

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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The World Needs More Heroes—And Changes

The world needs more Robert Poulks. Poulk is the 47-year-old Carolina Power and Light worker presented the Brunswick County Sheriff's Gold Service Award, the department's highest recognition for heroic action by a citizen.

Poulk says he was "just trying to help" when he intervened in the roadside beating of a woman he didn't know at the hands of her male companion. The assailant stopped his attack and Poulk stayed with the woman until the arrival of a law enforcement officer.

Though Poulk says he's not sure what he did was heroic, deputies are certain of it. Domestic violence calls are dangerous, not just to those being assaulted but for anyone who sets aside his risk of personal injury to get involved.

The woman whose beating Poulk stopped refused to testify against her batterer, so the charges were dropped. Neither deputies nor Poulk were surprised by that unfortunate but commonplace scenario.

That would indicate the world needs two things even more than people with Robert Poulk's bravery. One would be a criminal justice system which treats domestic violence as sternly as crimes which involve strangers who harm one another. More victims would pursue their cases if they didn't expect their assailants would receive suspended sentences and unenforceable probation requirements. The other would be an environment in which families—mothers and fathers together—teach their sons not to see violence as a means of solving problems, and their daughters not to tolerate it.

RC&D 'Umbrella' For Community Improvement

More than 20 years ago James D. Bellamy had a vision for regional cooperation. He tried and tried again to obtain funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a group that could serve as a catalyst for individuals and agencies looking to improve the region's quality of life.

This spring, the efforts of Bellamy and others finally paid off.

Brunswick, Pender, New Hanover and Columbus counties are partners in the new Cape Fear Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program, one of 275 in the country. Funded by the USDA through the Soil Conservation Service, the program has an operating budget of about \$110,000; a director-former Orange County District Conservationist Greg Walker, who will locate his new office in Wilmington; a regional council; and working county committees.

Our three regional council reps are B.J. Jones, county parks and recreation director; Don Warren, county commissioner chairman; and Bellamy.

Walker's job will be to work with committees in each county as they pursue their goals, offering support through grant research and proposal writing, other types of fund raising and working with volunteers. Jones says it better: "to grab money from anywhere and everywhere he can get hold of it."

What can an RC&D do? It can serve as a catalyst for making things happen in an area and can make existing resources go farther and work harder as a result of cooperation among organizations and agencies. Imagine if we had had one 20 years ago?

The possibilities are endless, Bellamy says. Local and regional projects are recommended by each county committee and generally falls within four categories: conserving and managing of woodland and wildlife resources; recreation; land and water; and public services.

Projects done elsewhere include starting farmers' markets, developing local recreational facilities, establishing recycling facilities and marketing aquaculture products.

"This group gets into everything; it's an umbrella," says Jones, secretary-treasurer for the regional council. Each county establishes its own list of projects, but the group can take a regional approach on issues in common, such as a developing a recycling center or beaver management.

Brunswick County's four resource committees met for over a year identifying existing and proposed projects that fit the broad guidelines and meet local needs.

In the end the committees realized, says Jones, that the group could accomplish almost everything it had set out to do with a single multi-faceted project, contingent upon some of the cooperation that is the hallmark of how a typical RC&D operates.

They'd like to obtain between 900 acres and 1,000 acres in the central part of the county, preferably adjacent to Brunswick Community College, and then start building—a county fairgrounds and flea market, an amphitheater, a ball field suitable for American Legion play, a farmer's market, perhaps a pond that could also be used by BCC's aquaculture program, a park area, and the item that's on many senior golfers' most wanted list: a county-owned and -operated golf course that could be used for play, golf instruction and for BCC's recreational grounds management program.

That same site could also house a forestry information, museum and exhibit building to educate the public on one of the major regional industries, forestry and wood products.

Ambitious, eh? But the plan is workable, a good example of what can be done when agencies and organizations work together.

Other projects are on the list for future assistance, ranging from more boat ramps for water access to a catfish processing plant at Northwest.

Jones says Brunswick County's planning effort won good reviews at the state level and should get early assistance.

But even after 20-plus years of watching and waiting, there's more waiting ahead as the program gets going. Walker's just one person, with part-time secretarial support, working with four counties all anxious to see their projects take off with a little professional help.

How much he's able to do and how quickly it gets done will depend in large part upon his ability to educate, excite and motivate community volunteers such as are serving on the county committees.

"It's going to be slow. I understand that and I hope other people will."

