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Working On Problem Without Government Is A Good First Step

If you've ever been on the beach a few hours after a fish spill on a hot summer day, you probably have no trouble understanding why the mayors of Brunswick County's oceanfront towns don't want menhaden boats operating too close to our shoreline.

A menhaden spill is a slimy, stinking mess, the kind of memorable incident that might convince any vacationing family to venture elsewhere the next year—like South Carolina, Delaware, Virginia or North Carolina's Outer Banks, where menhaden fishing is restricted or prohibited.

All-too-periodic menhaden spills on the Outer Banks a few years back left beaches ankle-deep in tiny, rotting fish. People who relied on tourism for their livelihood were left to do the apologizing and explaining to visitors, and they began to make a fuss about it. So did sportfishermen, and last year, the N.C. Marine Fisheries restricted menhaden fishing off some areas in Dare County.

On Long Beach, five menhaden spills have been documented in ten years, the latest just two months ago. Long Beach and five other Brunswick County beach towns would like similar protection against future menhaden spills here.

Still, it's difficult to embrace the idea of more government restrictions on commercial fishermen, who justifiably argue that their entire industry, and the heritage of many coastal families and communities, will soon drown in a sea of rules and red tape.

Representatives of the six towns and three menhaden fishing operations got together last week with Rep. David Redwine to talk over the problem and see if there's a way to solve it without official government intervention. That's a good idea—faster, cheaper and more efficient, too, if it works.

Though the situation might seem to be untenable—with the mayors saying they don't want menhaden boats within a mile of shore and fishermen saying that's too far—perhaps it's not. Perhaps the prospect of compromise will be preferable to that of further restrictions against the fishery. If menhaden companies won't hold to their end of a reasonable bargain, then it will be time to call out the cavalry.

If the towns and menhaden companies can work out their differences across the table without wrapping the issue in government red tape, maybe they'll end up with a plan everyone can tolerate.

If Only That First-Day Glow Lasted 13 Years

School started this week and I wasn't there. This is only the second time in the past 17 years that I've missed watching kindergartners on their first day of school. It's one of the real pleasures of covering the education beat.

But Don and I need our annual mountaintop fix, and between one thing and another, this seemed to be the only week we could manage after an April cancellation.

It's exciting, that first day of school. Most kindergarten and first grade students think school is a wonderful, wonderful place and know learning as the grand adventure it is. A typical kindergartner adores his or her teacher and hangs on every word. The afterglow can last for years, as on-the-spot hugs in the grocery store or mall testify.

Teachers who still care share that first-day glow, even after long years in the profession, and sometimes you see in older students when they come home excited about Spanish class or the new math teacher.

The question that burns in my mind all the time, and especially in the fall of the year, is what happens? Where does that spark go? What stifles enthusiasm for learning so surely that by ninth grade most children, but not all, are just going through the motions in classes they consider boring? School becomes one long social hour.

Many students who are serious about getting an education end up seeking it elsewhere, if they can afford it, outside the public schools.

So why the gradual fadeaway? Is it because some parents don't think school and/or education is important?

Is it because of the year they had the one "bad" teacher in the whole third grade, or because they had a problem and no one acted like they cared?

Did another kid rag them on the bus or call them "stupid"? Is it because a teacher burned out, but didn't leave (or get booted out) because the prospect of retirement benefits was too good?

Is it because parents can't or don't help with homework, either because they don't know how or because neither parent nor child has time for homework between one after-school activity and another?

Or because certain teachers don't think what they're teaching matters and pass on that attitude, giving no homework or "busy work," never checking assignments?

Watching from the sidelines of non-parenthood, I'm stumped. Perhaps it's a mix of all of the above, or something else entirely. After getting to listen to a lot of parents and a lot of teachers, sometimes I wish they could hear and see themselves.

If we adults don't think and don't act like school and education are important, how can we expect students to act as though these things have value, much less believe it?

Maybe this year we could start the school year with a fresh attitude and higher expectations of each other and ourselves as parents, teachers, students and community people.

