

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Teach Them For Life, Not Just For A Job

There's a great commotion right now among those interested in public education over a recommendation from the Research Triangle Institute.

This private nonprofit group was commissioned by a state legislative study sub-committee on vocational education to study vocational education in public schools.

After talking to about 130 educators, business people and college professors, and poring over studies from other states, the RTI group suggested phasing out job-specific courses in public schools, leaving the teaching of these to community colleges. High schools would teach only a general overview of vocations in clusters that students would select in the 9th grade.

The uproar that greeted this proposal has been something like the reaction to a tax increase or insults to motherhood. "Lots of kids will drop out if they can't take auto mechanics!" "Community colleges aren't equipped to handle that load!" and "How can young people in every county get to a community college?" are samples of the outcries.

And an unspoken wail was surely this: "What will happen to the vocational teachers?"

In response, let's think a minute about the purpose of public education and the realities of the working world.

It's always been an assumption among educated folk that public schools exist to prepare youngsters to live in the world; not to make a living, but to communicate through reading and writing, understand other people and the world around them, do day-by-day computations, and perhaps learn and appreciate creativity. The best gift the schools could make was to teach thinking skills.

Somehow, the current generation of youngsters have not come out of 12 years of schooling with all the above, or with very much of it. They are totally unaware of geography and history, just for starters. They have trouble making change. Forget Beethoven and basic physics.

But they have picked up some skills. They (and we use the average young person) can drive a car, drink of beer, smoke assorted substances, and be thoroughly assertive with teachers and parents.

They may also have learned a specific trade, such as hair-dressing or carpentry, and that's really what kept many of them in school at all.

Now, what kind of life can we foresee for this composite student? He or she can presumably get a job performing that one task learned in high school.

But how about continuing to learn through reading? How about participating in community life or government, even by informed voting? How about enjoying symphonies, conversation, travel among other cultures? How about an understanding of his/her world through a knowledge of history and religion?

Then, the day comes when this vocational graduate loses that one job. Perhaps there's a glut on the market for carpenters. Can he/she do anything else?

These are some of the reflections that prompted the study group to make its proposal. It felt, first of all, that high schools had their hands full teaching students to read, write, compute and think at any adequate level. To push for specific job training in addition was to the detriment of those basic skills kids would need all their lives at every moment.

Then, they believe a more general education in a vocational cluster would be of far greater benefit in the marketplace. Learning building trades instead of carpentry would mean several options for employment.

There are all sorts of problems associated with this kind of change, should it come about. Vocational teachers would have to be retrained to teach the clusters; community colleges might need time and more equipment to prepare for the quantities of students they'd have; and some kind of transportation plan might need to be worked out to enable young people who wanted job-specific courses to attend community colleges.

But solutions could be found for all these problems, as well as the drop-out question, obviously the most worrisome of all.

George Kahdy, technical adviser to the sub-committee now considering this proposal, said there's little chance the whole recommendation will be passed. It's politically controversial, and it does need work.

But he said it promises the hope of a closer look at present vocational education courses, some of which may be obsolete. And an even more valuable look may be taken at the present high school graduate who stayed in school only to take "shop." A study of that young person's life through several years following graduation could be instructive.

It is, indeed, important that every youngster stay in school. But it's just as important to ask and answer the question, "Why?"

Crystal-Ball Talk Is Powerful Stuff



Marjorie Megivern

The psychics are in the limelight right now, predicting strange and wonderful things for 1987.

A Fayetteville woman, for instance, said in a radio interview this morning that last week's flooding would continue. Ugh! Bad news!

I can foretell the future as well as these self-proclaimed psychics: I think I'll take a crack at it. After all, no one really checks up on such pronouncements, do they? It's just an entertaining way to start a new year.

How about a look at Brunswick County, 1987? I found a nearly-round rock alongside Highway 17 that is almost clear as crystal, although scratched and dirty. Let me stare at it and think a little. Here we go!

Aha! My first vision is that of a man in a bed, writing furiously. It's Billy Carter, our county manager, whose doctors sentenced him to a year of convalescence.

While he writes his memoirs,

David Clegg is momentarily running things, but what's this? Clegg is tapped for a role in the movie, "King Kong Goes To Bolivia," and the county will be turned over to Benny Ludlum.

Meanwhile, I see agriculture turned topsy-turvy during the year. Milton Coleman will introduce rubber plants as an alternative crop to tobacco farmers, prompting tire manufacturing throughout the county, and exasperating Congressman Charlie Rose, who had finally wangled a tobacco export embargo.

What are these cheering crowds? Ah, it's LaDane and Odell, but they're not in Ocean Isle Beach. No, it's Washington, D.C., and they've just announced their entries in the race for national office. By-passing state government, Mayor Bullington will decide to run for President, with her dad as running mate. The platform of the Bullington-Williamson ticket will be "Four-linging 17 will bring prosperity to the entire nation."

