

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Teaching Democracy—Again

Starting next fall, North Carolina Schools will be teaching the basic concepts of democracy. Again.

Such teaching used to be taken for granted, like pledging allegiance to the U.S. Flag at the start of each school day. But not in recent years.

This revived interest in teaching the foundations of democracy has won a new title: civic literacy. It joins the ranks of literacy and cultural literacy as one more area U.S. citizens have been found lacking in.

Starting next fall, as local civic literacy advocates Jess Parker and Robert Sellers should be pleased to hear, local boards of education must require, at the high school level, the teaching of the nation's founding and related documents. These are to include at least the major principles in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and the most important of the Federalist Papers.

Furthermore, in order to receive a certificate or diploma of graduation, students will be required to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the nation's founding and related documents.

The legislature also provided that the state's public school system will develop curriculum content and teacher training required to teach civic literacy.

The curriculum will include a review of the contributions made by Americans of all races during the period in which our nation was founded.

Civic literacy. A generation or two ago the idea of having to tell the schools to teach it wouldn't have been necessary. It was there already. But in more recent years we have gone to a cafeteria menu style of developing American citizens: introduce students to political systems, ideas, etc., and let them choose for themselves.

But, as columnist William Raspberry noted in a March 23, 1987, item in *The Washington Post*, "What that view overlooks is that the free market of ideas presupposes a political system committed to keeping freedom alive. Freedom presupposes democracy."

In other words, just because we've got it doesn't mean we can take it for granted. Those concepts must be taught, learned, practiced, and most of all, understood, valued and appreciated.

The institution of civic literacy education in the public schools is a first step in that direction, and a good one.

It is not enough for citizens to know how to read and write and function on a job to guarantee survival of a democracy; citizens must understand not only their rights, but their responsibilities to society, to fellow citizens, as well.

Democracy isn't perfect, but it happens to be the best that's available. If we want to preserve it, as we should, civic literacy—the teaching of democratic principles—is a must.

The Quality Of Life You Save Could Be Your Own

It would be easy to jump on the old battlewagon and join the fight to stop a high-rise bridge at Sunset Beach. I like a good tussle now and then, even if there isn't much chance my side will come out on top.

Like Durham lawyer James Maxwell, who spoke at the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association's recent "Save Our Bridge" rally, I think my "patron saint" is Don Quixote—the idealistic but impractical storybook hero who jousts with windmills.

I know how to lose. As a youngster, the only time I stood up to the neighborhood bully, he punched me in the nose. After I quit crying and got all the blood cleaned up, I de-

Rahn Adams



decided he wasn't such a bad guy after all.

The only winning team I ever played on was my elementary school's Pee Wee football squad. We had a 6-4 record that season, only because we scored one decisive win when the opposing team's bus broke down on the way to the

game and they had to forfeit. I'm sure we would have trounced them anyway, even if half of their line-men *did* have mustaches.

As a grown-up loser, I root for the Atlanta Braves no matter how many games below .500 they are. I betted that Pete Rose wouldn't be banned from baseball for gambling. I enter the Publishers' Clearinghouse Sweepstakes each year without subscribing to a magazine. I voted for Michael Dukakis but am glad now that he didn't win.

And several weeks ago when I heard about the SBTA's stepped-up campaign to oppose a high-rise span at Sunset Beach, I couldn't help but buy one of those neat "Save Our Bridge" T-shirts that were in vogue

at the group's Labor Day weekend get-together and are sure to become collector's items.

I haven't worn mine yet. Knowing how Brunswick Countians like to shorten names—UOB for Utility Operations Board, SAD for Special Assessment District, CATS for Citizens Against Toxic Shenanigans and SOS for Save Our Shellfish—I'd hate to be called an abbreviated version of "one of those 'Save Our Bridge' people."

While I'm sure my neighbors at Ocean Isle Beach and the fine folks at Holden Beach will disagree, I have always thought Sunset Beach was the most charming island in the South Brunswick Islands chain.

Whenever I promote our area to upstate friends who are considering a visit, I tell them that each island's atmosphere is attractive but different. I describe Holden as the "family" beach, Ocean Isle as the "swinging singles" beach and Sunset as the "earth person" beach.

And there was a lot of earth person talk at the "Save Our Bridge" rally, since the guest speaker was Orrin Pilkey, one of the country's top marine geologists. "I urge you to stick to your guns," he told the gathering, "and define progress in your own way..."

While I respect concerns about the increased development that might come with a new bridge, I would be more sympathetic to the "Save Our Bridge" cause if Sunset Beach Town Council—which is elected to represent the town's citizenry—shared the SBTA's position.

