

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Time Of Reckoning Is Here And Now

It has become obvious that Brunswick County faces some heavy decisions regarding disposal of the county's waste.

Mismanagement, miscalculation or some unfortunate series of events have left the county with a landfill that is nearing capacity and no approved alternative landfill in which to turn.

The current landfill off U.S. 17 between Supply and Bolivia has perhaps no more than two years left before it is full. The county is seeking state approval of a neighboring tract in which it could divert demolition material and extend the life of the current sanitary landfill to perhaps five or six years, according to county engineer Robert Tucker.

If the neighboring site is approved as a demolition waste site, the county will successfully buy a little time to locate, purchase and prepare a new landfill site. If the state declines to approve the demolition waste site, the county's problem will be severely compounded, because there will be very little time to obtain a new landfill site.

In addition to hopefully obtaining approval of the alternative demolition waste site and getting a new landfill site, the county is going to have to deal with the possibility of establishing tipping fees at the county landfill and the possibility of establishing a countywide recycling program.

Setting tipping fees is a big step for any county. The fees require that users of the landfill pay for that use and, in essence, is a user fee. It means that those who use it most—from municipalities to large industrial and construction users and others—will pay the bulk of the cost.

A tipping fee comparable to those in neighboring counties also means that landfill users from those counties will not dump their waste at Brunswick County to avoid the fee. If such dumping is done here, as is expected by county officials, Brunswick County taxpayers are footing the cost for the dumping of waste from neighboring counties.

Like a tipping fee, instituting a recycling program is a major step and no easy chore. However, with the diminishing availability of waste sites, numerous counties across the state have turned to recycling programs, most of them successfully. And Brunswick County, with its high water table, has a greater problem with suitable waste sites than most counties.

Perhaps Brunswick County has simply postponed dealing with a problem that simply appeared to be years away. If that's the case, the county must now deal with the fact that time is running out and the problem cannot be postponed any longer.

The answers never are easy and in this case some of the elements of the answer may be hard for county officials and residents to swallow. But the time of reckoning is here and now.

### Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address. Under no circumstances will unsigned letters be printed. Letters should be legible. The Beacon reserves the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

## Make Your Decisions By Choice, Not By Accident

Every now and then I have a fit of conscience and wonder if I shouldn't have pulled a trailer onto the family's south 40 back home, gotten a job at the furniture plant and pursued a life of peaceful coexistence with my ambitions.

But when you think you're smarter than the average factory worker and have a straight-A average in school to supposedly confirm your suspicions, you generally want to be noticed by the people whose names and pictures are in the newspaper every week—the folks who own the big houses and have the important jobs and are driven to what are considered by society to be great accomplishments.

That was my situation 10 years ago when I dropped out of college in my junior year. I was tired of wasting my time and was ready to dive head first into the so-called real world. Patience was not one of my virtues. And I guess I believed the myth that I could have anything I wanted in life, if I worked hard enough for it.

I've worked hard—probably harder than most of my old friends who have become successful professionals—but I'm really no closer now to my dream than I was the day

Rahn Adams



I tossed my bookbag in the closet and tore up the class schedule for what would have been my next semester in school. When you're 20 years old, a semester seems like a big chunk of your life.

My dream was to be a writer, a great writer. The next Great American Novel was waiting to be written, and I had faith that I was the man for the job—enough faith to gamble that I could find a steady day job that would allow me to sit home at night behind my typewriter and record for posterity whatever pearls of wisdom a 20-year-old college dropout could possibly impart.

To paraphrase Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," I took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference. But what Mr. Frost didn't tell us are that

there are no shortcuts from one road to another once a particular route has been undertaken, and there are no bypasses around the inevitable roadblocks that stop traffic ahead.

I've finally decided that the only sensible way to reach my planned destination is to turn around in the middle of this winding side road and backtrack to the main highway. To a 30-year-old college dropout, a semester or two doesn't seem like such a long time.

If I sound as though I'm suffering through some sort of major mid-life crisis, you're only half right. Having been in the news business for the better part of the past 10 years, my entire adult life has been a series of day-to-day crises, both major and minor.

