

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## A Good Project Gets Off To Bad Start

There's no question that this area needs a group home for the mentally retarded, and that the Town of Shallotte is the best suited location.

Therefore, it is a shame that residents of the town have not opened their arms in compassionate welcome. Instead, residents of the neighborhood where the home is to be built (John Street, off White Street in mid-town) are echoing that familiar saw, "But not here, not in MY neighborhood."

Unfortunately—and this may be why the project wasn't publicized sooner—similar experiences in other communities such as Whiteville suggests reaction probably would have been the same anywhere else in town—unless the home were placed in an area where no residential neighborhood currently exists. And that would defeat the purpose of a group home, which in part is to place these adults in a regular neighborhood.

Local residents' reaction reflects a different and perhaps more serious problem: a lack of education and understanding on the part of the community as to the nature of mental retardation and of the group home concept.

Southeastern Mental Health and the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) could have gone a long way toward easing some of the residents' concerns before now. They could have held an educational forum for the neighborhood or presented a program at a Shallotte town board meeting on existing group homes—and their neighborhoods. While most people don't check with their future neighbors before building a house, that's what the neighborhood expected in this instance.

But none of the above happened. Instead, approximately one year ago, the sponsors began looking at property and took an option on a lot that happened to belong to a town alderman. While some residents of the neighborhood probably feel Alderman Jody Simmons should have told them what was up, why should he have? It was a private property transaction, not town-related business. There was no conflict of interest, no "favors" to be gained.

It is important also for town residents to realize that the ARC and Southeastern Mental Health didn't have to come before the town board of aldermen at all regarding the project: It requires no rezoning or special planning conditions.

They came, as they should have, as a matter of 1) common courtesy and 2) because they wanted to inform the community about the project and reassure concerned residents.

From their perspective, if definitely not the community's, this step was probably "early" since the federal funding for the John Street project was just awarded and the home won't be occupied until 1990. Once built it will offer semi-independent living for six adults, adults with educational handicaps, not behavioral problems that could be disruptive to the neighborhood. Adults who now must live outside the county to enjoy any sort of independent living.

For now, though, nothing those agencies can say will probably make much difference in how town residents feel. It may be that only time and personal experience will ease their concerns and hurt at not being involved in the location decision.

Again, look at Whiteville. Strong objections were raised about that city's first group home, Columbus House on West Columbus Street. But there have been no problems and objections are no longer heard. The same can be expected here.

Shallotte Aldermen should do the right thing, should react in compassion, and put no pressure on Simmons, the ARC or SEMC to change their plans for the home.

At the same time, both the residents of the neighborhood and the organizations sponsoring the group home need to come together. SEMC and ARC took the first step in inviting John Street area residents to visit a group home and to learn more about the people who will eventually be their neighbors. Understanding conquers fear.

In turn, it's time for residents of the John Street community to explore what their real feelings are. Once their anger at the approach taken in establishing the group home is set aside, chances are their hearts will open to their new neighbors.

A good example to follow might be that given in Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

## New Role For Buddy?

The South American route is getting expensive for Eastern Airlines. U.S. Customs has fined the flier \$1.89 million over a two-week period for two shipments of cocaine found aboard flights from Colombia to Miami, Fla.

Seems like it would be cheaper for Eastern to invest in a drug dog, like the Brunswick County Sheriff Department's "Buddy," than to keep paying such fines and reaping such notoriety.

Or perhaps the sheriff's department could loan them Buddy himself, since his schedule may not be as full as the department would like it to be.

## Who Says 'President Dukakis' Sounds Strange?

Early last spring when presidential candidates were a dime a dozen, I made the off-hand remark that Michael Dukakis didn't stand a chance to be elected simply because of his unusual name.

At the time, "President Dukakis" sounded as strange to me then as the thought of "President Quayle" has sounded ever since J. Danforth got the Republican vice-presidential nod last summer.

But then, my observation came long before the Duke's sister, Olympia, won an Academy Award and Dukakis himself captured the Democratic nomination for president. Now I'm ready to eat my words.

Whether Mike was elected or not, he turned "Dukakis" into a household name—one that is no more unusual than the names of some of our greatest presidents. And I have the telephone book to prove it.

