

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Thanksgiving, 1989

Thanksgiving is the most American of our holidays. The first New England day of thanks for a harvest was probably in 1621, observed by order of Governor Bradford of Massachusetts.

Colonialists reportedly went out into the woods and shot several turkeys. The Indians entered the settlement with several deer. The settlers and Indians feasted together.

The first Thanksgiving Proclamation issued by a President came in 1789, a thanksgiving for the adoption of the Constitution.

As a national holiday and religious observance, Thanksgiving probably dates from 1863, when Abraham Lincoln—acting on the suggestion of Mrs. Sarah J. Hale—issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation.

Since that time, the observance has been adopted in all the states of the Union.

We in the United States have special reasons for thanksgiving in 1989. It comes at a time when democracy is winning out over much of the world, and when the danger of nuclear war is being greatly reduced.

What If Thanksgiving Were A Year-Round Holiday?

I ran across a great "thank-you" card a while back. I found it in one of those novelty shops that sells crazy coffee mugs and absurd bumper stickers and wacky stationery for mildly deranged folks like myself.

The card was printed by a company called Poison Pen Greetings Inc., or something to that effect. It was blood red with a red envelope. On the front were the words, "Thank you..." Inside, the message ended with, "...for nothing."

Naturally, I snapped up the card and zipped it off to an individual who I felt had done me wrong in a particular situation. I've been known to do uncool things like that now and then. My wife says my "German temper" is to blame—either that or temporary insanity.

I think about that card from time to time—not necessarily about the person to whom it was sent but about the sentiment behind it. Thank you for nothing—a saying that, surprisingly enough, dates back to the early 1600s in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

The older I get, the more I doubt that I could ever have absolutely



Rahn Adams

nothing to be thankful for in even the worst situations. As far as old sayings go, there's the one about how "every cloud has a silver lining." The difficulty is being able to see those silver linings while you're standing in the rain.

Speaking of clouds, take Hurricane Hugo, for example. On Sept. 21 at 5:30 p.m., you would have had a hard time convincing me that there was anything good about this ugly old storm that was forcing me to evacuate my Ocean Isle Beach home and to leave most of my toys behind.

Hugo's silver lining, though, was the reminder that life is more important than material possessions. Our washer, dryer, air conditioner, lawn mower, grass trimmer and arti-

ficial Christmas tree that "died" in the storm might have disagreed, but I learned that they could be replaced.

That's about as serious as I want to get in this column. There have been many considerably less grim events so far in 1989 for which I can give thanks. Here are some examples from each month:

January—Brunswick County Commissioners began the year with work sessions that were supposed to help them get a jump on 1989-90 budget work. At the time, I was bored stiff by the special meetings (that continued through late June, by the way), but they later helped me appreciate the fact that county budgets aren't formalized overnight. It takes at least one night and the better part of the next day for the commissioners to work out a secret budget deal over the telephone.

February—My wife and I moved from Calabash to Ocean Isle Beach. I hated the idea of leaving all of those fine seafood restaurants behind, but I was comforted in the fact that as soon as the weather warmed up and I bought a new pair of binoculars, my eyes would be feast-

ing on bathing beauties galore.

March—The weather warmed up, but my wife kind of cooled to the idea of me gawking at other women on the beach. I was thankful that I hadn't purchased a larger pair of binoculars, considering where my wife threatened to put them one sunny afternoon.

April—We had to pay Uncle Sam so much in taxes that my wife, whose birthday is April 15, finally understood why I didn't buy her that candy-apple red Porsche convertible she asks for every year. Instead, I bought her a faded red 1961 T-Craft motor boat without a rain canopy. I even sprang for a quart of black anti-fouling hull paint. Her exact words were, "Thanks a lot, pal."

May—A brief, violent storm at Ocean Isle Beach ripped the roofs off about six houses and shook our humble abode by its pilings the same night that tornadoes wreaked havoc elsewhere in the Carolinas. Boy, did I feel foolish a few days later when the weather service said our disturbance was only a "down-burst." I was just glad that I hadn't already bought the island's "I Survived (insert disaster)" T-shirt concession.

June—A Brunswick County investigative grand jury indicted 13 truly unlucky individuals on cocaine trafficking charges. Many of us breathed sighs of relief that the list included no lawmen, county officials, town leaders, prominent businessmen or eldest sons of any of the above...for a change.

