

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Now It's Time To Say What We DO Want

There's no question that Brunswick County voters took an "anyone-but" approach to last week's board of education election.

The only incumbent who'll be on the November ballot is Republican Yvonne Bright, provided she decides to hang in there after this year's school system budget is settled.

Thurman Gause and Polly Russ were defeated in last Tuesday's primary by Bud Thorsen and Clara Carter. Both Thorsen and Carter face opposition in November. Bill Fairley's frustration with his fellow board members, and the system in general prompted him to withdraw from the race. Chairman Donna Baxter followed suit after a hollow and embarrassing primary "victory" in which the late Liston Hawes, who died too late to be taken off the ballot, garnered nearly 3,000 votes.

Baxter and Fairley's withdrawals leave both the county's Democrat and Republican parties with difficult strategic and ideological decisions to make in replacing them. In a perfect world, Baxter's replacement would have her deep commitment to Brunswick County's children, but with better public relations skills and a tougher hide. Fairley's would share his belief in high standards and finite goals for Brunswick County's ailing educational system, and would have the patience and tenacity to swim against the tide until the results start to show.

The voters have loudly proclaimed what they don't want; now it's time the both parties to decide what they DO want in the way of a choice. It's hardly an enviable task.

Our Orbits Seldom Crossed, But I'll Miss Homer Lee Johnston

In all his years at Ocean Isle Beach and all my years in Brunswick County, I only had one conversation of any consequence with the late Homer Lee Johnston. It was an interview for an Under the Sun feature and it left an indelible impression on me.



Susan Usher

We didn't really know each other at the time, though it seemed I had always known of him. Our orbits had intersected only sporadically.

When we met that afternoon at the Johnstons' Ocean Isle Beach cottage, it was as though Homer and Eloise, who died two years ago, had been my friends for years. They were those kind of people—sincere, warm, generous-hearted, unpretentious. Most of all I would describe Homer as a man of good character.

When Johnston retired from Ivey's in Charlotte in the late 1960s, he and Eloise were able to begin spending more time at their beloved Ocean Isle. I was a teenager then, working summers as a waitress at The Islander Restaurant.

When I came home to Brunswick County in 1981, I settled into the bottom half of a cottage on Driftwood Drive, not far from the Johnstons' home. Homer had developed "my" neighborhood. It was unique in that almost all the owners (except my landlady) did not rent out their homes, but either lived permanently on the island or divided their time between homes. That made them eligible for a property owners' social group I think still calls itself the Sand Daubers.

One of the things I felt the Johnstons wanted most of all was for Ocean Isle Beach to be both a good town in which to live as well as a great place to visit.

That afternoon, I was there to hear about them and their contributions to Ocean Isle Beach and how they had seen the community change over a period of nearly 40 years. It was quite obvious Homer Johnston would have preferred talking about someone else's role, not his own. He didn't seem to be the kind of man to seek the limelight, though he graciously acknowledged recognition that came his way.

He talked about the island eagerly, though, like a proud father or a favorite uncle. He had every reason. He and Eloise loved Ocean Isle Beach and played a major role in making it the beautiful community it is today. They had seen some changes they thought were for the town's good, and others they didn't care for at all. When the issue was important, Homer didn't hesitate to speak up or take a stand. Sometimes he and people he liked to think of as friends had to simply agree to disagree when they came down on opposite sides of an issue.

Together he and Eloise generated a powerful force for good. Homer earned the right to be called one of Ocean Isle's "founding fathers," both for his role in the development of the island, and for his continuing contributions to its welfare. Many of them were made from behind the scenes, though he spent three years as mayor and 18 on the town council.

Asked about the worship services begun on the island 25 years ago, Homer quickly began listing the names of everyone else who helped make the project a reality. With persistent questioning, he admitted providing the cross that marked the site of those first services and of replacing it after a damaging storm with an even larger, taller cross. He was also instrumental in working with the Odell Williamsons to obtain use of the property, which now hosts services led by the Ocean Isle Beach Chapel.

Shallotte Presbyterian's services are now held between the public accessways for Duneside Drive and Isle of Palms, the Johnstons' neighborhood. Homer didn't hesitate to become involved in the change of location when he felt the pastor who had led those services for many years had been treated wrongly.

As for his experience as mayor, Homer credited Odell Williamson with that opportunity. Williamson had been named mayor of the new town and Johnston a councilman. Soon afterward, Williamson was elected to the state House of Representatives. Homer, whose primary residence was in Charlotte, served three terms as mayor.