Using the local Southern Bell direc-

Rahn Adams



tory as my source, I found that seven of our presidents' 35 different surnames are not listed in the Brunswick County and Wilmington areas.

There are no listings for Coolidge, Eisenhower, Fillmore, Garfield, Lincoln, Truman and Van Buren, although a couple of close substitutes—Lincoln and Van Beurden—are in the book.

Of the 28 other presidential surnames, I found 13 namesakes, of sorts, for our country's chief executives.

They include John Adams, James Buchanan, James Carter, Gerald Ford, William Harrison, Andrew Jackson, Andrew Johnson, John Kennedy, James Monroe, Richard Nixon, John Tyler, George Washington and Woodrow Wilson.

And there are some close calls. Instead of Ronald Reagan, Franklin Pierce, James K. Polk and Herbert Hoover, I found Ronald Ragan, F.R. Pierce, Jane A. Polk and Horace Hooper. Close but no cigar.

Oddly enough, James Carter is the most popular presidential name I found. At least five of them live in this area. If all five men voted for their namesake in 1980, that accounts for about half of Carter's support in North Carolina that year.

Two John Adamases are listed, which is appropriate since two presidents shared that name. My father, whose name is John, never had problems with it—unless you count the Lebanese neighbor who

automatically assumed Dad's middle name was "Quincy" and called him that for two years.

But it's amazing to me that there aren't more presidential namesakes in the directory. You'd think a good-sized area like this would have more than just a handful of patriotic parents.

Take Wilmington, for example, which has 156 Wilsons but no Woodrow Wilson; 127 Taylors without a single Zachary Taylor; 57 Pierces and 23 Pearces, none of whom are named Franklin; and almost 1½ pages of Johnsons with nothing remotely akin to Lyndon.

Wilmington also has Monroes, Tylers and Harrison, but the namesakes I mentioned earlier are all in Brunswick County.

The port city does have one thing that we don't, though, and that's a Roosevelt—not a Teddy or a Franklin D., but an Eleanor.

And in case you're wondering, I couldn't find a George Bush or Lloyd Bentsen among the Bushes and Bentsens in the phone book, and there are no Quayles or Dukakises at all.

So what does all that say about the impact of the candidates' names on this past Tuesday's election? Probably nothing—although I still can't figure out why two gals with great names like Lenora B. Fulani and Wynonia Brewington Burke couldn't pull more votes.

### LETTERS

## Attend Advisory Board Meeting

To the editor:  
 The Brunswick County School System has formed an advisory committee for the purpose of developing a sex education course for the county's fourth, sixth and eighth grade students. This is a much needed program.

However, as a member of the advisory committee, I am concerned by the rather sharp division of opinion among members of the committee. We have been unable to reach agreement on such basic issues as curriculum content, supportive class activities and media materials to be used.

I am concerned that the makeup of the board may not truly represent the wishes of the parents in the community. The only way parents can be sure this important and sensitive material is taught in the way they would want it is to become informed of the decisions being made at this time.

Advisory committee meetings are open to the public. The next one will be held Nov. 15 at 6 p.m. at Bolivia Elementary School.

