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OUR TOWN

The Federal grant of \$205,000 to assist Burnsville with construction of its sewage disposal plant is hardly the occasion for unrestrained celebration. Although it is extremely welcome, it should be recognized that the grant carries with it a heavy financial obligation.

The grant will pay for not more than 55 percent of the total cost of the project. So perhaps the best way to describe the situation is to say that Burnsville is now in a much less unhappy position than we were before.

That we must now proceed promptly with the construction of our plant is self-evident. Cities and towns throughout the State are proceeding to comply with the stringent laws requiring the ending of stream pollution. And despite generous Federal aid the cost to the towns is proving to be very high. Most of our neighboring towns are farther along with their projects than we are.

It is therefore quite unthinkable that we can refuse the grant, and simply continue to drag our feet. Burnsville contracted with the State Stream Sanitation Commission in 1960 to build its plant by 1963. We failed to do so because in the absence of a large grant, the town's finances simply made compliance an impossibility.

Now that the grant has been received, the pressure will be on us to move rapidly. The grant is

made under the Federal Accelerated Public Works Program—the same program that is assisting with our court house—and this requires construction to proceed without delay. Unnecessary delay involves the threat of revocation of the grant.

We have already taken two important steps in the project—the recent fifty percent increase in our water, and the purchase of a site for the plant. Next will come an election to authorize a bond issue to pay the town's share of the cost (in the order of \$175,000). Then will follow the detailed engineering of the project, which has not yet been done. We had hoped to have this already completed, and to that end applied for a Federal loan last year to cover the cost, but under the strange workings of Federal bureaucracy (under which the right hand seems never to know what the left is doing) the loan was denied.

Since the engineering involves much complicated detail, some months will probably elapse before contracts can be let, and construction gets under way. Considering all things, the next few months will be a busy time for your town officials.

BOB HELME, Mayor

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Safe Boating Week Observed June 28 - July 6

By: Luther Partin

RALEIGH, N. C. — "For of all the sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, it might have been." John Greenleaf Whittier's words of a past century still come back to haunt us, having lost no significance in the passage of time.

Even at this early stage in the 1964 boating season, wearing a life jacket very well "might have been" the difference between life and death for at least 13 people who fell out of boats and were drowned.

In most counties, North Carolina law requires a motor propelled vessel on public waters to carry an approved life-saving device for each person on board. But there's nothing in the law that says you have to wear the device. Some people think a simple solution would be to amend the law to require that lifesaving devices be worn while in a boat. But it doesn't appear to be quite that simple when you take a long, hard look at the situation. Law enforcement agencies are quick to use the phrase, "you can't legislate safety". And the difficulties in enforcing such a law are readily apparent.

So where do we go from here? The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's Division of Protection is responsible for enforcing the boating laws. Their reports show that about 96% of the boats checked have the required safety equipment on board. We've largely succeeded in getting the horse to the watering trough — but how do we make him drink. To paraphrase, how do we get the boating public to take their feet off the life jacket and wear it until they're ready to get in their car, and to be especially sure that children do this.

Buoyant seat cushions will support a person in the water. But just try putting it on while trying to stay afloat. It's no small task. That is if you're lucky and a cushion is available, and you can get to it. If you are tossed in or fall into the drink, the cushion usually stays in the boat, so what

good is it to you under these conditions?

This aspect of boating accidents we should give careful consideration and keep foremost in our minds: most of the victims simply hit the water and disappear of they're not wearing safety devices. Why does this happen? Maybe they hit the boat on the way out, or the impact from hitting the water may stun the victim temporarily. Some safety officials think even experienced swimmers may panic or go into shock under these conditions, and the ensuing helplessness quickly becomes hopelessness.

Most boating emergencies arise suddenly and unexpectedly. Non-swimmers suddenly faced with water immersion have little chance to survive unless they have a life-saving device attached securely to the body. According to statistics, the experienced swimmer doesn't stand a much better chance without flotation gear. To permit a child to be around water without a life jacket securely fastened; much less on a boat, would seem to be folly of the worst kind.

It is probably true that we cannot legislate safety, but it is true beyond doubt that we can determine responsibility. A boat owner who has passengers in his craft has at least a moral responsibility to make certain everyone is using the safety devices he has provided in accordance with boating regulations. In dealing with human life, a moral responsibility can hardly be distinguished from a legal responsibility. It would seem, even to the layman, that a boat owner permitting unsafe conduct on his conveyance is inviting tragedy, and a court decision may declare him legally responsible for the injury or loss of life. Even if no prosecution results, the knowledge that you were morally responsible for a human death inflicts its own punishment — the sentence is long and there is no parole.

Safe Boating Week runs from June 28 — July 6. Neither safety nor religion will do you much

good if given lip service one day a week or one week out of a year. But if boaters will make a conscientious effort during this week to learn and apply the rules of safe boating, Whittier's saddest words will have less chance for personal application.

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