While retirement freed the Johnstons to spend more time on the island, their love affair with Ocean Isle Beach obviously had begun much earlier. They were property owners before Hurricane Hazel, and could recall when BEMC ran electricity to the island.

Looking back, it's not surprising that Homer Johnston remembered it was my father's crew that ran the line. He was the kind of man who cared about the little things and the little people.

Homer Johnston—and all he stood for—will be missed.

For The Love Of Fo'-Co'ner Nabs

Ignorance was bliss. I'm referring, of course, to the old way of labeling packaged foods to fudge on their nutritional value.

In a project which probably cost as much as ten or 12 military aircraft toilets, consumers now face a dead-end sign on their last avenue of culinary denial with the new Nutrition Facts label.

Naturally, the first place I encountered one was on what is, in my humble opinion, the most desirable meal of last resort available in the American South—a pack of Lance Toastchee Peanut Butter Cheese crackers, known in the vernacular of my school days as "Fo'-Co'ner Nabs."

(Only in the past year did I learn from my husband, an erstwhile Yankee, that "Nabs" is a bona fide trademark name for a snack cracker produced by the conglomerate RJR Nabisco. I in turn taught him that "Fo'-Co'ner" translates to "four corners" and distinguishes the square orange crackers from the sweet round cookies like "Van-O-Lunch.")

I have early memories of P.L. Lance's perfect little squares of crisp lightly-salted cheese crackers hugging a smudge of dry-ish peanut butter. I remember being lifted by adults in country stores so I could grab a pack from the big glass jar with the red metal lid. I remember buying them in Wannamaker's drug-store along with a tiny Vanilla Coke



Lynn Carlson

concocted from a squirt of syrup, a spritz of soda water and a drop of vanilla extract, the total tab coming to 12 cents.

In middle age, I continue to consume Fo' Co'ner Nabs regularly at times when a meal simply can't be worked into the program.

They are filling, tasty and easily digestible. I sometimes buy them in eight-packs at the supermarket, to be stuffed, one pack at a time, into my purse on my way out the door when there's no time even to toast a bagel. They're good with coffee for breakfast, with soft drinks or iced tea for lunch, and with either red or white wine for my Tuesday-night supper, which too often occurs in the wee hours of Wednesday morning.

I have in front of me a new package of Toastchee. On the logo side there's a starburst bearing the value price of 25 cents. On the Nutrition Facts side, here's the low-down: serving size, one package, 39g, 6 crackers; calories, 200; total fat,

12g, 18 percent of daily value; sodium, 260 mg; total carbs, 19g, 6 percent of daily value; fiber, 1g; sugars, 0g; cholesterol, 0mg; protein, 7g; calories from fat, 100.

I can live with that. After all, in my world, this is not snack food. I consume them instead of, not in between, meals. If a Lean Cuisine has 280 calories, costs \$2.19, takes 8 minutes to microwave and fills you up for the same amount of time...well, you do the math.

Now, I'm ambivalent to learn, Charlotte-based Lance Inc.—once referred to in the trade magazine *Snack Food* as a "Southern powerhouse"—is going big-time, branching out West to Las Vegas, shipping peanut bars to England and talking with food people in Mexico, Canada and Asia. A daily newspaper article says Lance has broken into the vending machine market (a peculiar way to put it...) in California, Washington and Oregon.

It all began in 1913, when founder P.L. Lance, a food broker whose specialty was coffee, got stifled by a customer who failed to claim an order of 500 pounds of peanuts. Lance, the tale goes, took them home, roasted them and sold them on Charlotte street corners, beginning, with \$60 capital, a company which last year did \$473 million worth of business and employed 5,500 people, and has never laid off a single worker. An American

dream-come-true if ever there was one!

The next hurdle, Lance's current president and chief executive is quoted as saying, is developing more fat-free snacks. Fat-free cranberry and apple bars began rolling off the belts a few weeks ago; the fat-free fig cookies are outselling the regular version two-to-one.