What's with the public school scene in early 1987? Every school building is dark, parking lots empty. Now I see... everyone's at the hospital. Kids and teachers and administrators are lined up for several city blocks around the Brunswick Hospital, getting their monthly drug tests. By the time one is complete, it's time for the next, so school has been cancelled for the time being.

However, education is not being neglected. Dot Worth will serve as

roving teacher, giving instruction along the line in Christian Love, followed closely by Kate Brooks who adds the admonition, "Just Say No!" Kids are understandably confused.

My psychic energies are fading. Now, I see only brief glimpses... Alan Holden hosting a beach party for day visitors, a hurricane erasing Bald Head Island, "Butch" Redwine incorporating Grissetown, and the county commissioners all appearing on the Today show, explaining how they eliminated the property tax.

This last vision so blinds me, I've dropped my rock, er, my crystal ball. Gosh, this is powerful stuff! I would never have imagined such dramatic happenings all in one year.

Make a note of it, folks. Clip this column. But in December, don't try getting in touch with me. I'm planning an extensive world tour.

The Ultra Tide

BY FORREST WHITLEY

The raging waves of the Ultra Tide, boosted by the gusting wind, Crashes the coastline's sandy shores, too powerful to comprehend. She splinters docks and piers alike, and tosses vessels as children's toys. She pounds the bulkheads and claims the dunes, with a fearful thunderous noise. Helplessly we watch as she surges inland, and shatters all that's in her path. Never has a weapon been built by man, with such a devastating wrath. Now, after a while, the water recedes, leaving its spoils behind. We shudder to think of the damage she's done, and of the destruction we'll find. But after a while, we'll clean it up, and the structures will be replaced. And a stranger here a year from now won't know we've been defaced. He'll bask in the sun by a mirror-calm sea, and take pleasure in the gentle wind. He'll give no thought to the Ultra Tide, but we know that she'll come again.

A Display Of Power

By now I'm sure everyone of us is aware of the astronomical high tides and the storm damage of New Year's Day. Some have said damage was the most severe since Hurricane Hazel in 1954. In front of our house at Holden Beach, erosion was the worst I've seen and our steps over the dunes gave way after 11 years and having withstood two hurricanes and several other winter storms.

We watched the 10- to 12-foot waves breaking as far out as we could see through the driving rain. White caps were on the horizon and waves were crashing hard against the dunes. Each time a wave came in some sand would move out with it and the face of the dune would crumble a little more. The next wave would take the loose sand and more would crumble. At about 8:30 that morning, which was supposed to be high tide, we were faring pretty well, having lost some dune but no damage to steps, decks and walkways.

We went in for dry shoes and clothes and decided to put on rain suits and stay on the deck to watch the tide recede. The promised wind had begun to blow from the east and the water increased its fury. Steps broke loose east of us on the beach and came rushing by as if on a conveyor belt.

Suddenly we heard another crack among the sound of crashing waves and rain beating on slickers. A nearby deck gave way where the supporting 4x4s were standing free of the washed away dune. Another crack and a thump as the deck broke loose and moved toward us.

A surge from a big wave drove it into the steps next to us where it rested momentarily. Another wave or two and those steps began to



Bill Faver

move. Two more power-filled waves tore them loose. The deck floated free and sailed on by. The steps crashed into our steps and it took 10 to 12 minutes before the force pulled them along toward the west.

The same thing happened for the next four or five houses until the beach was clean and the dunes clipped back as if a huge bulldozer had come along and sheared off the dune. It all lasted about an hour and a half and the wind shifted to ease the pounding.

With the change in the wind, the gulls, pelicans and terns returned to fish in the debris. Water was still too high for the sandpipers and willets. But around 1 o'clock when the tide moved out and the lumber-strewn beach appeared, the smaller birds were in a feeding frenzy searching for small crustacea, worms, and other life exposed by the rough water.

Holden Beach was lucky in relation to some other places in our area. The display of power reminds us that the sea claims what it wants and there's not much stopping it! Perhaps this can help us realize we need to give the ocean its space and place our homes and activities far enough away to allow dunes to erode and build and erode again. The power is there.

It Was A Great Little American Car

Tuesday a week ago, the last of the Chevettes rolled off a GM production line, and for me it was almost a time of mourning.

The Chevette was a spunky little car: it handled well, accelerated pretty well for a 4-cylinder compact car and was one of the easiest cars on today's market to service and maintain.

When it was first marketed, the Chevette was the first of the "small" cars produced by an American company and it became an instant success, a best-seller so to speak.

But soon the market was flooded with competition; too much, I guess, for a simple little car with a simple price tag.

Seventeen months ago—it seems almost like last week—I reluctantly sold my little Chevette.

