

The State Port Pilot Opinion

The Y2K bug

Even small business operators -- even homeowners with microchips in their microwaves -- need to know how to adjust

It's going to be interesting to see just what kinds of nuts the millenium drives out of the woodwork.

The coming of the 21st Century and the beginning of the Third Millennium ought to drag out just about every gloomer and doomer around.

But, the truth of the matter -- as it is becoming ever clearer -- is that we probably can't go to bed the night of December 31, 1999, and expect to wake up the next morning to things just as they were.

There will be some dramatic, and maybe terrible, consequences to face with the beginning of the next millenium.

The problem, dubbed the Y2K bug, is set to strike that morning. Depending on whom you talk to, the bug could bring with it everything from an international monetary crisis to stalled elevators, burned toast and cold coffee.

The problem of the millenium bug, or Y2K bug, is one that is a consequence of our highly technological age. It seems when the early computer nerds were beginning to do their business back in the 1960s the decision was made to conserve memory by making computers recognize dates expressed as two digits. So, 1998 to a computer is simply, 98.

That's going to be problematic on January 1, 2000, when computers start reading the date expressed "00." The computers may think it's 1900 or they may just be so confused they will shut down or process wildly out of control.

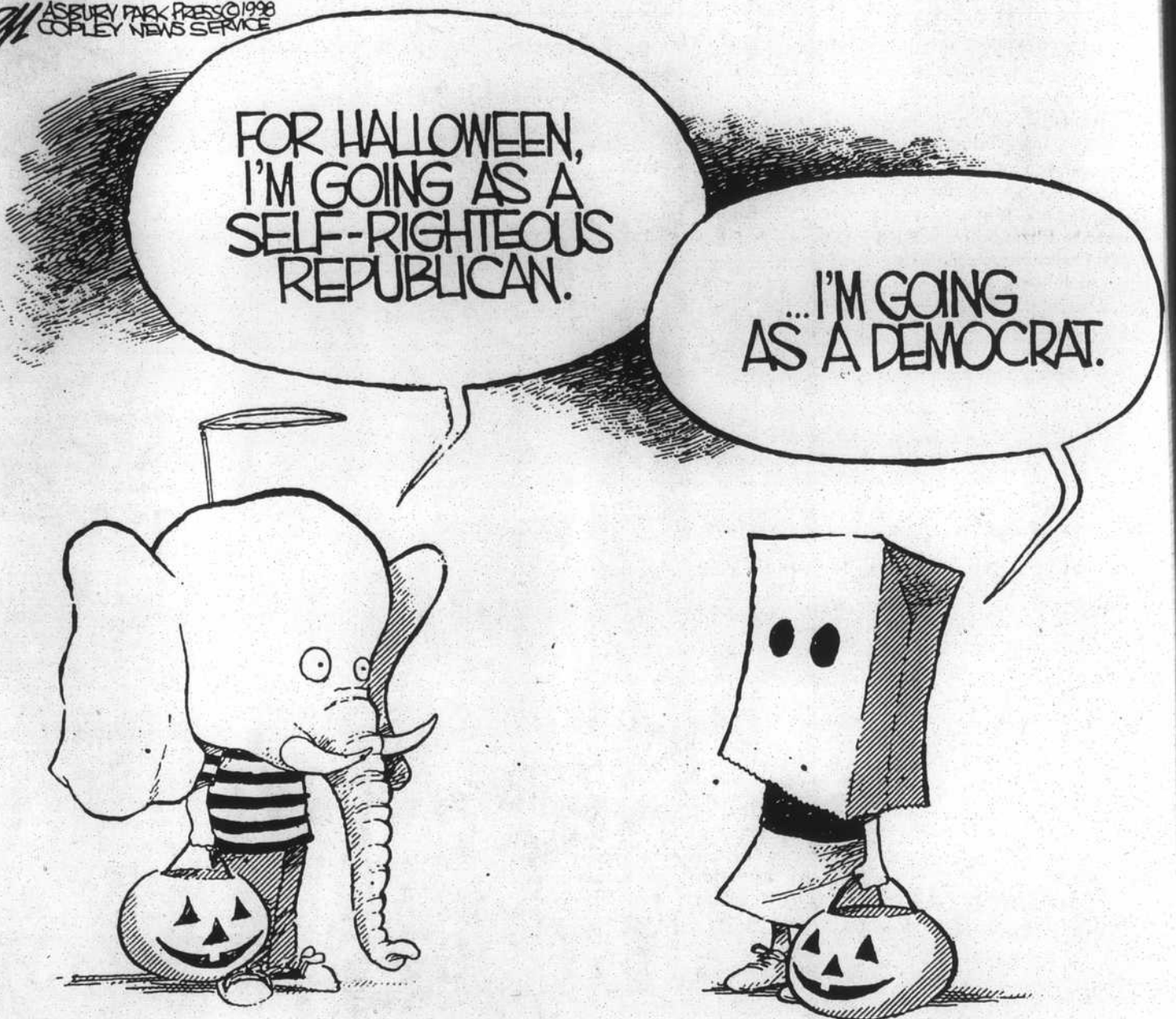
Although government and industry, having recognized the Y2K problem too late, are way behind in efforts to make corrections, there are solutions to the pending Y2K dilemma.