Carolynn Skipper  
 Route 2, Leland

## Area Fortunate To Have Hospital

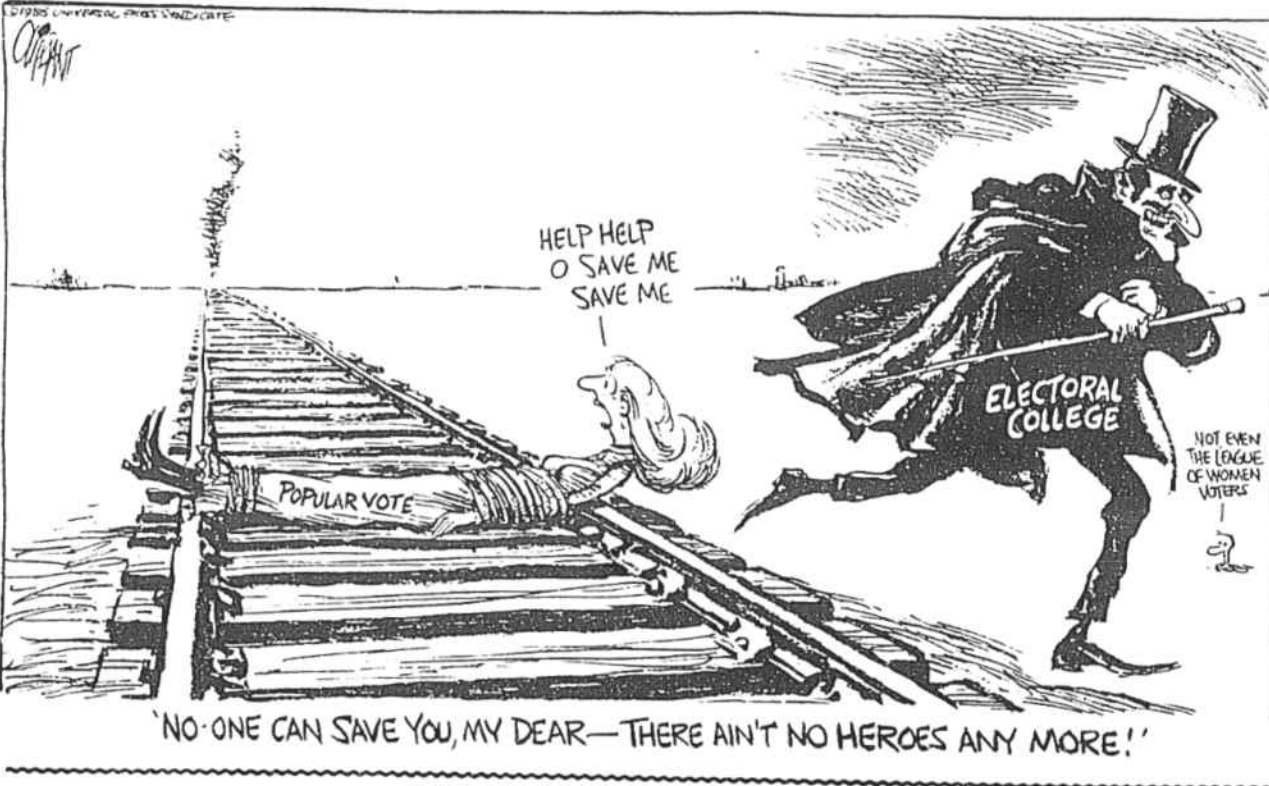
To the editor:  
 This is in praise of your fine, up-to-date and caring Brunswick Hospital. Your doctors and hospital staff are compassionate and understanding.

When I returned to Holden Beach for our fall visit, I found I needed immediate medical attention.

All of you in Shallotte and the surrounding area are most fortunate to have such a fine hospital and caring medical professionals.

Helen O. Stewart  
 Pispah Forest

(More Letters Following Page)



## Frankie Wouldn't Harm A Fly

All of this controversy over the proposed group home for mentally retarded adults in Shallotte has taken me back to my wonderful childhood years.

Times were great when I was growing up in the 1970s outside Philadelphia. My only cares in the world, it seems now, were when the next sandlot football game would be played and how I was going to get my soccer ball off the roof of our ranch home.

The days seemed to last forever back then, and the neighborhood was one, big, happy family. In addition to all the "normal" kids, there was one mentally retarded man named Frankie.

I say man because that's exactly what he was. Nobody ever knew how old Frankie was, including Frankie himself, but looking back on it, I'd have to say he was about 30 when I was about 10.

Anyway, he was a 30-year-old man with the mental capacity of an eight-year-old.

Frankie wasn't too sharp when it came to books and stuff like that, but when it came to caring and gentleness, he was unmatched. Frankie would do anything for anybody, whether he knew them or not.

The thing is, he knew just about everybody in the neighborhood. Frankie loved everybody, and everybody loved Frankie. The kids loved him, the parents loved him and nobody felt the least bit threatened

Doug Rutter



with him around. He was a big brother to us kids and a son to every parent in the neighborhood.

After one minute with Frankie, you knew you had made a lifelong friend. He was that kind of person.

As a young boy, I admired Frankie. It wasn't his determination to make it despite his handicap that I looked up to, but rather his athletic prowess.

