

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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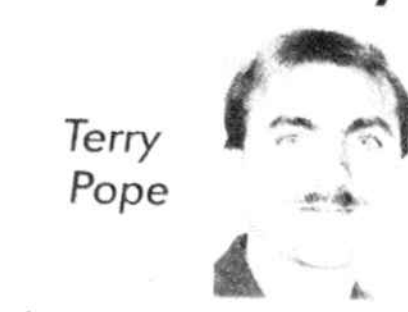
Beasley, Ludlum Played A Fair Final Game

It could have been worse. With the last regular meeting for this Brunswick County Board of Commissioners now history, that's the feeling I get deep down inside.

There were a few surprises last Monday night but nothing that can't be handled. The new board of commissioners will take over next week with two new faces. Donald Shaw of Leland and Jerry Jones of Shallotte will replace Grace Beasley and Benny Ludlum. Did this old board go out with a bang?

I don't think you could call it a bang. In fact, I think both Ms. Beasley and Ludlum played a fair final game. They didn't try to run the score up for either side, but instead they made some sound decisions affecting county residents in their last time at bat (barring a special meeting between now and Monday night).

Ms. Beasley threw the first curve ball when she jumped all over the recycling issue while commissioners were discussing board appointments. She wanted the county to keep paying Bush's Recycling of Florence, S.C., to ensure that the proverbial rug won't be pulled out from under the volunteers' feet at



Terry Pope

six recycling stations scattered throughout the county.

Was it a good move? I think so, although that still leaves Bush dealing with the county on just a handshake agreement to provide recycling trailers at the six sites for a \$200 fee each time a full trailer has to be moved, which is roughly about once a month. Ms. Beasley had wanted to avoid entering into a contract with Waste Industries of Wilmington which would provide permanent recycling stations for \$426 per month each, a waste of county money, she said, plus the deal was coming right in the middle of a fiscal year.

The motion that passed 4-1 was to keep paying Bush until the end of June 1991. That would allow the new board a chance to study the re-

cycling issue before then and to make its own decision on how to get towns and volunteers working together under one program. In a way, Ms. Beasley played fairly in looking out for the interests of the volunteers who attended the meeting. Those volunteers asked if the subject was going to be discussed when they saw it wasn't on the agenda.

"It's not on the agenda, but whether it will be discussed tonight I can't say," responded Chairman Gene Pinkerton, with just a hint of what was to follow.

The bad part about the recycling vote is that there is still no contract with Bush. The county is really unprotected should Bush decide to suddenly pull out of Brunswick County, not that it's likely to happen. Will Bush be the guy the new board relies on after June 1991? Remember, the state has mandated that all counties must have a recycling program in place before July 1, 1991. The new board must find a way to replace a handshake agreement with a legal and binding contract in six months.

Ludlum voted against the motion, not to stir up any trouble but because it was his last time at bat and

he was looking for a walk. He told the board he felt uncomfortable voting on the issue when it was his last meeting. I'd give Ludlum a point anyway for stating his opinion and sticking to his guns, although he wasn't shy about nominating Eugene Tomlinson for the Doshier Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees under that same discussion on board appointments.

Both Beasley and Ludlum accepted a move by Commissioner Kelly Holden to have other appointments put on hold until the new board takes office. There are five seats open on the Brunswick Hospital Board of Trustees. Seven members to the Brunswick County Keep America Beautiful Board were appointed last week, the only question concerned nominee Bill Turner, assistant superintendent of Brunswick County Schools.

Why? Because he's not a permanent resident of Brunswick County, but he is the guy the schools submitted for joining the board. All seven members added to that board are well qualified. It was another sound decision made in the final game.

So it wasn't a bang; it was more like a sigh of relief.

Judge's Bridge Ruling Doesn't End The Fight

Both sides make good points in what they have to say about the proposed new high-rise bridge to Sunset Beach. If you weigh the arguments of each side, it's not really a debate over who's right and who's wrong. It's a battle over whose view of growth, tourism, pollution, traffic, development, environment and public safety should hold sway in the end. It's a battle over change, over one's definition of "progress."

The bridge is just a symbol reflecting the larger issues facing any barrier island now under development. You can't argue that increased tourism is either right or wrong. There are benefits and liabilities associated both with construction of a new 65-foot clearance fixed span bridge and with keeping the existing floating barge bridge as the island's only access to the mainland.

Judge W. Earl Britt ruled in U.S. District Court last week to halt construction of a new bridge until the Department of Transportation prepares an environmental impact statement regarding the project's anticipated effect on endangered plants, animals and the human environment. In one sense, Judge Britt couldn't have ruled any differently because the state simply had not done all its homework before launching this project.