Those solutions, and a greater explanation of the depth and breadth of the Y2K problem, will be the subjects of a multi-agency forum sponsored by the Brunswick Community College Small Business Center on Thursday.

Even small business operators -- even homeowners with microchips in their microwaves -- need to know how to adjust to Y2K.

It's good to see Brunswick Community College in the forefront of this critical public education need. We have a lot to learn in the next 15 months.

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No bounds

Our community suffers from the same problems related to poverty that other counties, states and nations face

In a county where the tax base is \$6.15 billion this fiscal year, it's often taken for granted that our residents each enjoy the good life, too.

But in Brunswick County, our community suffers from the same problems related to poverty that other counties, states and nations face regardless of the influence of our beach towns and ever-growing retirement neighborhoods. It's good to see our elected leaders and agency directors don't overlook this fact.

An application due on Friday for possible federal funding would upgrade living conditions of 12 families in our county based on receipt of \$389,000. County commissioners held a public hearing October 5 to receive input on the application but, as expected, no one spoke. That doesn't mean the need doesn't exist, just that a certain segment of our population is silent when it comes to asking for things.

County public housing director Thurman Everett identified 15 to 20 homes that could benefit under the Community Development Block Grant scattered site application, and 12 were targeted for the county's application. They were picked based on the severity of the housing conditions, income level of the occupants and grant amount the county can apply for. It is persons like Everett who speak for the silent victims of poverty, for he witnesses first-hand what the needs are everyday.

This project would include rehabilitation of nine homes, the leveling and relocation of three homes and installation of septic tanks and bathrooms at six houses. The county applied for \$350,000 to do that work and another \$39,000 to remove outhouses and install running water in homes which lack such basic needs.

For the total of \$398,000, the county would match \$17,500 if the application is chosen between February and March of next year. Each application is rated on a point system in order to distribute about \$6.6 million.

Support for the grant indicates that, while our county officials must manage a \$97.1 million annual budget and collect about \$42 million in property taxes for 1998, they do not take for granted that all our residents are living at ease. Their support for this project may have been a bit silent, but it hasn't gone unnoticed.

Not exactly news

Yet again we must speak in praise of the weekend's weather. Saturday was a beachgoer's dream, and we went there to see bathers and anglers and strollers and dreamers all enjoying themselves immensely. The spot flotilla at the east end of Oak Island was enormous; watching water-jet riders rocketing through the Lockwood Folly sky was a thrill. Outdoors was the only place to be. The forecast for later this week promises a winter wakeup call, but by the weekend it looks like smiles again -- though this time wearing shirts and socks... One of the best views we've had of Southport harbor recently came from a chair at Ross' Hair Care shop, a good long way from the shore. Bill Ross recently had a mural of the harbor painted there which is so realistic you half expect to see a ship slide through... "Fall back" is the Saturday night watchword. Set your clock back one hour, go to sleep and enjoy the extra 60 minutes of rest. You'll have to give it back next spring when Daylight Savings Time resumes.