Come to think of it, maybe that's the real reason the first day of school is so exciting. The hope that this year it will be different, and better. If only we could make that first-day glow last 13 years.

Susan Usher



When It's Reigning Cats And Dogs...

This letter was taped to our office door one recent morning:

Dear Editor,

I am a traveling nuclear tech and must leave in two weeks on assignment out of state. Unfortunately, someone threw out four kittens on my doorstep two weeks ago.

I've placed a two-week ad in the Beacon and the shopper, and so far, I've placed one kitten with a good lead on a second; however, I feel I'm going to need more coverage to meet my deadline.

I've contacted every humane society along the coast, and all are full....

The mother is about six months to a year with black long hair and a bushy tail. One kitten is black with long hair, and one kitten is black short hair.

They have had a vet visit, shots, wormed, ears cleaned, parasite-treated, etc. They will make nice



Lynn Carlson

pets for someone....

I wish I could take them, but I can't because I'm a responsible pet owner. I have no more pets than I can handle (one). He's the kind of critter that doesn't require an unwieldy amount of time or attention (cat). He won't be responsible for bringing any unwanted kittens into the world (neutered). And he can't possibly annoy anyone outside my home (stays inside).

It hasn't always been that way. Eric and I once had a brood of cats and a big, sweet, dumb Labrador retriever. All of them roamed freely on our five acres of mountainside.

When we relocated to a canal lot on Holden Beach, we gave the dog to a treasured friend and convinced our buyers that the cats came with the house.

I don't know what it is that drives us to want to keep pets—even when we spend way more time at work than at home, even when we already have kids, spouses and too many other things to clean up after and spend money on. All I know is that I seem to be able to live cat-free only for a few weeks before the yearning begins again....

Nonetheless, I'm afraid I wouldn't have the compassion of Deborah Downer, the woman who wrote the letter above. Any busy professional who'd go to such lengths to seek homes for some slacker's discarded animals—who'd feed them and get them medical attention rather than send them to an animal shelter overpopulated with cats destined for the gas chamber—deserves a hand. By that I mean assistance, not just

applause. If you can help Deborah, call her today at 754-5942 or 754-8266.

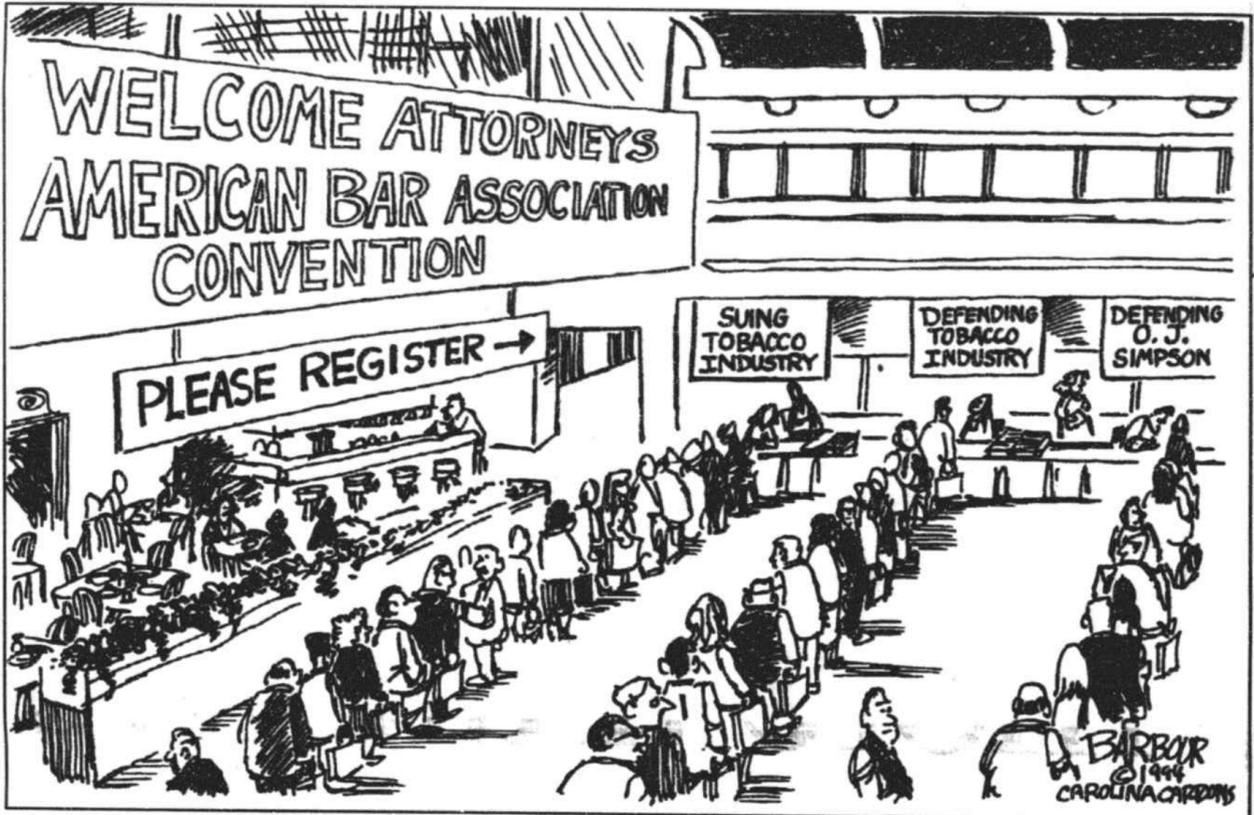
Whatever drives people to keep pets can apparently also drive them around the bend. Last week I read a not-joking daily newspaper food section article about Making Homemade Dog Biscuits. Really.