I'd bought it in Morganton after my Pontiac, which had only 70,000 miles on it, died on the road and couldn't be resuscitated. I borrowed a vehicle from work, drove to the nearest car lot, asked to see their cheapest car. The salesman said what I wanted was a Chevette or its even cheaper cousin, the Scooter or some such thing that barely had wheels.

The only Chevette on the lot, however, was loaded with gadgets and carried too high a price tag. He called around and found MY car about 150 miles away. It was delivered the next day.

I'd never driven a straight-shift, but the salesman said it was easy. After a jerky 50-minute ride around a county that had more than its share of hills and railroad crossings, I had to agree. With the Chevette at least, it was easy.

Still test-driving, I scooted around the corner to the bank where the chairman of my board of directors was vice-president. With a check from him for \$3,800 and the balance of my savings account, I paid the salesman and drove off the lot smiling. A beautiful relationship had begun that would last for more than five years.

You may remember the car. It was a bright metallic blue four-door hatchback. By last summer the trim was peeling off the front door side panels. Driving home from Bolivia one after-



Susan Usher

noon, I saw strips flapping in the wind from both sides of the car and stopped to see if the Chevette had finally begun to fall apart.

About two months earlier, the knobs used to roll the front windows down had both popped off the same day, each striking a thigh with a solid thump and half scaring the daylights out of me.

It was time; the little blue Chevette had given years of reliable service. That, of course, excludes the five-month period back in early 1981 when the battery had to be disconnected each time the car was parked. Otherwise, the lights came on by themselves and sapped all the juice.

Working nights at the time was a real adventure, with a choice of games: take a chance on getting mugged while reconnecting the battery at 2 a.m. on a downtown street in Raleigh or gambling on whether the car would have any juice. After six trips to two different mechanics' shops and about \$300, they fixed it with a \$4 part, having overlooked the obvious.

In July 1985, though, our journey together ended. I'd been putting off a decision for months, letting maintenance and repairs ride while I debated whether to buy a new car or somehow find the money to get the Chevette rebuilt. Three times in one month I'd had to be towed, and in this business, a reliable vehicle is an absolute must. The Chevette no longer fit the bill.

With more than 150,000 miles on it, it was beginning to show some age. It needed brakes and tires, plus some other stuff I wasn't so sure about and wouldn't have understood if someone had explained it. Later on, I learned

(See GREAT CAR, Page 5-A)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How Much Is A Life Worth?

To the editor:

How much is a life worth? To be brutally frank, astronauts are going for approximately \$750,000; hostages, almost any price up to an including a possible national scandal; but military people are a real bargain, a "regret-to-inform" telegram plus six months pay is their worth.

All these people are taking overt actions which could put their lives at risk, so why should there be such a disparity when death or capture occurs?

I do not take issue with the government guaranteeing benefits for the astronaut families, but the same guarantees are not being afforded the children of marines who died in Lebanon. There is no question that all efforts should be made to free the hostages, but ransom should not be paid for civilians unless the same payments are available for military prisoners.

A sailor was murdered in Bierut and a plane load of soldiers were killed near Iceland, and what a price, a "regret-to-inform-you" telegram and six months pay. Oh, there was a wringing of hands and statements about heroes, but then we dropped the subject—almost as quickly as we forgot the marines in Lebanon.

But, what the hell—these grunts, doggies and swabbies knew what they were getting into when they enlisted. Now all you guys knock that crap off because those telegrams are expensive, but to your country, your death is a real bargain.

These words, ideas and statements are all mine. I accept responsibility for them, but admit that I probably would not have taken such action had it not been for a number of calls and conversations over the past few mon-

ths. The one most memorable was a teen-age marine widow who was expressing concern for the future welfare of her two children.

Jess Parker
 Brunswick County
 Veteran Service Officer

Thanks For Caring

To the editor:

On Christmas day Mr. and Mrs. Norwood Ezzell opened their restaurant in Wilmington to senior citizens. This was done in memory of Mr. Ezzell's mother and daddy.

This was a very kind and generous deed and made us realize that there are people who care for the older generation. The food was delicious, the entertainment was delightful, but most of all their kindness and generosity were greatly appreciated.

To those of us who have no family to share Christmas with, it was a joyous occasion. Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Ezzell, for caring.

Mary and Frank Richardson
 Boiling Spring Lakes

Thanks, Neighbors

To the editor:

I would publicly like to thank all of my neighbors in Sunset Lakes who so graciously gave their time and money to help repair our dam which completely washed out on Christmas Eve night.

A special thanks to Odell Williamson, who not only gave us his time and money, but who let us use his road through private property, our only exit and entrance to our property during this emergency.

Glenda Crook
 Board Member, Sunset
 Lakes Homeowners Assn.