July—It was a struggle, but I survived the Fourth of July celebration at Ocean Isle Beach without being struck by any stray skyrockets from the strand and emerged from the weekend with only a strange case of twitching and stuttering. Shell shock, I guess. (For added effect, insert at least two extra S's in front of every s-word in the preceding paragraph, then read it aloud to a friend...Now you know how I felt on July 5.)

August—I marked my 30th birthday. I would say I "celebrated" it, but I try not to exaggerate too much in my column. For example...

September—Hurricane Hugo. If you remember the piece I wrote on hurricane names last spring, you'll remember that I predicted Hugo to be the "Big One" this year. I'm glad it was just a lucky guess, though, because my boss said I'd be in a heap of trouble if he thought I actually had anything to do with bringing that storm our way.

October—After being ignored for over two years, I finally received my official "Welcome to Shallotte." My nearly brand new car was ravaged in a senseless rear-end collision on U.S. 17. Luckily, I wasn't driving the classic 1974 AMC Gremlin I traded in last year.

Since November isn't over yet and December is yet to come, I'll refrain from making assumptions or predictions about any other dark clouds with silver linings this year. Let's just hope for the best.

Besides, with the county commissioners talking about scheduling extra work sessions in the coming weeks, I'm having an awfully hard time keeping myself from taking another job or two at them. They are, after all, five of the finest, most up-standing, hardest-working folks I've ever been forced to spend hour after hour after hour with.

So on this Thanksgiving, I bid you adieu with this heartening quotation—selected at random—from Mark Twain's *Following the Equator*: "Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not be successful." Amen.

Unload The Baggage; Set Yourself Free

I was almost 30 years old before I could say out loud to anyone outside the family that one of my parents had been an alcoholic. And until a few days ago, there wouldn't have been a column like this, especially in my hometown newspaper. For one thing, that's not the kind of the thing you routinely volunteer; and second, I didn't really think it made a difference. Everybody has problems, that doesn't make them different, right?

That was before I helped put together a conference on Women and Alcoholism with a woman named Jamie Norton, who later went on to lead a state organization for ACoAs, as we're called, Adult Children of Alcoholics. At that conference I began learning that there were other people out there like me, deadly serious about themselves and everything else, alternating between being ultra-responsible or running away, overly-controlling, unable to get a long-term project off the table, always overreacting. The list varies from person to person but it goes on and on.

Alcoholism and cancer had always been my greatest fears. My dad died as a result of the one disease; my mom, the other. The odds seemed pretty good that one or more of us girls would either become an alcoholic, marry one, or end up with cancer of some kind. Maybe two out of three.

But it doesn't have to be, because we've all three learned to deal with these things in our own way, in our own time.

It hasn't always seemed so straightforward. As the youngest in a family of three girls, I have fewer memories than either of my sisters of my father sober and healthy, and less sense of what a close family life might be in the traditional sense. All of my life it seemed I alternated between disappearing between the covers of a book or the limbs of a tree in McMilly Swamp, and doing whatever it took (good or bad) to gain the family's or somebody else's full attention. Poor Mom!

I didn't really know how to be a friend and sabotaged most relationships pretty early; subconsciously I guess that was one way to make sure other people didn't have a chance to hurt me.

Hurt and pain were something we knew about first hand, no matter how hard she tried to keep it otherwise. We loved each other but still there was the constant tension of nerves on edge, people functioning at their limits. And there was violence. We learned it from each other, physical and emotional/verbal abuse. We used it as both weapon and defense.

One of my earliest images is peeking through the bedroom door into the living room and seeing my father, in a drunken rage, taking his belt to one of my sisters until a trickle of blood ran down her leg. I don't know if she remembers it or not; it's the kind of thing you try to forget. I was three years old and won't ever forget it; I swore at the time he would never do that to me, and he didn't. He died when I was 12.

It wasn't but about a year later when Mama found out she had cancer. She died when I was 18. All that means is that I know what it's like to grow up in a home that doesn't work like the ones you used to read about in books, a home where children do adult things and have no one to share their feelings with except the family dog.

I'm learning to let go of much of the baggage I've dragged around all these years—the anger, the sense of having been victim as well as cause. I'm still a ways from the calm I know can come by taking each day as it comes, but I'm on the road and liking the trip a lot.