The thing I most remember about Frankie was that he was strong as an ox. He could sock a baseball a country mile or carry the football and four of us little ankle-biters on his back for 50 yards before we eventually pulled him to the ground.

You see, all of the kids who grew up around Frankie, myself included, didn't look at him any differently than we looked at anyone else. Even though we knew he was mentally retarded, we never thought he was a bad person. We viewed him as just another one of the gang.

Although he lived at home with his parents and cousins, Frankie was employed at the local rest home for years and years. He worked in the cafeteria, forever it seems, and as far as I know, he never had any pro-

blems coping with "normal" people on the job.

Frankie was a big part of our neighborhood. He was an institution, if you will, as much as some of the families on John Street are an institution in Shallotte.

It's a crying shame, though, that the people of John Street aren't willing to at least listen and learn what the group home concept is all about.

The people of John Street, it seems, are so stubborn and set in their ways that many refuse to recognize any difference between mental retardation and mental illness. The people who would live in this group home would have learning disabilities, they would not be raving lunatics.

The people of John Street say they have nothing against helping mentally retarded adults, but their blind opposition suggests that they are cold people who want nothing to do with folks who unfortunately are just a little different than they are.

The people of John Street have chastized the representatives of Southeastern Mental Health who are trying to bring the group home to Shallotte, when they should be commending them for doing something which will make Brunswick County a better place to live for everyone.

The people of John Street fear that a pack of psychopathic killers will be moving into and disrupting their quiet neighborhood, when in reality, that notion couldn't be further from the truth. A house full of Frankies couldn't harm a fly.

## It Was Another Great Trip To Clemson

It was a trip I'd been dreading for weeks. One could hardly imagine how badly I didn't want to go to Clemson.

Memories of the monsoon-like Labor Day weekend '87 trip kept crowding into mind, especially after the weekend forecast. And there were all the other things we could be doing: the oyster roast for my Aunt Dale and the Brunswick Toastmasters family social, even this column.

However, it was my fault we were going. Back in mid-summer, when Don's old gang began planning their social calendar, a Clemson game was a must. In an effort to be a good sport, I went along, asking only that it be the Clemson-Carolina game and that we buy tickets in the Carolina section. That was well before the start of UNC's '88 football season.

In any event, I was stuck; major attitude adjustment was in order. Luckily, after a wet and woolly



Susan Usher

night, Saturday dawned bright and fair. Off to the game we went, 3½ Clemson fans and 1½ Carolina fans (Don was nice enough not to root entirely for Clemson), and a bucket of the Colonel's chicken.

Our seats were in the north end zone—apparently as far away from the Carolina boosters' corner as our friend George could arrange with the ticket man. There were only five Carolina fans in the entire section and that was counting Don.

I had casually mentioned missing Carolina's Peach Bowl appearance while a coed there. George quipped

back, "Today you get to see them play the Orange Bowl." Sure enough, except for that one tiny corner of beautiful Carolina blue, Death Valley was a sea of orange. To top it off Saturday was "Spirit Blitz" day, which meant that everybody in the stands had free white and/or purple shakers to boost the Tigers.

The first half was a game, with the Tigers getting across a field goal and the Tar Heels the first touchdown.

But the second half was almost a Clemson blitz. In the last 1½ minutes of the fourth quarter, Carolina managed to get across their second and the game's last TD.

The Tigers won the game by the three-touchdown spread predicted by my dear husband (he was being kind at the time, he thought), but they had played clumsily throughout the first half. In the entire game, they'd had only one play worth really shouting about, an interception and breakaway run for a gain of about 45

yards that positioned them for a touchdown.

Frankly, the weather was more exciting than the game, at least for this Tar Heel fan. Midway through, some overwrought Tiger in the bleachers above began pelting my Carolina blue jacket with ice—or at least that's what I thought was happening. It was really a small hailstorm, followed shortly thereafter by winds of northeaster strength.

As the game came to a close, lightning was flashing to the north and west of us and the wind was picking up. The sky looked downright menacing and I would have sworn that it too had an orange cast.

Downtown was closer than our van, so we dashed for it. We made it inside TD's (formerly Lester's) just ahead of the first few drops and just in time to grab a table for two for the five of us.

It was delightful.  
 See you next year, George.