The N. C. Oyster Festival last weekend at Shallotte found one of our staff members shucking shells for the first time. Though not a difficult task to learn, she said she felt a lit-

tle inferior to the seasoned veterans who showed up with brown bags of their own condiments. Saltine crackers, vinegar and Texas Peté hot sauce separated the pros from the amateurs at the event. However, it's good to learn a new skill, she said, and she was proud to discover that a whole bucket of oysters isn't hard to get to the bottom of... Lisa Bellamy, champion shucker of the 1997 Oyster Festival, won this year's U. S. Women's Oyster Shucking Championship in Leonardtown, MD. Saturday. She shucked 24 oysters in 2:50.24, a good time we presume, to beat her nearest rival by a fifth of a second.

"Love a Fair" was used several years ago to promote the North Carolina State Fair, and while slogans change the feeling is the same. The annual ten-day event runs through Sunday at the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh, and it's worth the trip. Our favorite exhibit always is the art and photography, but if there's not something for everybody at the fair, then you may be too hard to please.... A parting shot of Hawaii: Overlooking Waikiki Beach, on the second floor of an office building behind full windows, was an athletic club

with the walking machines lined up facing the brilliant blue water and sandy beach. Now if that doesn't push a walker to go the extra mile, we don't know what would... Perhaps it would be the new set-up at Oak Island Sports Center, where exercisers will soon get a view of, er... golfers. Linda Miller tells us new equipment will be added this week, expanding the facility to include the former gift shop.

If the Atlanta Braves had won the National League pennant -- and they didn't come close -- the World Series might be a contest because of pitching. The New York Yankees wandered through the American League playoffs before finding their bats in the Fall Classic this week against San Diego. The Padres may win a game, maybe two, but we'll be surprised if they do... Comparing modern-day teams to those of 40 years ago is foolish -- everywhere except baseball. While time and training has made football players bigger and faster, and basketball players taller and more athletic, baseball skills have remained much the same. These Yankees, as good as they are, can't hold a candle to the Bronx Bombers of old.

Public opinion

Together

To the Editor:
I think it will be nice for Long Beach and Yaupon Beach to join and become one Oak Island. People should be willing to work together.

I wasn't surprised to see a few opposed, however. They always say, "If you are for it, then I'm against it." Maybe if they changed the name to Allen Island or Allentown, they would be pleased.

And I wouldn't worry about those poor retired senior citizens on fixed incomes. Considering those long trips and cruises they take, they probably have more money than anyone else down here.

Jennifer Taylor
Long Beach

Samaritans

To the Editor:
I would like to thank the couple

who helped me when I had car trouble at Supply last week. I wish I knew their names.

At first, they tried to help me tape up the gash in my car's radiator hose, but when learning that I needed to travel to Southport with my two youngest children they decided to assist us even further. They left and returned a little while later with a new hose, which they installed in my car.

I felt disbelief that two strangers could give of themselves, their skill and their time so selflessly. They accepted only baby wipes from me

to clean their hands.

I was able to continue on, picking up my son from school and my husband from work. We all made it back home safely, thanks to these Good Samaritans.

Upon telling this to several people, I heard these responses: "Only in the South ...," and, "There is still some good left in the world." Thank you for reminding us all of that today. May your kindness and generosity be returned to you ten-fold.

Mrs. Satu Harris
Long Beach

Letters to the Editor...

The State Port Pilot invites its readers to share opinions on matters of public interest. 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. The writer's address and/or telephone number must be included in case verification is required. No letters will be published without the name of the writer; addresses and telephone numbers will not be published.

Child abuse

To the Editor:
I beg all teachers from the first grade through at least the 11th grade to please at some point talk to each child alone and see if they are, or have been, abused in any way and have been told that they would be beaten up if they told anyone.

I truly believe some of them may tell you something very shocking. You could be the only one a child has who could help, and I am sure they can count on their teachers. I do not know of anything worse than a child molester, except a parent who is too scared to report this. I have tried to help someone, it seems all by myself.

Kids need our help.
John Ganey
Boiling Spring Lakes

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