But, at least for this child of Carolina, many questions remain unanswered:

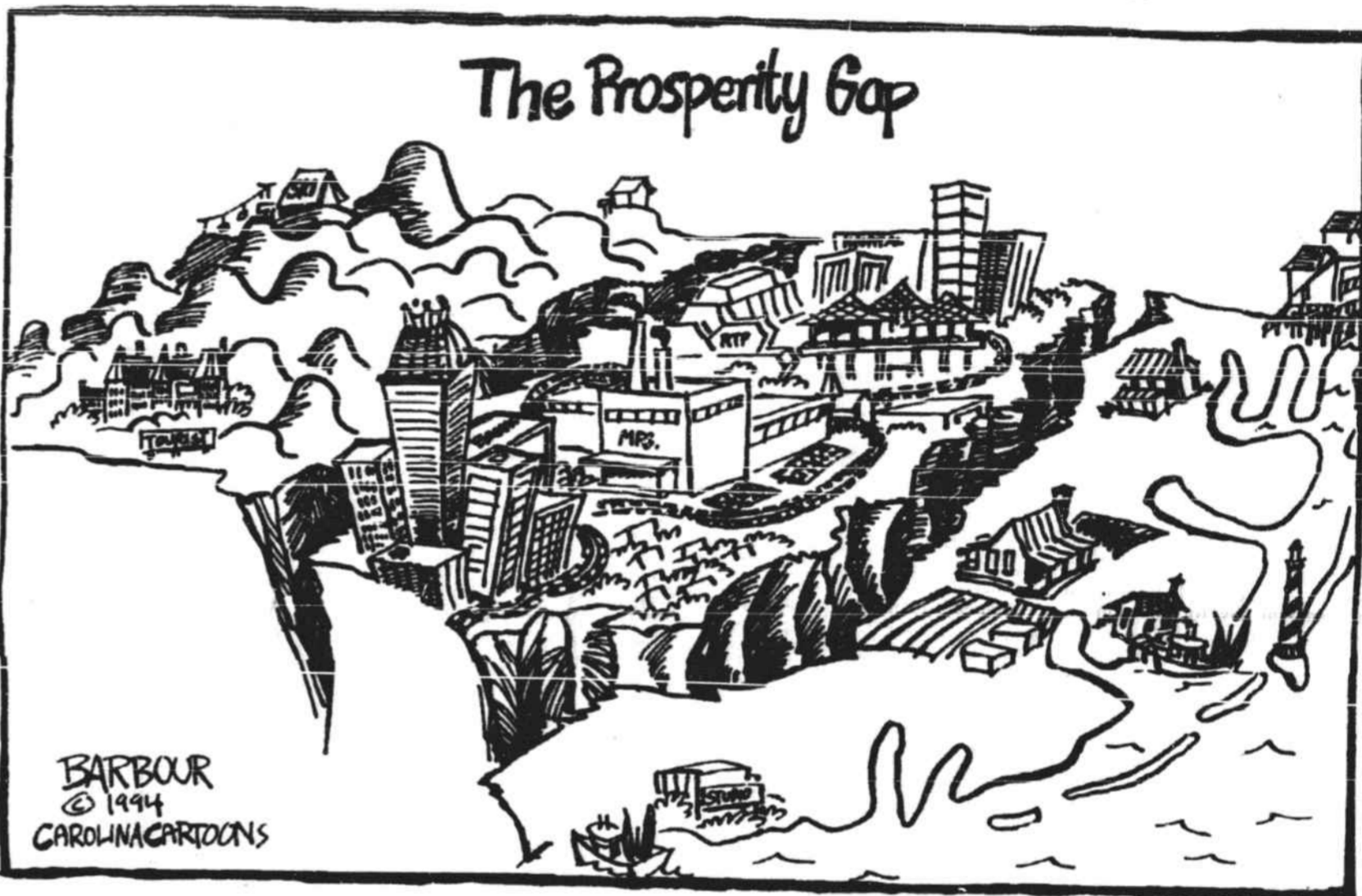
■ Will trendy Californians embrace Fo'-Co'ner Nabs in their juice bars?

■ What will the global repercussions be if Seattle's young arbiters of coolness turn their backs on bright orange crackers as a fitting accompaniment to a double cafe latte?

■ Is fat-free peanut-butter in the realm of scientific possibility?

The truly loyal among us will keep our minds open. They said that after a while we'd acquire a taste for Nutra-Sweet soft drinks, skim milk and decaf coffee—even to the point of preferring these products to their time-honored predecessors—and they were right.

If we could go that mile maybe, just maybe, we can learn accept the idea of Fo'-Co'ner Nabs, even fat-free ones, as Everyman's Food. Bon appetit!



Attacking Crime By Creating More Criminals

Boy, that's some crime bill our esteemed Congressfolks are working on up there in Washington.

Just last week they voted to make criminals out of millions of law-abiding American citizens, including myself and many of you.

They voted to create a new high-profit black market commodity that will put millions of dollars into the hands of drug dealers, gang members, international smugglers and other career criminals.

They voted to guarantee that violent offenders will have more efficient methods of harming us than we will have to defend ourselves against them.

