials didn't tell the person ahead, "If you want to get up and do that, fine, but I didn't tell you too."

Also fine are passing references, as in the reference to God in the Pledge of Allegiance, or a poetic reference to "God's canopy," for instance, in discussing the beauty of nature.

Groups that are not school-sponsored but meet on campus are free to have prayer, etc., unless they are meeting during school hours and students are involved or school personnel are required to attend.

What about churches meeting in a school building? Schwartz says several cases are "bubbling up," working their way toward the U.S. Supreme Court, that relate to churches that meet in public school-owned facilities. Some of the questions likely to come up: how long can a church meet in a school building and not violate or appear to violate the "establishment" clause, the Constitutional ban on state-established (in this case, school-"sponsored") church or religion.

Time limits can be set on how long a church can use a school building, Schwartz said.

More important, though, is that any church using a school facility have to follow the same rules and pay the same fees expected of any other group.

So that the school system isn't in effect subsidizing any group, fees charged to community groups for use of facilities should cover the actual cost of custodial service, energy usage, etc.

Clear as a bell, isn't it? If you were principal, next time a situation came up on campus you'd know exactly what was at stake and what to do.

Right.



The Orphan

Hoowee! Did Y'all Hear What Howard Said?

Not since Sherman's march to the sea has the South seen an onslaught of Northern aggression to rival the arrival of Howard Stern on our local airwaves.

For those blissfully unaware of popular culture (Aren't you lucky?), Howard is a radio talk-show host, a best-selling author, the self-proclaimed "King of all Media" and a candidate for governor of New York.

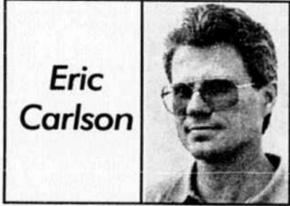
He has also become the Emiliano Zapata of broadcasting. Like that fugitive revolutionary who fought to return stolen land to Mexican peasants, Howard is being hunted down by the Federales of the FCC for exercising his Constitutional right of free speech.

You see, Howard has occasionally been known to use what some folks consider "bad words" during his wildly popular four-hour radio show, which has been on the air for more than a decade.

While most people understand that radios have on-off switches and tuning dials to prevent any stray "bad words" from jumping out of the speaker and offending them, government regulators feel the need to justify their existence by levying multi-million-dollar fines against Howard's employers in hopes of driving him off the air.

It ain't working. Not only is Howard still the premier talk radio host in New York, but he has also captured top market slots in Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, Cleveland, New Orleans and now (Cover your ears, oh ye of little tolerance!) Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The format of the show is absurdly simple. Howard merely sits behind the microphone and yaks about



Eric Carlson

whatever is on his mind. Which could be almost anything. Or almost nothing.

There is much ranting and raving and name-calling and neurotic over-analysis of minuscule subjects, frequently reaching crescendos of babbling and laughter with everyone talking at the same time—kind of like dinner conversation in a large Jewish household.

Helping maintain the show's frantic level of controlled chaos are Howard's female sidekick Robin Quivers and a cast of supporting players, known affectionately as "Babba Booie," "Stuttering John" and "Jackie the Joke Man."

The conversation ranges from sarcastic to moronic to borderline pornographic with frequent references to bodily functions, nudity and adolescent sexual urges. But there are also hilariously refreshing observations, biting sarcasm, common sense opinions and raw, bare-boned honesty about issues rarely discussed in the open.

Kind of like Beavis and Butthead with brains.

Howard is famous for voicing those cruel, unmentionable opinions that pop into everyone's head now and then; the ones you never say out loud and quickly scold yourself for even thinking. But not Howard.

He might devote a half hour to the question of why a rich man like Burt Reynolds would wear such an ugly hairpiece. Or indulge in a graphic discussion of exactly which parts of Michael Jackson's body are affected by his alleged skin disease.

When Howard has a guest on the show, it's usually one of those marginal celebrities who has dropped off the A list of talk-show regulars. People like Mr. T or Jessica Hawn or Joan Rivers or the guy who played George on "The Jeffersons" or the guy who played Grandpa on "The Munsters."

He is also fond of interviewing lesbians, prostitutes, strippers, off-color comedians and offbeat news notables like David Koresh's mother and John Wayne Bobbitt (for whom Howard organized a telethon). Or you might hear him do a telephone chat with Chevy Chase's housekeeper.

Most talk show hosts use the same old 20 questions for every guest who wants to promote their latest book, movie or TV show. But not Howard. If Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor visited the show, he'd be more likely to ask about the color of her underwear than the future of Rowe v. Wade.

Which means that when you tune in to Howard Stern, you might be surprised or shocked or angered or offended, but you won't be bored.

And you won't have to endure some pudgy curmudgeon like Rush Limbaugh hashing and re-hashing the same old hackneyed, reactionary dogma that somehow seems fresh and dazzling to his worshipful audience of "ditto-head" sycophants.

Rush would never admit it, but he owes his success to Stern. After all, it was Howard who first broke into

the big time with the outrageously opinionated talk-show format that old "Limp Paw" copied and watered down for more conservative palates.

I was amazed the first time I heard the Howard Stern Show on the radio in Brunswick County. I didn't think folks around here would care much for a trashy, loud-mouthed, New York Jewish boy with a sick sense of humor who assumes everyone south of Staten Island looks and talks like the Beverly Hillbillies.

But from what I can tell, Howard is a hit here too.

I pulled into a convenience store one morning and saw a woman pumping gas with the car door open and the volume turned up loud so she could keep listening to Howard.

Last week I saw a couple sitting in a pickup truck outside the Wal-Mart listening intently for Howard to finish ranting about his latest pet peeve before going inside to shop.

I've heard lawyers and cops in the courthouse discussing some of the more risqué portions of Stern's New Years Eve pay-per-view television special.

Howard Stern is not for everyone. If you have any politically correct nerves in your body, he will definitely find a way to get on them. And if you think you might be offended by someone burping or disrobing on the radio, I would advise you to stay tuned to country-western stations (where they sing about wholesome things like getting drunk, fighting and cheating on wives).

Just remember that the little knob on the right changes the station and the one on the left turns the radio off.