The community already has the tools to "define progress" in its own way through its governmental authority. The density and type of development can be controlled through zoning. A building height limitation can be set to keep high-rise hotels and condominiums off the island.

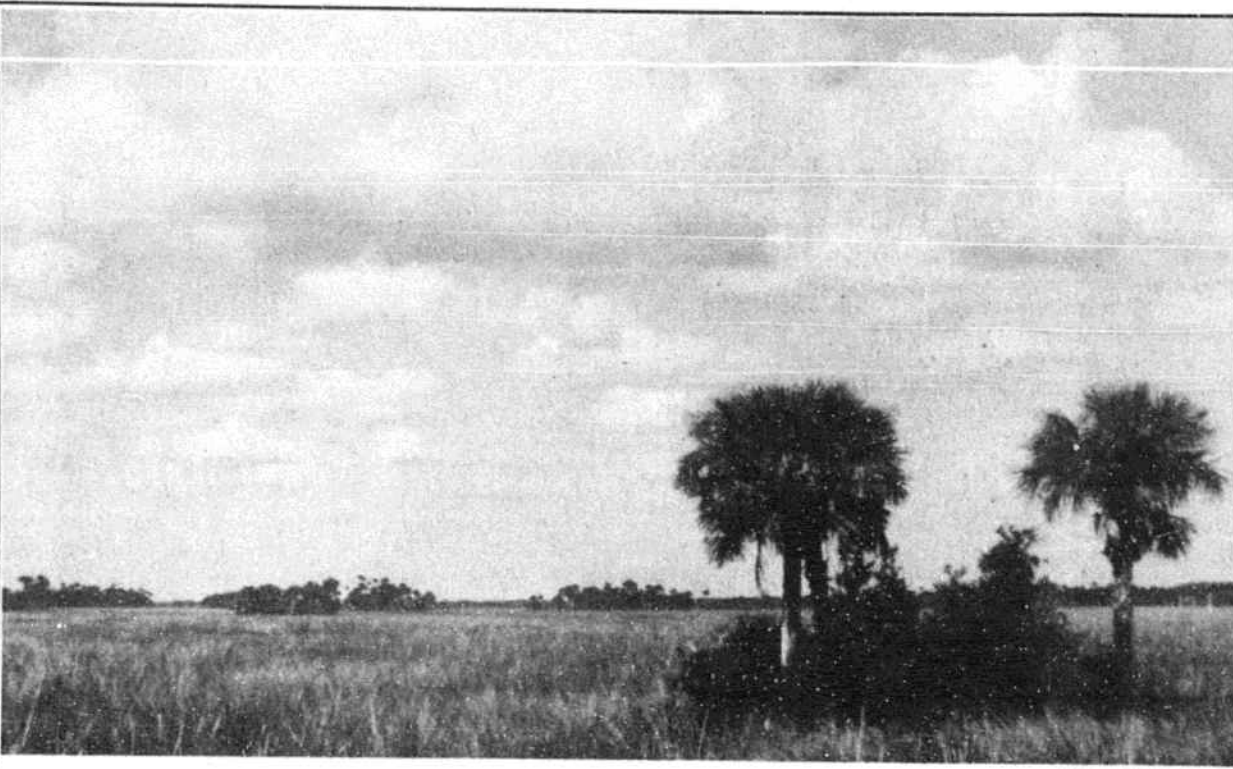
Along those lines, an argument can be made that non-resident property owners have no official voice in town government since they are registered to vote elsewhere and can't participate in Sunset Beach elections. Maybe they deserve some say.

However, full-time residents are the ones who have a year-round stake in local affairs. Part-time residents can gather up their beach toys and go home whenever they please.

The unique pontoon bridge is—as some say—a symbol of the "quality of life" at Sunset Beach. Long waits in traffic when the bridge is open or broken down are merely "minor inconveniences," they add.

I wonder, though, how much that quality of life is diminished and how major that inconvenience becomes when the one-lane bridge causes a police car, fire truck or ambulance to lose precious seconds crossing onto the island from the mainland or when islanders must take their chances on the lurching bridge in the high winds and heavy seas of a hurricane.

There comes a time when even Don Quixote must lay down his lance and let the windmill turn.



THE EVERGLADES continues to be caught in the conflict between conservation and development.

Pioneer Of The Everglades

BY BILL FAVER

Occasionally we read about someone who has spent a lifetime in speaking out and defending a particular point of view. Sometimes we agree with them and sometimes we don't. Those with whom we agree are considered smart and statesmen; we consider those who differ from us as uninformed or even stupid.