It wasn't a ruling declaring a winner or loser, however; the battle isn't over and Sunset Beach is still a community divided.

Britt's ruling should not have surprised parties on either side of the issue. It is reasonable to require that the state follow its own environmental protection laws.

Everyone had his day in court, but the state's arguments were weak and lacking in substance, almost as if officials somehow knew they would be spanked and told to start over again, and to do it right this time.

It is doubtful the state will appeal Britt's ruling. It is also doubtful, given its current investment and the divided opinions of island property owners, that the state will give up so easily its plans for a new access to Sunset Beach.

One thing is certain: If, and more likely when, a third public hearing is held on a Sunset Beach project, there should be more substantial information for the public to consider for comments, in terms of both impact and alternatives. There won't be any railroading, no "it's good for you, so take it and stop asking stupid questions."

The Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association has been criticized for suing the state in an attempt to block construction of the bridge. The delays caused by the SBTA lawsuit may, ironically enough, cost "taxpayers" millions of dollars if a new bridge is allowed to be built later. The total pricetag for the bridge has already doubled since it was first proposed more than 10 years ago, to an estimated \$11.1 million. With additional delays and inflation the figure is sure to rise even further.

The SBTA argues that a new bridge will be too costly, and that it will encourage denser development on a fragile barrier island, threaten the loggerhead sea turtles, plovers and wood storks and spoil the island's family-oriented atmosphere.

Proponents of the new bridge say a new bridge is a practical necessity, essential for the safety of island residents, improved vehicular access to handle anticipated growth, provision of adequate services to island residents and the unimpeded flow of recreational and commercial boating traffic on the Intracoastal Waterway.

So what do you do when both sides are right?

You make sure that every angle has been thoroughly explored before the concrete trucks are allowed to start bullying their way down the causeway at Sunset Beach. You make sure that the state stops assuming it knows what is best for residents. You make sure that the state and federal environmental laws have been followed. You make sure every alternative is considered.

If the full environmental impact statement is prepared the way it ought to be, resident and non-resident property owners will be able to evaluate not only the probable impact of some type of new access to the island, but that of the existing span should the state choose to keep it.

Judge Britt's ruling last week causes, at the very least, a delay in construction.

For that you can thank—or blame—both sides who thought they were right.

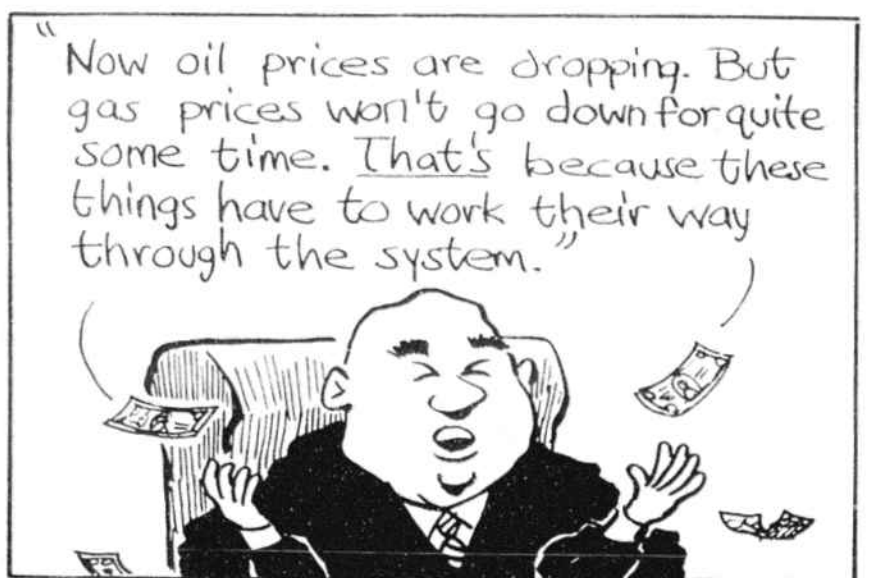
Bridge \$\$\$ Available

Meanwhile, the N.C. Department of Transportation has a piggy bank of funds set aside for completion of a new Sunset Beach Bridge that won't be needed for at least a year or longer.

Why not take those funds and put them to use on a bridge project that hasn't drawn objections from any quarter? Plans to build a second bridge linking Oak Island to the mainland are being pushed back a year because of the state's budget shortfall; this is a good chance to get that project on or ahead of schedule.

Oak Island, with its three beach communities, is the longest and most heavily populated of Brunswick County's barrier islands. Its residents and visitors can legitimately claim the need of a second route to and from the mainland.