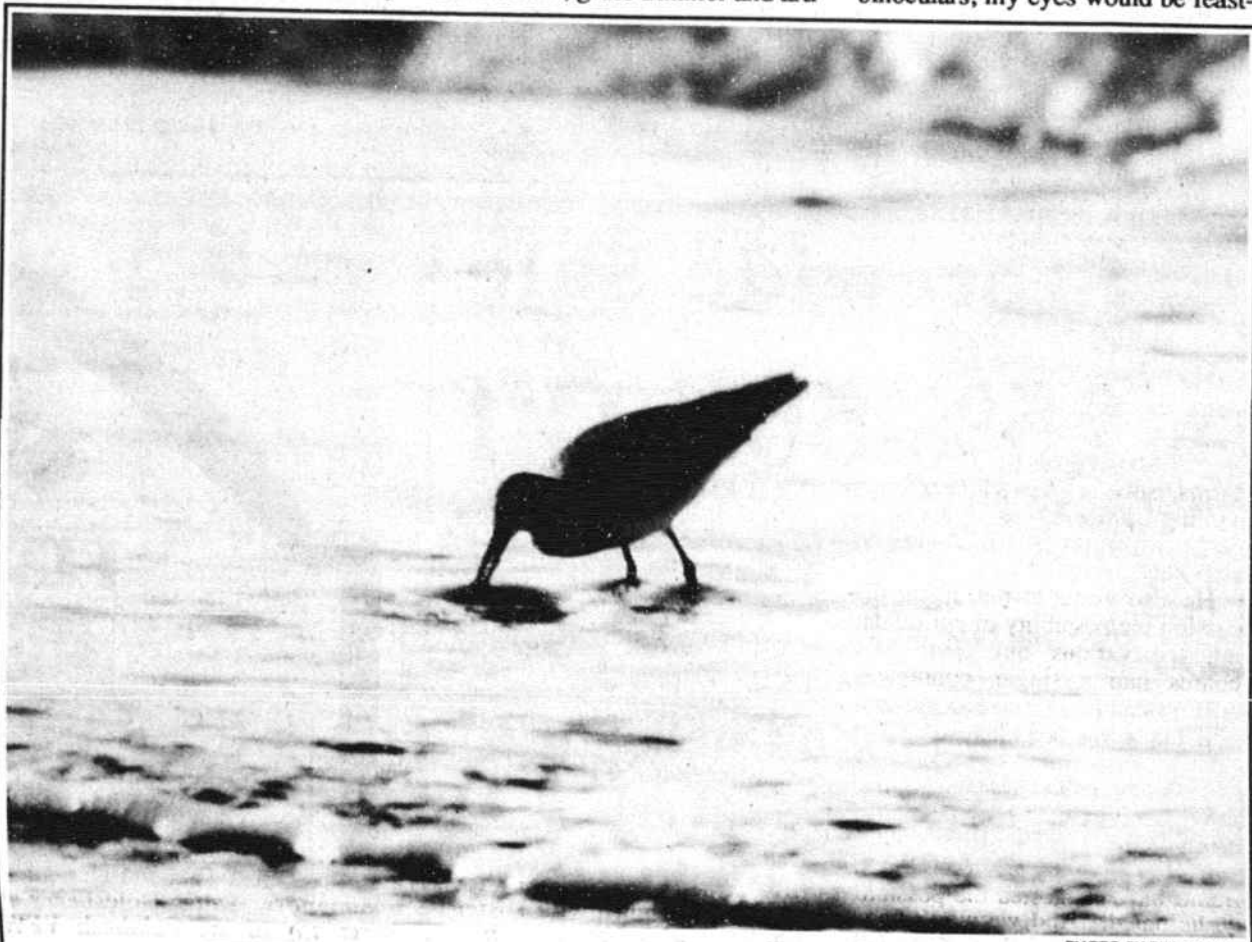
Others who have lived in the type households that evolve from alcoholism, abusive relationships, chronic illness, can break free also. Knowledge gives us the power to change ourselves. Once you confront something and learn all you can about what happened in the past and what can happen as a result, why then you're on the way to healing...and freedom!

Without that, I could never have married and have that marriage succeed, because I could never have trusted another person to the degree that this or any other intimate relationship, such as close friendship, requires.

For those of you who recognize some piece of yourself in this column, you don't have to go it alone. Help is out there! An Adult Children of Alcoholics chapter is being formed here. The group meets Mondays at 7:30 p.m. at Seaside United Methodist Church near Ocean Isle Beach. Someone to talk to about it is as close as a call to the church, 579-9136.

And for you women who have been in or are still in abusive relationships or homes, Hope Harbor Home (754-5726) offers empowerment groups that can help you and your family.