If you have an idea for a project, call Jones or any committee member: Rex Nash, Winnabow; Wayne Miracice, Southport; and Phil Inman, Ash, forestry; Darryl Somersett, county operations department, and Billy Mintz, Ash, land and water; Irene Webb, school system sewer plant operator; and Norman Horpe, Shallotte, Kathy Summerlin and Cynthia Tart, Leland, recreation.

Madness Raises Madness, Cycle Goes On

Call her Ginger, the 48-year-old college student who came to visit me. She looks like a Ginger with her buckeye-colored hair and eyes.

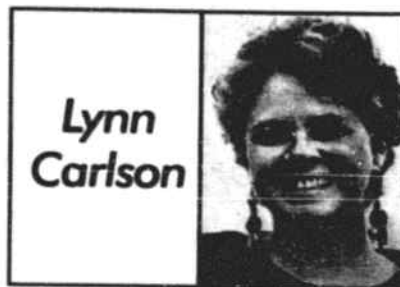
We talked on the phone a few months back when she first told me a bizarre and awful tale about 10 weeks of physical, sexual and emotional abuse that began with a first date.

I didn't really know what to think at the time. I get a lot of calls from kooks, and she didn't sound like one. But her story was just so implausible, how she'd gone to dinner with a man who refused to leave, holding her in her own home against her will, beating and threatening her into submission, dictating when she bathed, took her medicine, drank her morning coffee.

She'd pressed charges, but not for kidnapping or rape—only for the lesser charges of assault on a female and communicating threats. There were no witnesses and no easy means of substantiating what she alleged. I suggested we talk again after she had her day in court.

I heard from Ginger again after her accuser pleaded guilty to lesser charges and received a suspended sentence. Because he copped a plea, Ginger never got to tell her side to the judge.

She came to see me and showed me pictures of herself with black eyes, a split lip and ugly bruises on her arms, shoulders and breasts. She



Lynn Carlson

said he forced her to tell her grown children she'd fallen in love with him and was getting married.

Once when they went out—at night to go grocery shopping—he warned her he'd kill her if she spoke to any black people, so she prayed not to bump into any of her non-white classmates.

She said he made her quit school because she didn't "have any business being around those young boys," that he told her she was his "little baby girl" and he'd take care of her now. She showed me a boxful of letters he'd written her, and flowery cards oozing romantic love.

But something about the chronology of Ginger's story didn't make sense. In one breath, she told me she'd been held against her will by a man who was not her boyfriend but a mere acquaintance. In the next she admitted, to my absolute disbelief, that he left at one point to spend a few days in a psychiatric hospital, and she let him come back.

"Why in the world would you let

him come back?" I asked. "The nurse said he was okay, that they'd straightened out his medication and he wasn't violent any more," she replied softly. "He asked me if he could just stay a few days until he got a place of his own, and I let him."

At another point she said she left for a stay in the same hospital, getting away by convincing him she thought she was the crazy one and needed a doctor's help to quell her violent tendencies.

"Does that mean you fought back sometimes?" I asked.

"Sometimes," she said.

"What would happen when you did?" I asked.

"He'd get just like a little child," she said with a disturbing glint of pity in her eyes.

The man still calls her, she says, apologizing for "hitting" her, thanking her for helping him see the error of his ways, vowing he'll make it all up to her when she finally takes him back. She swears she never will.

"Why do you even talk to him?" I asked.

Her answer: "I don't expect you to understand, but it's easier for me to know he's on the other end of the phone than to be afraid he's in the woods behind my trailer or stalking me everywhere I go."

"Can't you just move away?" I continued, the fortunate voice of inexperience in these matters.

She said she's thought about it but doesn't want to have to start all over again. She'll finish school in a year. She's pursued her charges far enough to have a restraining order in place, neighbors who now know to keep an eye on her, and regular "keep-check" patrols through her trailer park by sheriff's deputies. To move, oddly enough, would cost her a certain amount of security.

"Also, I know he'd find me," she concluded.