Someone wrote a letter seeking a good dog biscuit recipe (how would you know?) and there was a flood of responses. Really.

Call me callous and tell me I don't get it, but listen here: If you are out there (a) making dog biscuits, (b) thinking up recipes for dog biscuits and (c) writing letters to newspapers about the joys of making dog biscuits, you have entirely too much time on your hands.

Volunteer for something—Lower Cape Fear Hospice, Hope Harbor Home, Brunswick Buddies, the Guardians Ad Litem, the Brunswick Animal League all need you.

If you're killing time cooking dog food, you need them, too.



Racers Will Remember Fallen Frenchman

Dear Robert: The Horn was rounded February 5, and today is March 18. I am continuing non-stop toward the Pacific Islands because I am happy at sea, and perhaps also to save my soul.

—Bernard Moitessier

It was, by any measure, the greatest race of all time. A race around the world. Alone in small sailboats. Without stopping for rest, supplies or repairs.

Nine sailors tried. Only one made it back to the starting line in Plymouth, England. Six were forced to drop out after craft or captain could bear no more of the sea's relentless testing.

One of the competitors went mad. Terrorized by what lay ahead, he sailed his boat as far as the coast of Brazil. There he spent months wandering in circles while broadcasting phony reports of his position in hopes of returning in first place.

Instead, overcome by the shameful cowardice of his hoax, he cast himself into the Atlantic and drowned.

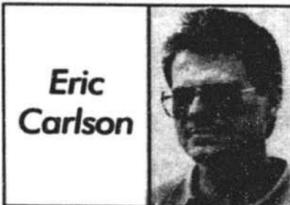
The official winner, Englishman Robin Knox-Johnson, claimed the modest prize of a golden globe and £5,000 after an amazing feat of endurance and seamanship by sailing his 32-foot boat *Suhaili* eastward beneath the southern tips of Africa, Australia and South America before returning to Plymouth.

However, it was a Frenchman, Bernard Moitessier, who captured the imagination of sailors everywhere by deciding not to win the race and instead to pursue a more important victory for himself.

By mid March, 1969, Moitessier had been alone at sea for seven months. The most difficult challenges of the voyage were behind him—battling dangerous Pacific storms, dodging icebergs in the Southern ocean and rounding the infamous Cape Horn.

He had just crossed his outbound path, marking a successful circumnavigation of the globe, and was almost sure to win the race. All that remained was a relatively easy sail up the West coasts of Africa and Europe to claim his prize and permanent recognition in the history books.

