

OPINION

Character assassination

The election campaign is over and ballots are being counted as we write. We have no idea who the winners are. But of one thing we are certain: It was the dirtiest campaign from top to bottom to which we ever have been a witness.

Following a month devoted to character assassination we are left with choices of the lesser of two evils in most of the political campaigns we have been exposed to. These are men and women whose accomplishments projected them into the public limelight, from which they emerged as nominees for their respective parties for whatever offices they were seeking. Even the losers deserved a better fate.

It's better than bullets -- the hard-nosed kind -- but there must be some means by which campaign rhetoric can remain dignified and civilized. What we have been left with are office-holders whose integrity has been the subject of debate, whose morals, old and new, have been dragged out for public discussion, and whose wives have been drawn into the fray for merciless criticism.

We started out in a contest for the high office of president of the United States between two decent men with impressive credentials, joined later by a third candidate with spectacular achievements in the business world. What we have ended with are the remnants of their character and reputation which, for losers as well as the winner, will forever be the subject of rehash and speculation for the amusement of the reading and viewing public which feasts on bad news.

We wish the winners well, whomever they are, because they are our leaders for the next two, four or six years. But somehow, some way, we must find a way to elect men and women to places of responsibility and trust in our government without in the process destroying the good image which made them acceptable candidates.

No time to waste

Curbside recycling starts in Southport this week, with all residents urged -- and expected -- to separate newspapers and some plastics, glass and aluminum from the rest of their garbage and put them in special recycling bins.

The bins were delivered to households in the community a couple weeks ago with directions on what to do. We hope that everybody by now has read these, determined when the pickup schedule is (call City Hall, 457-7900, if you don't know), and resolved to participate.

The recycling program is voluntary, but absolutely necessary. As has been noted time and again humankind is choking in its own waste, and we can win that battle the same and only way we are going to end the drug problem or wipe out national debt -- by exercise of collective will.

Some who have come later into our disposable, throw-away, discard-it society (and those with poor memories) may think it is the American way to wad something up and chuck it. No way. Recycling, reusing, return for credit or refill has been a part of American life all along.

The attitude that it is right and proper to throw things away indiscriminately and wantonly is the anomaly, and we say chuck that.

An 'A' for absenteeism

If a student misses school, he gets a chance to make up the work. It's as simple as that, according to proposed changes in the Brunswick County schools' attendance policy.

The incentive he's given is that he'll be helping the school system improve its report card. For each day of missed school work made up -- in just three hours time, no less -- the school gets to wipe that student's absence out of the computer which funnels information to the state Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh. The student, however, will still have those absences marked on his record, even if he makes up every single hour.

The important thing is he is getting the education his parents and other taxpayers are paying for, and the school system gets an opportunity to raise its attendance rate, one of the areas it scored poorly on in the last two report cards.

Maybe everyone's report cards will be all A's by spring.



Not exactly news

The first episode of the new "Matlock" will be a two-hour segment Thursday night at 8 o'clock on Wilmington TV station WWAY. The title is "Vacation" and several Southport scenes will be featured... Following segments of this popular series starring Andy Griffith will be shown on Saturday nights on ABC stations. Once more we remind Southport residents that the local history display at the CP&L Visitors Center is still in place. It is the best effort that has been made to present a comprehensive coverage of Smithville/Southport during the past 200 years. If you have not seen it, let us urge you to do so before it is too late... We have had another report of a pheasant hen which paid a visit to the bird feeder in Roberta Hon's backyard. She has to be an escapee from Jim Splawn's collection.

Dan Harrelson came in the office one day recently and renewed subscriptions for almost everyone in his family -- children, grandchildren and sisters. The bill came to more than \$100. Dan felt better when we told him Lewis Hardee does the same thing each year for his family... All of which reminds us that this plan is not an extravagance but

is a good substitute for letter writing, which nobody ever does any more. Getting the *Pilot* every week is the next best thing for folks who want to keep up with what's going on in their old hometown.

Not only do symphony concerts many times overtax our musical appreciation, we are not sophisticated enough to know when to applaud. We were brought up believing you clap for something you like without sitting around waiting for the conclusion of a series of undefined duration. A friend has informed us that the sure clue is not to applaud until the conductor turns around to face the audience... *Someone of Value*, a biography of Robert Ruark, is on the press and will be available in December. It was written by Hugh W. Foster, who has a special first edition offer for numbered copies up to 1,000.