One Champion of the Florida Everglades is considered by friend and foe alike as an intelligent, informed, dedicated environmentalist and author.

Marjorie Stoneman Douglass is now in her nineties. She became concerned about the Everglades when the government began selling land at low cost to anyone who would drain and develop it. The vast stretch of freshwater marsh seemed of little use to anyone in its undeveloped state and the State of Florida's plans to dike and drain gave her cause for alarm.

She studied the situation and felt no one was considering the ecosystem as a whole and what would happen if any of it was disturbed. Her book, *Everglades: River Or Grass*, opened the eyes of many people to the proposition that the sawgrass and hammocks were suspended in a shallow river flowing

from Lake Okeechobee down across the tip end of Florida. The Indians had known it; they had called it "Pay-ha-okce," meaning "river of grass."

Mrs. Douglass was in the midst of efforts to preserve the area known as Everglades National Park, dedicated in 1947 from efforts begun in 1915. She was in the fight to keep from developing the Miami Jetport in the area in the 1960s. She is now speaking out about the effects of sugar cane production and farming in the area between Lake Okeechobee and the Park. She has written and worked to save Big Cypress Swamp and other vast areas north of the Park.

Her efforts have been successful, but the battle is far from being won. The age-old conflict between short term economic gain and long term environmental degradation is still in effect in the Everglades. She is quick to point out the problems and to say, "Why should I care if the sugar companies make money or not; I'm talking about the death of a unique part of the world."

I doubt that Marjorie Stoneman Douglass will live long enough to see the Everglades out of danger. The conflicts will continue and we will likely lose the uniqueness of the Park and the Everglades. Such is the cost of progress. We can be sure it would have disappeared long ago had it not been for this Pioneer of the Everglades.



FAVER

A Getaway Spot? Let Me Tell You About...

"The Getaway Spot." That's how the Baja California Fiesta Sweepstakes describes its 3rd Super Prize: "5,000 square feet of land in Mexico's Baja, noted for its warm water, sandy beaches and great fishing."

It goes on to assure would-be "winners" that the prize is "not a time share but a transferrable Deed of License (emphasis added)." How tempting. Who doesn't dream of their own little getaway spot, romantic, quiet, simple... It sounded too good to be true.

Decide for yourself on this delightful Getaway Spot.

I was one of the lucky winners of this prize, along with at least one fellow Brunswick County resident and possibly hundreds more.

Looking over the fine print, it was a "fine" prize indeed. For a mere \$28.50 a year (at least until 1993, when prices are due to go up and undetermined amount) the winner gets the use of this lot through the year 2019. And the fee for the first six months is paid by the management, cutting your first year cost to a mere \$14.25.

The would-be development is located 8.4 miles north of the town of San Felipe. Just look for the visitor's center.

The lot just might (no guarantee) have a view of the Sea of Cortez, with "sunny skies, warm water, clean air, lack of congestion, general sense of freedom and well-being..." You can get good Mexican beer for 24 cents per bottle when bought by the 20-bottle case. And El Dorado Ranch Estates is in the process of building a private beach club, pool, jacuzzi and tennis courts for the enjoyment of you and your guests. It sounds like the perfect getaway, almost.

However, what El Dorado Ranch Estates doesn't have is even more

Susan Usher



impressive, especially for us back-to-nature folks: No water, no sewage, no roads, no electricity, no telephones, no deed or permanent title to the property.

You can camp on your property (no open fires allowed, however, "without a proper enclosure" or without sufficient water or extinguishing equipment to control a fire.

The brochure also hints that you could build on your lot, following the native's example and installing a septic tank, portable generator (must be "muffled" and a water tank for the roof. Water supposedly can be purchased inexpensively from the local water truck. But is it sanitary and suitable for drinking? Who knows.

I do know you don't get water or mineral rights to the property. The Land Use Rules and Regulations state, "Some easements may be required from Management for water or its transportation." Mmmh. Wonder how much that costs?

And there's no mention of what happens to the lot—or to any improvements you've made on it—after the year 2019, when your right of usage will be terminated.

Meanwhile Management states its intent "to build a self-contained resort community where American and Canadian tourists and retirees can enjoy the flavor of Mexico without having to venture outside of the community."

Your home away from home.

The deed of license is transferrable before then, for a small (\$100) fee. But Management warns that now isn't a good time to consider selling your right to use the property, though your deed of license is almost certain to rise in value in the future.

Management had indicated a copy of the sweepstakes offer had been mailed to the "Consumer Protection Agency in your state." Indeed, it had been sent, Judy Bishop of the N.C. Attorney General's office confirmed in a recent telephone call. I wasn't the first to contact her, she said.