But something happened to Moitessier. He had discovered his place in the world. He realized how much he truly enjoyed being out there, alone on the endless sea, with



Eric Carlson

nothing between himself and oblivion except 40 feet of steel deck.

When Moitessier entered the great race, he made the curious decision of not equipping his boat *Joshua* with a radio. He felt that whatever comfort might be gained by having a way to communicate was not worth the distraction and temptation of using it.

Instead, Moitessier counted on the occasional passing ship to take his mail and log entries back to the race organizers in England.

So it was on March 18, that Moitessier used his trusty slingshot to fire a film canister containing the above message to a tanker off the southwest coast of Africa. Writing in his log that day, he declared himself free:

"To have the time...to have the choice...not knowing what you are headed for and just going there anyway, without a care, without asking any more questions."

He continued on for another three months, sailing half way around the globe again before landing in Tahiti. His total journey of 37,455 miles was the longest non-stop single-handed sailing voyage in history.

Anchored in Papeete Bay, Moitessier wrote a marvelous description of his adventure titled "The Long Way" (published in English by Grafton Books). It has earned a space on the shelves with other classic accounts of solo circumnavigations by Joshua Slocum (whose first name Moitessier took for his boat) and Sir Francis Chichester.

But Moitessier's saga offers more than just another tale of man against the sea. It describes being forever transformed by 10 months of intense, private intimacy with the primal forces of nature. In another log entry he wrote:

"I found a little temple from forgotten times, lost in the faraway forest. I stayed near it a long time, all by myself, to learn to read the marks carved on the stone. Nothing was

left of what I brought, and I lived on roots and wild honey, staying near the temple for as long as it took to find out. And little by little, the stone gave forth a name and said go on and seek the truth inside of things, further on."

Seafaring people around the world were saddened to learn of Moitessier's death in Paris earlier this summer. Fortunately, in the latter days of his long battle against cancer, Moitessier completed an autobiography that took him seven years to write. (Unfortunately, there is no English language publisher yet.)

The book describes his lifelong quest to form "a perfect alliance with nature." It details of his childhood years in Vietnam, where he learned to pilot junk-rigged sailboats on the Gulf of Siam.

Moitessier includes a full account of his life aboard *Joshua*, the 40-foot ketch on which he first set a record for non-stop voyaging with a 14,000-mile journey around the Horn from Tahiti to France in 1966 before dwarfing his own accomplishment in the great race.

Finally, in the spirit of Gaughin and Melville, Moitessier paints a fantastic picture of his sojourn on a deserted South Pacific atoll where he and his family lived alone and

without modern conveniences for three years.

Residents of neighboring islands came to know and respect Moitessier and bestowed upon him a name in their native language that he adopted for his last boat and the title of his autobiography. They called him "Tamata," which in Polynesian means "to try."

Because of the danger and tragedy that surrounded it, the great race was never run again. But its spiritual successor, the fourth British Oxygen Corporation (BOC) Challenge, will begin next month from Charleston, S.C.

Twenty-nine sailors from nine countries will travel the same round-the-world course in high-tech sail craft measuring from 40 to 60 feet. They will have the latest navigation equipment to guide them, including on-board computers and satellite weather forecasting. They will be required to stop for rest and repairs in South Africa, Australia and Uruguay before returning to South Carolina.

You can be sure that not a single one will complete the journey without thinking at least once about Bernard Moitessier, who realized that it wasn't as important to win as it was to try.

Worth Repeating...

- Only the educated are free. —Epictetus
- Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among people, who have a right...and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean of the characters and conduct of their rulers. —John Adams
- Let knowledge grow from more to more, But more of reverence in us dwell; That mind and soul, according well, May make one music as before. —Tennyson
- Not every man is so great a coward as he thinks he is—nor yet so good a Christian. —Robert Louis Stevenson
- In your rocking chair by your window shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel. —Theodore Dreiser
- Education is...hanging around until you've caught on. —Robert Frost