The annual Dixon's Chapel Oyster Roast will be held Saturday at Varnumtown. The deal is you get all the oysters you can eat for \$10 -- but you have to open them for yourself. Bring your own knife... The Burroughs family of Shallotte was on na-

tional TV Friday night, on Fox Network's "America's Most Wanted". The last we heard they were in a western state and arrests had been made of the parents. We were glad that the announcer mispronounced Shallotte when reporting their hometown in North Carolina.

Among the most colorful foliage on Bald Head Island this time of year are poison ivy vines, which are turning red. They are so pretty you almost can forgive the plant for being poisonous... Here we are in the first week of November and haven't had even a threat of killing frost.

The most impressive yacht we have seen pass through the Southport harbor this year spent two nights here last week. It reminded us of the days 50 years ago when the Vanderbilt yacht *Alva* stopped overnight here twice a year... We saw a lot of Adopt-a-Highway litter bags beside the Old River Road over the weekend and they looked like misshapened pumpkins left over from Halloween. Incidentally, from all reports -- or lack of them -- we would guess we came through a quiet celebration of this year's All Hallows Eve.

Public opinion

'Branded'

To the Editor:
Samuel and Daniel Williams are not the criminals your cold-hearted and indiscriminate report (*Pilot*, October 21, 1992) depicts them to be. They've had their share of adolescent delinquencies, but I bet most of us can think of things we've done worse than nail a city street sign to our bedroom wall.

Things must be rather boring around the Southport Police Department for this incident to be the only police-related activity of social significance to be published in the entire issue of your newspaper.

"Possessing stolen city property" is the boys' indictment. Our government, military and police systems have this handy way of using terminology that dehumanizes people and turns them into enemies of the public. We are the public. We are the criminals. The criminals are our children. Let us all take responsibility instead of finger-pointing all the time.

And let's print news that has the potential for social value, not individual destruction. The last thing two struggling teenagers need is for the whole world to see them branded by the law and the media as

evil forces.
Mike Bellows
Southport

Public safety

To the Editor:
This is my first "letter to the editor", even though there were times in the past when I was encouraged to write one in defense, but I chose to remain silent and let the One far greater than I handle the situation. Time has proven, as usual, that was the right choice.

My reason for writing is a positive one, and that is to commend our police department for a job well done this year in their patrolling the area on Halloween night. Some of you may recall the many problems some of us were confronted with last year; to my knowledge there was not a "repeat performance".

To The Editor:

The State Port Pilot invites its readers to share their views on subjects of public interest. Comments should be addressed to The Editor and mailed to The State Port Pilot, P.O. Box 10548, Southport, N.C. 28461. Letters should be limited to 250 words, longer letters will be edited for space, or will be returned to the writer if editing would significantly alter the content. Please include the writer's address and/or telephone number so he or she can be contacted by the Editor if necessary. Addresses and telephone numbers will not be printed.

This year I decided to participate more and have my home well-lit and be able to greet the little ones (or large ones) as they came around. A friend and I sat on my front porch and gave out pencils (I might add they were well-received by young and old). As we sat there we noticed the police cars frequently going by, as well as chief Gray. This was very comforting.

It's unfortunate we seem to take so much for granted and so often are quick to criticize and slow to commend.

Thank you, chief Gray, and the entire police department.
Faith Walker
Southport

Delegation

To the Editor:
Thank you! On behalf of Midgett & Associates, Teresa and I would

like to say thank you to all of the people from the Southport-Oak Island and Brunswick County area who attended the North Carolina League of Municipalities meeting in Greensboro last week.

Thanks to all of you, we registered over 200 people for the door prize drawings from our booth and had more than a dozen serious inquiries from groups interested in coming here for a meeting, seminar or other similar retreat.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to the chamber for the donation of some of the door prizes that were awarded.

Southport-Oak Island and Brunswick County businesses and residents should be proud of their delegates who attended this year's meeting. Not only were they one of the largest groups representing an area of the state but also one of the most outgoing groups when it came to promoting this area as the best place on Earth for business, pleasure and family. This really is a community of caring people who love where they live and work hard for the betterment of the community.

David and Teresa Midgett
Midgett & Associates
Village Travel & Cruises

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