"I think everybody in North Carolina must have won one of those lots," she said. "We've had I don't know how many phone calls." So much for an El Dorado Ranch Estates as a true "getaway spot."

I suspect it truly isn't a good time to try to unload this property. Management is giving "deeds of license" to too many people. If all of them accepted, a "getaway" it wouldn't be. It would be too crowded.

And, so far as Consumer Protection Specialist Billie Holcombe can tell, the offering is legal. It's a jump-in-at-your-own-risk situation, she's advised. Adds Bishop, "You just have to realize that it (El Dorado Ranch Estates) isn't developed at all. They say they're going to develop it, but there's no guarantee."

"It's like a big desert, I understand," she concluded.

I think I'll just settle for a long walk in the Green Swamp.

And for a mere \$100 plus \$14.25, you can have my deed of license to El Dorado Ranch Estates. If you wait long enough, there might be (no guarantees) a return on your investment.

Meanwhile, happy camping in the Baja.

So You Wanna Buy A Used Car

I finally broke down last week and started looking for another vehicle.

After spending a goodly sum of money over the last nine months to keep the old Chevrolet Citation running, I decided it was time to invest a few dollars in a different set of wheels.

The upkeep on the 1981 Chevy was mounting with something major going wrong every other month. At some point, you just have to decide to cut it off. After toxic fumes started seeping through the heating vents last week, I decided that the time had come to say goodbye to Barney—the first car I ever owned.

It wasn't an easy task, especially for someone who has been accused of "hoarding" money. But by the time this newspaper hits the streets, I will hopefully be driving a "newer" car than I have been for the past two years.

I say "newer" because I wasn't in the market for a new car. First of all, I don't think I could afford it. And second of all, I think I'd be too afraid to drive a new car.

Anyway, one of the first things I learned after stepping onto the used car lot was that most vehicles don't have the prices written on them. That's not cool.

If you go into a grocery store, it's easy to find out the cost of a box of Cocoa Puffs. The price is either on the box or written on the shelf below.

Why don't they do the same thing with automobiles? I'll tell you why. If the price was written on the car, there would be no need for car salesmen. The car salesman is the only one who knows the price of the car, so he has to be there as you stroll through the lot.

For better or worse, I quickly

Doug Rutter



found out that car salesmen are very easy to come by. All you have to do is drive into the car lot, get out and start walking around. Before you've peeped through the window of the third vehicle, a well-dressed salesman will appear with his hand extended in friendship.

Pulling from my experience as a consumer in search of the perfect used vehicle, I have thrown together a list of traits one is likely to see in a car salesman.

Before I go into all of the gory details, I'd like to make it perfectly clear that I'm not trying to offend anyone. We all have to make a living. My description of a car salesman is a compilation of the worst traits of the salesmen with whom I have had to deal. You are unlikely to find any single car salesman that demonstrates all of these characteristics. If you do, however, I would advise you to avoid him.

—Car salesmen are friendly. They want to know everything about you. They want to know where you live, where you work, how many goldfish you have and any other related tidbits. Do they really care? Probably not.

—Car salesmen are devious—or crafty—depending on how you look at it. They're always trying to get you to sit down in the driver's seat, presumably so they can lock you in until you give in to their price. Also, a smart car salesman will never tell

you the price of a car until you have told him how much you plan to spend.

—Car salesmen always know what's best for you. They know what kind of car you need better than you do. They know you need a high-performance sports coupe with AM/FM stereo cassette and the works. They also know that you need high monthly payments to improve your credit rating.

—Car salesmen always get a lot of business from your hometown. After you've told the salesman where you live, he will invariably say, "Oh yeah, we get a lot of business from down there. We had a couple in here the other day from your area. I can't think of their name right off, but I gave 'em a real good deal."

—Car salesmen are optimistic. They always look on the bright side of things. Just because a vehicle is seven years old and has more than 100,000 miles on it doesn't mean it's not a steal at \$3,995. Car salesmen think older cars with high mileage are "classics" that will run forever.

—Car salesmen don't think the older car you're trying to trade in is a "classic." They think it's worth about half of what you were hoping would be the least you would get out of it in a trade.

—Car salesmen don't get along with the competition. Tell a salesman that you like what he has but want to look somewhere else and he's likely to reply, "Friend, he'll never give you the kind of deal I can give you. Just look at this beauty over here..."

The way I figure it, car salesmen and politicians have a lot in common. They're always trying to sell you something that you're really not ready to buy.