Not only have I had to worry about personal problems, I've been paid to struggle with the trials and tribulations of everyone from the Average Joe to the Better Than Average Biff. News reporting can be an interesting and stimulating job, but it is not for the faint of heart—especially since neither Joe nor Biff generally appreciates anything negative he reads about himself in the newspaper.

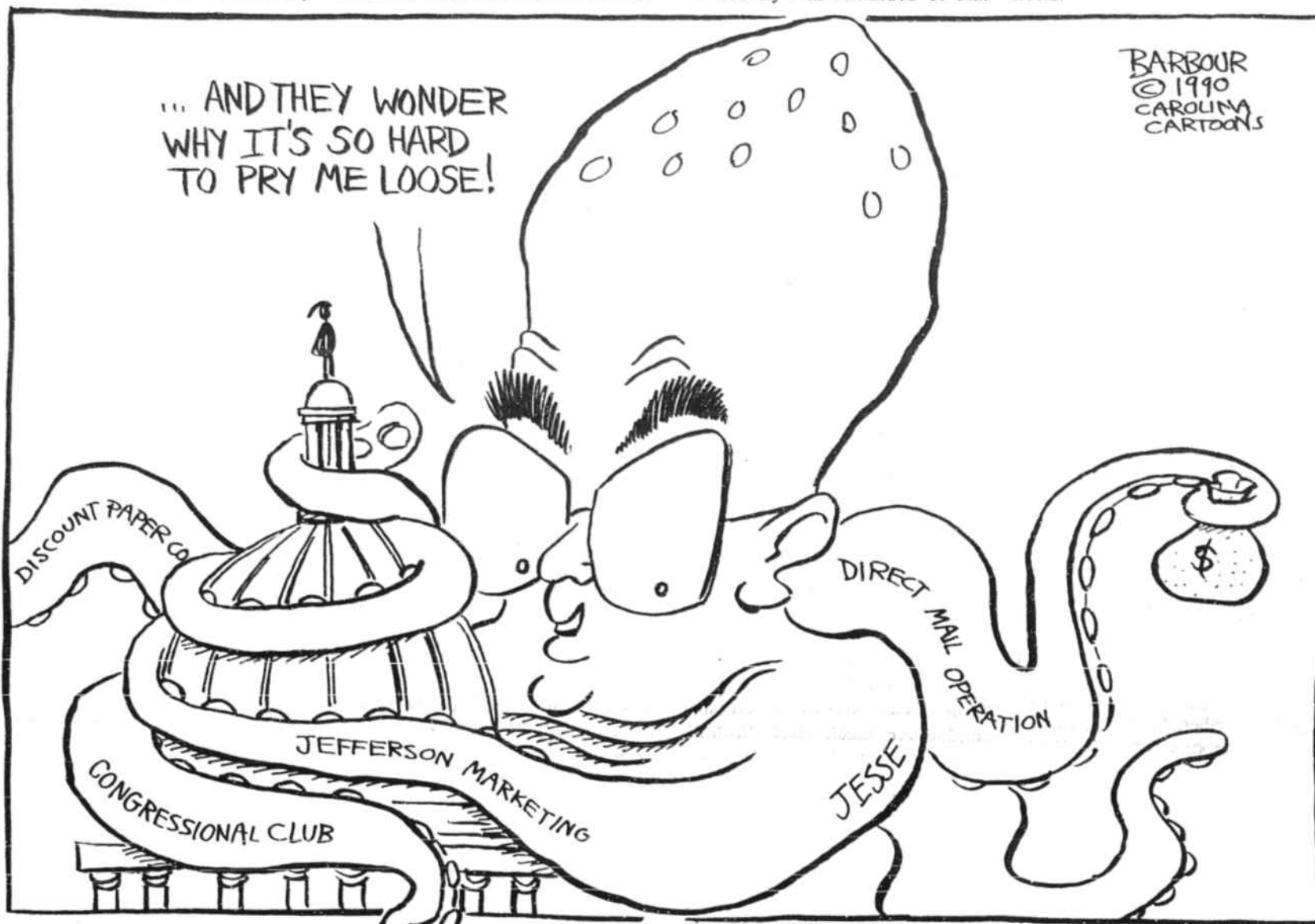
I recently was reminded of that

fact when an individual whose toes I stepped on in this column tactfully admonished me to judge not, lest I be judged. Actually, what the individual said was more like the old Alistair MacLean quote, "Make your enemies by choice, not by accident." I've found that the same is true with career moves.