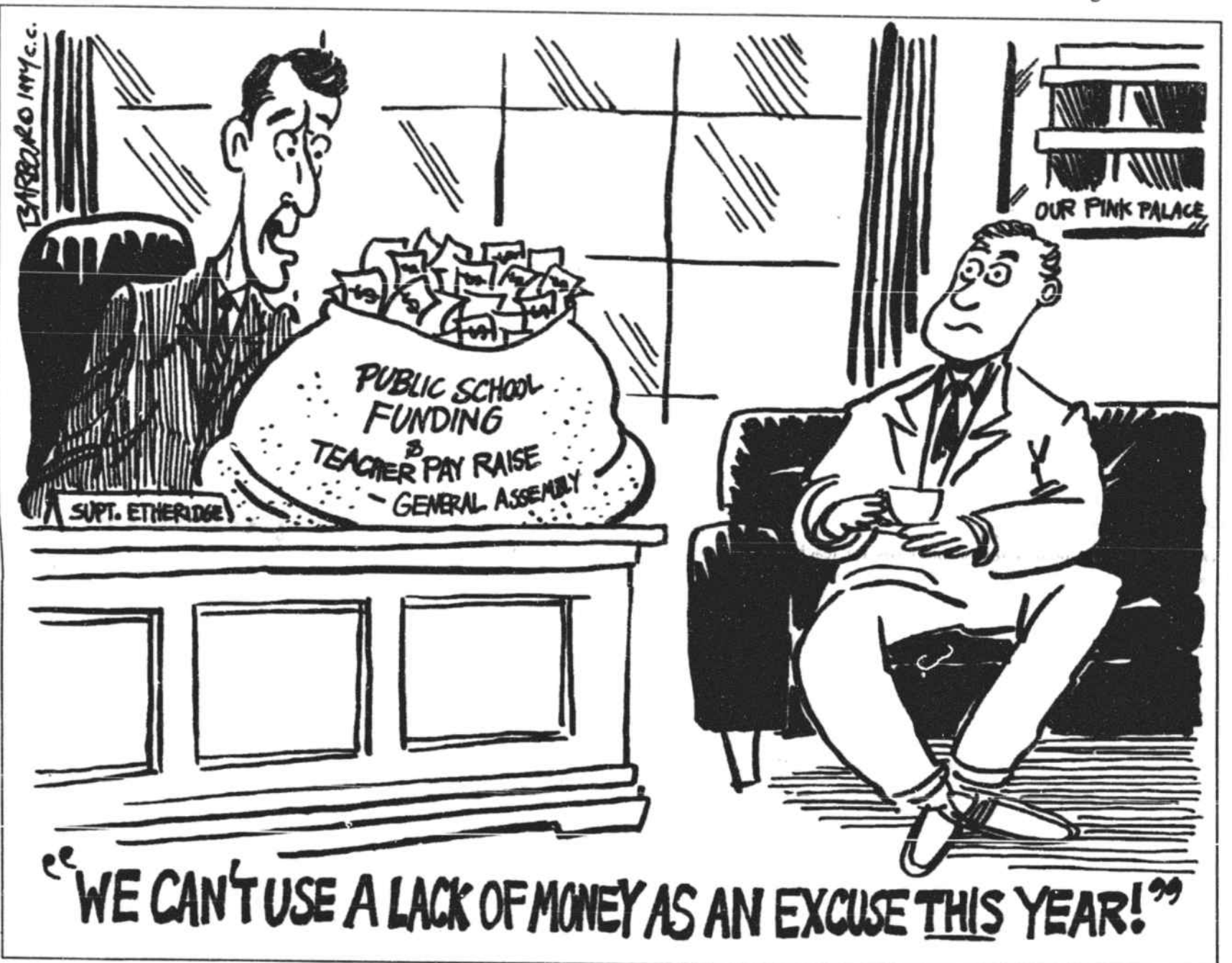
"What do you want now?" I asked.

She said the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and the subsequent media attention to domestic violence caused her to experience a kind of epiphany. "I'm taking my life back," she told me. "I want people to know that the same kind of thing that happened to me can be going on next door to you and you don't even know it."

She says she also wants people to stop bringing up children in violent households. "Madness raises madness and the cycle goes on for generations," is the way she put it.

I had more questions, but I knew Ginger wouldn't be able to answer them and I wouldn't be able to comprehend even if she did. I can no more imagine being pummeled by a mate than Ginger can imagine the luxury of a week without fear.

It will be a long time before I go a week without fearing for her.



Hey, That's Life In The Hub Of Activity

Start spreadin' the news I'm leavin' today.

I want to be a part of it, Shallotte, Shallotte...

Don't we all?

It seems that way these days. Especially during the summer. Especially on Friday afternoons during the summer, when traffic on Main Street is bumper-to-bumper from the skating rink to Joe and Moe's Auto Repair.

Remember when folks around town worried that the new U.S. 17 Bypass would transform Shallotte's bustling business district into Casper City?

Guess what? It ain't happened.