They called it "a ban on assault weapons." They said it would outlaw the sale of 19 military-style auto-loading rifles and pistols. They said the ban was necessary to help reduce the number of violent crimes.

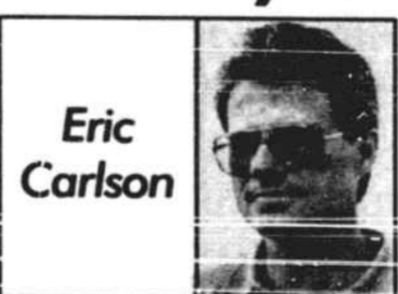
They also said the ban would have little effect on the millions of average Americans who exercise their Constitutional right to own guns for hunting, target shooting and home protection.

They lied. And the mainstream media helped them get away with it. Its coverage of this issue consistently misrepresented the restrictions the bill imposes on gun owners who obey laws, while downplaying evidence that the ban will have almost no effect on those who disregard the law.

Newspapers and TV dutifully publicized press conferences where "fed-up" legislators posed beside tables covered with the alleged targets of the ban—menacing killing machines like the TEC-9, Uzi and MAC-10 "machine pistols" and the rapid-fire "street-sweeper" shotgun.

They blindly repeated assurances that the bill would only ban "19 assault weapons," while specifically exempting hundreds of "legitimate" sporting firearms.

But the fact is, the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms estimates that as many as 200 previous-



Eric Carlson

ly legal guns could be classified as "assault weapons" under the bill, making hundreds of thousands of law-abiding gun collectors and sporting shooters into owners of illegal firearms.

Millions more of us will be stigmatized as criminals by another (ignored or misrepresented) aspect of the bill that bans guns with ammunition magazines holding more than 10 bullets.

In the rare cases where this latter portion of the bill was even mentioned, the misinformation was usually accompanied by a photo or reference to the 30 or 50-round "banana clip" magazines protruding from a military rifle like the AK-47 or AR-15.

Do any of you sharp-eyed readers out there remember a news reporter ever mentioning that this rule would also outlaw the pistols that have become America's most popular choice of handguns in the past decade?

When the U.S. armed forces and most law enforcement agencies selected the 9mm autoloader as their sidearm of choice, gun manufacturers competed for their business by improving the quality and design of these pistols.

Millions of smart American consumers noticed a good thing when they saw it and made the trusty "nine" their own choice for recreational shooting and home security.

Unfortunately, for we value-conscious shoppers, one of the technological advances built into nearly all modern 9mm (and many other new) handguns is the capability of holding 12 to 15 rounds of ammunition.

We aren't talking about so-called "Saturday night specials" here. This ban outlaws hundreds of the highest quality pistols manufactured by the most reputable gunmakers in the world.

So why have they done this? Because it is the next logical step toward prohibiting all firearms ownership, of course. But they will tell you that these weapons must be banned to fight crime.

Trouble is, the FBI reports that only one percent of all the homicides committed last year involved the use of so-called "assault weapons," of which there are about 900,000 in the U.S. Knives were used in 16 percent of all murders, while 6 percent were committed with fists and feet and 5 percent involved blunt object weapons.

So now all these millions of guns are banned. What does that mean?

It means that no drug dealer or gang leader worthy of the name will be able to resist the instant status boost of owning a "banned" weapon. Does anyone believe they won't be able to get them?

It means that local pawn shops won't buy these guns off the street, because they can't sell them. Which means police will no longer have a handy paper trail to help find the

owner of a banned weapon used in a crime. Nor will they have a likely place to find such weapons that have been stolen.

It means that many (if not most) of those who want to buy and sell banned weapons will avoid the hassle and paperwork of doing so legally and will simply pass them on to the highest bidder.

Which will make these weapons—the ones we love to hate—the most difficult to trace and the most likely to fall into the hands of criminals. And just who is going to enforce this new law? And where exactly are we going to put the few offenders who are successfully prosecuted for breaking it?

Nowadays a felon sentenced to 10 years in prison will be free within two years. Half of those will commit another crime during the time they should have been behind bars.

So we know for sure that fewer crimes would be committed if our leaders attacked the problems in our criminal justice and prison systems to guarantee that offenders serve their sentences.

Unfortunately, it takes honesty, character, statesmanship and political will to do that.

It's a lot easier to just ban guns.

Worth Repeating...

■ Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.

—Henry Clay

■ There is in every woman's heart a spark of heavenly fire, which lies dormant in the broad daylight of prosperity; but which kindles up, and beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity.

—Washington Irving

■ Philosophy is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other clause—that it must be lived forward.

—Soren Kierkegaard