Before I conclude, look up in the left-hand corner of this page and note the heading, Opinion Page. And notice that there also is considerable space here dedicated to Letters to the Editor. Just as I have expressed my opinions about everything from oat bran to the Sunset Beach Bridge, you—the reader—have had the opportunity to voice opinions of your own. And you know what they say about opinions, whether yours or mine.

I've enjoyed writing this column over the past three years, and I also appreciate the valuable insight and experience I've gained by helping to cover both the good and bad news of Brunswick County for the Beacon. Still, at times I've felt like the ugly girl at the prom: They let me drink the punch, but no one will ask me to dance.

And I'm itching to kick up my heels.



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Don't Spoil This Very Special Vacation Spot

To the editor:  
 Having come to Sunset Beach from Winston-Salem pretty regularly since 1961, we have noticed many changes here on this beautiful and very special and unusual island. When we first came down here we stayed at the Sunset Strip Motel. Later with our young daughter and

her golden retriever dog, we tent camped on the east end of this island, the cost of which was then only \$2 per night and had a difficult time finding the manager to pay him before leaving.

Later throughout these nearly 30 years we have rented cottages up

and down this beach area for various family gatherings. Two years ago we invested in an oceanfront duplex with eight other share owners.

We marvel at the quiet and friendly atmosphere here and hope this very special vacation spot will not be spoiled by the proposed

high-rise bridge. Perhaps a solution might be to widen the bridge to allow two traffic lanes which would not prove as costly as the proposed bridge.

Bill and Libby White  
 Sunset Property Owners  
 Winston-Salem  
 (Letters continue, following page)

## Reflections After Wandering Through The Solid Waste Maze

I've spent several hours over the past week or two sorting—make that trying to sort—my way through the county's solid waste maze. I got lost in the process, but did come out with a few thoughts about what I'd seen and heard.

Starting off, the question was simple: I just wanted to know how the Clean County Department, the Keep America Beautiful (KAB) steering committee, the county's solid waste advisory board, and the solid waste department fit together, so I could include that tiny piece of information in a news story.

It seemed logical to me that these agencies should come together under some sort of "solid waste" umbrella since each is tackling the problem from one aspect or another. It also made sense that there should be some one person who could sit down and tell me how Brunswick County is addressing its solid waste problem. Not so, at least not exactly. Most of their roles are still being defined. The only link this hodgepodge of agencies appear to share other than trash is that all four report to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners through the county administration.

Acting County Manager David Clegg comes as close to being the one person who knows about solid waste as I could find, though there are plenty of folks with viewpoints and wishes. Last Tuesday he tried over the telephone to explain to me how each group fits into the overall solid waste picture. It would take a

chart to properly describe this fragmented set-up, but I'll try with words only.

First, the solid waste, or landfill department as it is often called, is charged with operation of the landfill, collection system (green box sites), and existing procedures that relate to solid waste. The department also has a litter officer, whose charge is enforcement of the county's litter ordinance, such as it is.

Second, the solid waste advisory board is no more, disbanded after its initial year and replaced just last week with a three-member "blue ribbon" commission, all former members of the advisory board. The new panel will be charged with studying specific issues related to solid waste, but commissioners haven't yet decided what those issues should be.

Another twist in the solid waste maze is Robert Tucker, the county's new staff engineer. He is Clegg's "point man" for technical aspects of Senate Bill 111. This sweeping piece of legislation mandates that local communities, among numerous other requirements, be recycling 30 percent of their waste by early 1993.