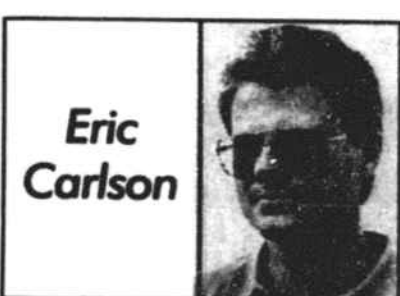
Watching cars try to make a left turn onto Main Street in the summer reminds you of those nature films of migrating salmon fighting their way past a dam spillway to get upstream. All you need to complete the picture is a giant grizzly swatting Toyotas out of the center lane.

The N.C. Department of Transportation, calls that a turning lane. But most folks are savvy enough to recognize this bit of municipal machism for what it truly is: Suicide Alley.

It's a free-fire zone where oncoming cars play "chicken" by roaring straight towards each other at high rates of speed, waiting until the last possible moment, when one driver cuts left into Twin Creek Plaza and the other screeches right into the Speedway gas station.

I left my heart in Shallotte city; High on a hill It calls to me...

So how come all these cars are chugging along in an endless line



Eric Carlson

through the middle of town when they could be zooming past on the uncrowded four-lane?

Naturally, part of the reason is Shallotte itself. It's the place to find whatever you need in Brunswick County and the first stop for most visitors heading for rental cottages and vacation homes near the beach.

I believe the myriad attractions of the big "S" are best described in the community service pages of this year's telephone book:

"In the heart of Brunswick, Shallotte—as the hub of activity in the county—offers a vast selection of shops and boutiques. The latest fashions in clothing and department stores, several distinctive gift shops and the novel specialty boutiques make a day of browsing for a special purchase here a delightful experience."

Shallotte's magnetism is not strictly limited to locals. Include the nearby beaches and countless fine restaurants and you have a centrally located community that blends the best of small-town life with added amenities, making it a wonderful stop while in Brunswick."

Long distance information Give me old Shallotte, N.C. Help me find the party Tried to get in touch with me... Much of Shallotte's traffic prob-

lem is a natural by-product of commercial hustle and bustle in this busy "hub of activity." And I suspect many a curious newcomer is drawn to Main Street by that aforementioned special magnetism.

The rest are just lost.

This is not surprising. Highway maps suggest that N.C. 179 (Village Road) is the best way for southbound travelers to get from U.S. 17 to Ocean Isle Beach, Sunset Beach, Calabash and places in between.

Likewise, a cursory look at the at the map gives the impression that the only way to find Holden Beach from the south is by driving—you guessed it—all the way down Main Street to the light at N.C. 130.

Not true, as any savvy local will gladly tell you. So for those who don't have business in downtown Shallotte and are simply on your way someplace, I offer this guide for getting from where you are from to where you're going without contributing unnecessarily to our traffic problem.

Shall-oh-out, Shall-oh-out It's my kind of town, Yeah, my kind of town.

Unless you've been scouring the earth in search of the latest fashions and have come to Shallotte to find them in its vast selection of shops and boutiques, those bound for the South end can take the bypass right past the hub of activity. Then take a left onto Ocean Isle Beach Road, which will take you to (Guess where?).

If you're heading for Sunset Beach, buzz right by Shallotte to N.C. 904, otherwise known as Seaside Road, which takes you to (Guess where?).

For those whose destination is the Calabash area, just keep on going south and make a left onto Thomasboro Road. (Guess where that is.)

Coming from South Carolina or Whiteville en route to Civietown, Shell Point or Holden Beach, stay on that old four-lane past our snazzy Information Center and take the first right onto Smith Avenue. This will let you avoid all but a block of Main Street (allowing me leave the Beacon without waiting for you to pass by).

In a tightly controlled scientific survey conducted last Friday afternoon, I followed two vehicles down Main Street from the north by-pass exit, two from the south end, then three each from both ends. That makes 10 cars, from which even I can derive accurate percentages.

I was a little surprised to find that only one southbound vehicle used Main Street to access N.C. 179. But two northbound cars went all the way from Joe and Moe's to N.C. 130 toward Holden Beach.

This proves two things: First, that traffic could be reduced 30 percent on Main Street by following my advice. And second, that a lot of folks must indeed be attracted to our fair city by that old "magnetism" we know so well.

Why else would you see all those bumper stickers that say "Shallotte is for lovers?"

We got married in a fever Hotter than a pepper sprout We've been talkin' bout Jackson Ever since the fire went out. Yeah, yeah, go to Jackson, Just turn loose of my coai Go on, go to Jackson I'm headin' back to Shallotte