Susan Usher



WHAT DOES SAND MOVING for dune building do to these creatures? PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

We Know So Little Because We Seldom Ask

BY BILL FAVER

I watched with interest the sand-moving activity going on at Holden Beach last week. Large earth movers were scooping up sand at the water's edge and moving it along the dune line to be pushed up into new dunes.

The frenzied activity to move sand while the tide was out included going into the water to gather sand. I'm sure no one was objecting to this good effort by the town to rebuild the dunes lost to Hurricane Hugo. As an oceanfront lot owner, I certainly did not. But there were some questions not asked that bothered me.

What was happening to the intertidal organisms that live in the zone between low tide and high tide? Usually they can move along with the tides and their swiftness is their clue to staying alive. There was no way they could anticipate or escape the big caterpillars. Those who lived through the scooping action were left high on the beach in dry sand and likely did not survive.

What was happening to the ghost crabs who live in

the area where sand was being deposited? Addition of extra sand and the effect of the earth movers probably caused tunnels and burrows to collapse, trapping many of these critters. Some may have been able to dig out or to shift locations on up in the dunes. Others probably perished. Because of the warm weather not many of them would be hibernating and their activities were certainly disrupted.

What effect will the sand moving have on the fish and birds we usually have in the fall? We'll be able to tell about this question. We can see if changing the availability of mole crabs, coquinas, worms and small crustacea at the water's edge cuts down on the fish and birds who come here to eat them.

Answers to questions such as these are hard to get. One of the reasons we know so little about the answers is that we seldom ask the questions. We assume that our activity will be beneficial to us but will do little harm to the other creatures with whom we share this special place.

Even if we did know the answers, though, we probably would feel the need to replace the dunes far outweighed the need to protect a few million crabs and worms and clams. And then we wonder why there are fewer fish and fewer birds and less shells than once we had.



FAVER

Save Me A Seat On The Sofa

Over the past two years, I figure I've been to about 50 meetings in Calabash Town Hall. For most of those meetings, I was able to sit comfortably on the soft blue sofa that adorns the conference room.

If you've never been to the town hall, you have no idea what I'm talking about. So let me tell you a little about it. It's one of those three-cushion specials that invites you to sit down, and when you do you never want to get back up.

Without a doubt, it's the most comfortable seat in the county as far as this reporter is concerned. And believe me, when you sit through as many board meetings as I do, you learn to appreciate quality furniture.

Anyway, I fear my days as a sofa-sitter are coming to an end. The new regime is about to take over Calabash, and I suspect there may be more public attendance at the town meetings than there has been in the past.

What it boils down to is that I'll probably have to compete for my spot on the sofa that has gone un-contested for more than two years. Anything to complicate my life.

It was somehow appropriate that the old Calabash Town Council couldn't meet last week. It would

Doug Rutter



have been the council's final meeting if enough board members had shown up.

Although it showed signs of greatness at times, the old Calabash Town Council often reminded me of a horse with a trick knee. It made some good runs but rarely crossed the finish line without falling down a few times.

Some of the folks in Carolina Shores think all of that will change now that they have five representatives on the commission. They're probably right. It will be interesting to see what the new board has planned for what some people have dubbed the "New Calabash."

I guess it wouldn't be right to talk about all these forthcoming changes in Calabash without mentioning something that won't change. May-

or Doug Simmons will be back for another four years.

Without a doubt, Mr. Cook was a qualified and capable candidate. But I'm glad the people of Carolina Shores found it in their hearts to put their faith in Mayor Simmons.

He knows the people of Calabash—old Calabash that is—and should help blend the two areas together. Personally, I would have missed his fishing and hunting stories.

While we're on the subject of elections, you may be interested to know that my background as an investigative journalist is paying big dividends these days. You guessed it, I found out who voted for Batman in the Holden Beach election. Sorry, but I can't reveal the name of the voter in question or the source of my information—which in this case are one and the same.

Anyway, only time will tell what the new regime has in store for the people of Calabash. I have a feeling that all of Calabash, both new and old, will benefit from consolidation in the long run. But of course, that's only my opinion.

The only thing I'm sure of right now is that I better get to the town meetings early if I want a seat. I wonder if I could reserve a spot on the sofa.

Best Of Press

Few of us get what we deserve, for which most of us should be thankful.

—*Enquirer*, Cincinnati

Some minds are like concrete—all mixed up and permanently set.

—*Herald*, Altoona, Iowa

If you can look happy when you're not, you'll get along all right.

—*Observer*, Vail, Iowa

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