Clegg says right upfront he's been hesitant to lead the county into commitments relating to the bill that can't be gotten out of easily. Why? I can even answer that: Because it could all change in the near future.

This means that while local municipalities are waiting to see what the county is going to do before

Susan Usher



leaving the gate, the county is waiting to see what the state is going to do. Frustrating? You bet, especially for volunteers who are anxious to see recycling take off in Brunswick County and are willing to do their share to make it happen.

State legislators are under a lot of pressure—from local governments and others—to take a second look at the bill. The lobbyists generally seem to agree that, among other things:

- 1) the state shouldn't have mandated so much without also providing the means (i.e., the cash) to do it with;
  - 2) the state should have given communities a chance to do things voluntarily and in their own way;
  - 3) the General Assembly didn't realize what it was doing when it passed S.B. 111 in the first place; and
  - 4) given the state's budget shortfall and that it's an election year, state cash for pulling off S.B. 111 is not likely to appear during the coming fiscal year.
- Fourth, the Clean County Department happens to be the vehicle

through which the county applied for its KAB affiliate status. Its role in the solid waste picture is also still being defined. The KAB committee serves the department in an advisory capacity only.

Clegg described KAB as a "wholly owned subsidiary" of the county, whose task, from his point of view, is mainly public education. That doesn't mean, he pointed out, that the KAB board can't recommend ordinances and policies to the county commissioners. It just reflects what he feels should be the group's major emphasis.

From the national KAB's point of view, ongoing public education is absolutely essential, but as just one aspect of the complete "KAB system". Most KAB affiliates are heavily into litter prevention and into voluntary recycling. As of 1988, their role was also expanded to include—by demand of local governments—involvement in long-term solid waste disposal planning. Affiliates now share information with the public and with local governments on solid waste disposal alternatives, though it doesn't advocate one method of disposal or recovery over another. Each community, once armed with the facts, must decide that for itself.

Most KAB affiliates are free-standing, not-for-profit organizations. The permit application for our affiliate, now in the certification process, came through the county. And, as Clegg suggested in last Tuesday's telephone conversation,

that special relationship has its pluses and minuses.

On the plus side, the relationship gives the KAB the county's official support, money to get started on, and a direct avenue for making recommendations and suggestions through the Brunswick County Clean County Department and the county commissioners.

Those are big pluses, given the KAB's mission, but it takes big pluses to offset the minuses, at least from where I sit.

The way I see it, the relationship also means that the KAB has no choice but to move more slowly than some of its participants would like. Government seems to work that way, especially when dealing with something new, something that by its nature has to involve more than one agency's "turf" and something likely to cost money. C'est la vie.

The county tie-in unfortunately also means that there is pressure from certain quarters to include on the KAB board members appointed not because of their interest in the issue or their specific abilities, but merely because of their political connections. That's too bad, because what the fledgling organization needs is broad-based community support and board members who are willing to work together and to work hard for something they believe is good for Brunswick County.

Personally, I don't think it would hurt a bit if some members also happened to be politically as-

tute and well-connected. There's no point having a committee if it can't make things happen. But one set of assets shouldn't replace the other. It's important that this panel not be tied to political parties, figures or causes. It needs to be allowed to set its own priorities and shape its own direction based on the research now under way as part of the KAB certification process.

Certainly most of these solid waste projects are in their infancy, with lots of growing pains. And given enough time, they may all come together into something that vaguely resembles a master plan of action.

I certainly hope so, because Brunswick County residents have made clear in recent years the importance of cleaning up and beautifying our community. It would be a mistake to lose the momentum we've got going through the roadside clean-up projects, recycling centers and educational programs.

It would help if all the parties involved in solid waste find a forum for sharing information and working together—maybe the new "blue ribbon" commission can help with that.

We also need to actively support the Keep America Beautiful program and ensure that it is given a chance to do its job.

And, it's important that the ordinary, private citizens of this county keep reminding the people who set the county budget and make the decisions of our concern.