

MORE LETTERS

Don't Knock Absentee Owners Who Like Sunset Bridge

To the editor:
Regarding your article "Abnormally High Tide Puts Sunset Motorists in Limbo," I feel it is totally unfair for tourists to use profane language when dealing with Sunset Beach police doing their job in an emergency. Let me apologize on behalf of all tourists.

In my opinion it is equally unfair for Chief Buell to blame "absentee property owners" for the rising tides or closed bridge. If "nearly a foot of salt water floods the causeway" and "decks and yards were covered as well," it makes no difference what

kind of bridge we have. Access would be blocked regardless.

As an absentee property owner this weekend I purchased groceries, porch furniture, hardware, seafood and employed the services of numerous workmen to get ready for the rental season. I subscribe to the *Beacon*, pay taxes and utilities, joined the Bird Island Preservation Society, wrote the legislator, made out a check to the Sunset Beach Fire Department and put a donation in the St. James collection plate on Sunday. Perhaps reassessing the value of absentee property owners

would be helpful to us all.

I say if you don't like the present bridge and the wait, don't live on or come to Sunset Beach. If you've got a life-threatening illness, move to the mainland. If you like total uniformity with no hint of creativity or individuality and you need instant access, move to another island.

Sunset Beach is a remarkable area. Let's be part of a solution that uplifts and preserves our uniqueness and not part of the problem.

A siren installed and used with a ten-minute warning before closing could solve most of these com-

plaints. To those who had to wait, I say Sunset Beach is worth waiting for.

A better solution would be to donate the proposed amount to build a new bridge to United Way or other social agencies.

Carol W. Costenbader
Asheville

Judgment Begins In The Lord's House

To the editor:
I saw a bumper sticker that said "Jesus loves you...and I am trying."

Then I read in my Bible in I John 4:20. It says, "If someone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

So, what's this all about? Shallotte, and everyone that lives here, better wake up. God says you're either for me or against me.

In D-Day, African Americans died for me and you. Whites died for us. Hispanics died for you and me. My cousin Rudy Hernandez received the highest honor—the Medal of Honor, two Purple Hearts. My uncles, brother and myself served to keep us free. I am sure your family has done the same. I thank all those that protected my rights.

Don't let hatred dishonor the blood that was shed by Jesus and all those that died on D-Day, Korea, Vietnam, etc.

Last of all, I must remember Judgment begins at the House of the Lord—that means me.
Paul Hernandez
Shallotte

GUEST COLUMN

Information Highway Should Be Reexamined

BY MICHAEL LOWEY

North Carolina's leap onto the information superhighway continues to generate much debate and attention, especially on the issue of cost.

The idea of the information superhighway is to connect via computers and video schools, universities, hospitals, businesses and state government agencies. Each would become more efficient as a result, able to draw quickly and cheaply on the expertise of others on the superhighway.

The information superhighway would, supporters claim, stimulate job growth and economic development, save money, improve education in poorer counties and improve crime fighting.

In its move to the superhighway, North Carolina is seen as a national leader, with the most extensive public/private partnership in the nation. Other states, the federal government and even foreign companies and governments are watching what happens in this state's move onto the information superhighway.

One thing that is just becoming clear is that the information superhighway won't come cheap. The original amounts estimated, a few million a year to get the thing up and running at more than 100 sites across the state and \$514 million to hook up every school in the state, have recently been criticized as being far too low.

The state legislature was sold on the information superhighway last year largely because it offered much at a low start-up cost. Now the total cost for the project keeps changing. Late last year state legislators were shocked at a \$100 million total which has now unofficially been pushed up to \$135 million.

Included in this amount are the additional phone charges of connection to the superhighway at local high schools—nearly \$50,000 per school, or a third more than what was projected last year—which, for the first 52 schools comes to \$2.5 million a year alone. Jane Patterson, the governor's point person on the issue, is recommending that the state, and not local schools, pick up the tab for at least the first three years.

An even larger cost issue has been raised by Public School Forum of North Carolina, an independent group which examines school policy issues. In February, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction estimated that it would cost \$514 million to connect all of North Carolina's schools to the information superhighway. The Public School Forum, which independently examined the issue, thinks the costs could easily exceed \$1.5 billion or about \$1,500 for every child in the public schools.

The reason for the large differential is that the forum considered the age and condition of schools and training costs, while the Department of Public Instruction study only set aside \$1.3 million for teacher training, which the forum found unrealistically low.

The increased costs have angered key members of the state legislature. As Rep. Martin Neuhoff Jr. (D-Asheville), chairman of the House appropriations committee, put it to the News & Observer of Raleigh, "You know, we thought the highway was a done deal then (last year). We figured \$5.1 million and the greatest thing since sliced bread was a great deal. Now it turns out that whoever was in charge was hiding it from the General Assembly. It's embarrassing we didn't get answers before—but this time we will."

The latest embarrassment for the administration's information superhighway effort is the revelation that a highly touted study estimating 44,000 new jobs and \$2.7 billion in economic growth from the project was not sponsored by the state, as many legislators and observers assumed, but by BellSouth, which stands to make millions of dollars from state contracts to use the system once it is constructed.

As should be the case for any expenditure of public funds, the State of North Carolina needs to carefully calculate the costs of, either fully or in part, getting on the information superhighway and compare it to the benefits.

If this is not done, and there are reasons here to be worried, poor public policy decisions will be made and taxpayer money will be misused or wasted.

The first step should be to make sure the information currently available about the project is accurate and free from bias. No good decisions can really be made until then.

Lowrey is a fellow at the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh-based public policy think tank.

Surfer's Guide To Carolina Pier Fishing

Well, it's that time of year again. The ocean temperature has climbed into the 70s and lured schools of migrating fish and crowds of hopeful fishermen toward the coast.

This spring, many first-time fishermen will be wetting their lines in hopes of landing a big one (or lots of small ones) for the family dinner table. To most novices, that means heading straight for one of the many fishing piers lining our shoreline.

Which is a good place to start. Piers allow anglers to get out where the fish are biting without spending a lot of money on a boat. Once there, you are likely to find lots of friendly people to help you learn the ropes.

Still, as a public service, I thought I would give you newcomers a few important tips to get you started.

Now I've never actually hung a baited hook off the side of a fishing pier. But I have spent literally thousands of hours paddling surfboards around in the water beside them. So I offer this advice from the unique perspective of one who regularly swims with the fishes.

The first thing to remember is that fish are NEVER EVER found where good surf is breaking. One of the most common mistakes made by beginning fishermen is to cast their lines directly into the breaking waves (where the surfers are).

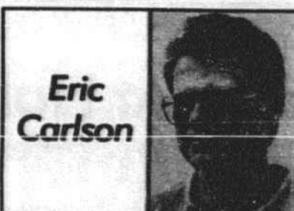
Having spent so much time in the shadow of fishing piers, I can assure you that there are definitely NOT ANY FISH down there amongst the waves.

Think about it. Why would a fish choose to swim around in water that's churning around like a Maytag washer when they could be peacefully cruising along out where the sea is nice and calm? Believe me, they don't.

Likewise, why would a surfer go paddling around where some hungry bluefish or mackerel might mistake a big toe for a tasty scallop? Chomp! It just doesn't make sense.

So the thing to do—if you really want to catch something—is to move farther out on the pier where the water is really deep. That's where the BIG fish are, lounging around looking for a good shrimp or a bloodworm or a colorful spinning lure to munch on.

A fish's natural tendency to avoid breaking waves is heightened in certain easily recognizable surf conditions. Whenever you see waves approaching the shore in the shape of long, glassy walls that pitch over into perfectly rounded tubes, you must avoid fishing anywhere near the surf zone.



These types of waves are called "barrels," and they strike fear into the little hearts of all things that swim in the sea. Because in olden times, fish were commonly coated with salt and packed in barrels for preservation and shipping.

The mere sight of anything resembling a barrel—like those perfectly shaped waves—will scare off every fish for a mile around. That's why the old salts say, "Waves a barrelin'...Stay home with Marilyn."

Another important thing to remember is that there are a lot more fish on the windy side of a pier than on the calm side (where the surfers are).

You see, fish enjoy the unbridled freedom of swimming along with the wind, just like birds. When a school of fish encounters an obstacle in the water, such as a pier, they freak out and bunch up on the windy side looking for a way around. That's the place to hang your hook!

Don't be fooled by all those ill-informed anglers fishing on the lee side of the pier. These are fair-weather fishermen who put their backs to the wind merely because it's a little bit easier to cast their bait.

Remember, the best things in life don't come easy. Don't be a sissy. Don't give in to "pier pressure." Just load up that line with a half-pound of lead. Grit your teeth. Stare into the eye of the wind and leave that bait where it will do some good. That's the real spirit of fishing!

While we're on the subject, I must mention a dangerous activity occasionally practiced by a minuscule minority of frustrated pier fish-

ermen: casting for surfers.

Yes, I'm afraid it's true. Now and then, one of those "bad apple" anglers will get himself overly agitated on coffee (or some other mind-altering liquid) and lose all touch with reality. He will somehow arrive at the deranged assumption that he isn't catching any fish in the waves because of the surfers.

But instead of moving a little farther up the boards (where there might actually be some fish) these so-called fishermen, in an act of senseless desperation, will cast directly at a surfer helplessly paddling across the water 30 feet below.

We've all experienced that kind of frustration. Like when another driver pulls some bone-headed move and cuts you off in heavy traffic. But we don't jump out of the car and sling lead weights and barbed hooks at them, do we?

The criminal justice system considers this an "assault with a deadly weapon." If the aggressor happens

to hit his mark, it would be called "assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury." Both are felonies punishable by lengthy prison terms.

On the other hand (and I point this out merely for comparison) throwing someone off a fishing pier constitutes "simple assault," which is a misdemeanor. So while the laws of physics certainly favor the angler, the laws of North Carolina may not.

All of which is beside the point. Because there is no reason for such conflicts to arise. Surfers actually do fishermen a great service by indicating the worst possible place to cast their lines, just as a flock of sea birds will point a sharp-eyed angler toward a school of bait fish.

Just remember this helpful saying of Hawaiian watermen:

"Gulls on the surface...is where there are for-sure fish.
Surfers on the waves—Try another place."

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