The only existing exit from the island takes motorists past CP&L's Brunswick Nuclear Plant. The odds of a nuclear accident at the plant are slim indeed, but an evacuation route that brings individuals closer to the plant offers little reassurance in the face of a possible disaster.



So What Kind Of A Name Is That?

You've seen the pictures—beachgoers with hands extended, bearing offerings for the seagulls circling overhead.

At the Sunset Beach Fishing Pier the other day sunshine was plentiful and fish were scarce; an armada of jellyfish was coming through. I was experimenting with a new camera, taking pictures of this one particular gull, when Ed Kayler comes over.

"Come in here, there's something I want you to see," he says, motioning inside the shop. You know, the place where fishermen and their companions hang their trophy pictures and buy such necessities as tickets, bait and popcorn. Ed waves toward the corner near the microwave.

Looking around I halfway expect to see a mounted king mackerel or some other souvenir of Kayler's first pier season, which is starting to wind down. A couple of cases of beer are stacked on the floor.



Susan Usher

Batteries and tackle line the rear wall. "Have a seat," he says. I take the slatted wooden chair with the jacket flung over the back. Ed takes the other one.

Buzzes, clicks and even stranger noises come from the nearby arcade area. Surely it's not Thanksgiving week already. What am I supposed to see?

Through the shop door a V of bright sunlight pours in, followed by a couple of vacationing youngsters in swimsuits.

The room quiets. Ed crumbles

a saltine cracker on the floor in front of us, steps to the door and looks outside.

"Watch this," he says, still eyeing the door anxiously as he returns to the corner. "Paul! Come here, Paul!"

Who the heck is Paul? I wonder. There's no one to be seen.

A shadow falls across the patch of sunlight, followed by two legs.

It's Paul Perkins.

A scraggly, overweight gull of some kind appears, mostly white with darker feathers in the tail area. After a brief safety check, he makes a beeline for the cracker crumbs.

It's obvious Paul knows the routine. But he pulls up short at the sight of a stranger and heads back to the door.

Ed says he's been feeding the gulls on the pier outside the shop. It was only natural that at least one should get curious about life on the other side of the door.

"Last week I saw him in front of the door," Ed says. "When I open it he doesn't leave. I start feeding him, at first just inside the door."

In a very short time—about a week—Ed trains Paul to come all the way across the room for snacks.

Paul. What kind of name is that for a gull?

"His nature and disposition are that of someone who ought to be named Paul Perkins," Ed says, without further explanation. Paul could be a girl, he admits, but he doesn't think so.

Paul settles in a roosting position at the door sill, one eye on us and another on some gulls on the pier. He's not your usual pier gull.

He stirs, scoots across the floor for a quick snack, gives me the evil eye and darts out again. It's obvious strangers make him nervous. He wants me out of there. I oblige.

Paul Perkins. The name's perfect. Ed.

Manley Should Be Banned For Life

The National Football League has goofed again.

Dexter Manley, who tested positive for illegal drug use three times while playing for the Washington Redskins, has been allowed to return to the playing field after being banned from the league just one year ago.

What a joke. This guy should not be allowed to play pro football ever again. It's an insult to the great athletes in the NFL who lead drug-free lifestyles, and it's an insult to the fans.

NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue apparently believes that everybody deserves a chance to make up for past mistakes. That's a good concept, Paul, but it doesn't apply in this particular case.

Dexter was given another chance after the first time he tested positive for drugs. And when he fouled up the second time, he was given yet



Doug Rutter

another chance to clean up his act.

By allowing Manley to return to the gridiron, the NFL is giving another chance to someone who doesn't deserve it. If you ask me, Dexter Manley has used up all of his chances. It's three strikes and you're out where I come from.

More importantly, the NFL is telling thousands of youngsters who look at pro athletes as heroes that it's OK to use drugs if you promise not to use them again. Whether you keep your promises or not isn't important.

I wrote a column a few weeks back saying I opposed drug testing. I stand behind those words. But in a large organization such as the NFL which has adopted an anti-drug policy, it has to be enforced to be effective. If you're not going to punish players who use drugs, why test them at all.

Manley's old team, the Redskins, have already said they don't want him back on the roster. Coach Joe Gibbs said he doesn't need any more defensive ends, which is the position Manley played.

More likely, however, Gibbs and the Redskins organization don't want someone in their lineup who has tested positive for illegal drugs on three different occasions. It might tarnish the otherwise squeaky clean reputation of our nation's capital, if you catch my drift.

Dexter shouldn't be too worried, though. Pro football teams—or any

professional athletic teams for that matter—don't turn their backs on good players just because they're not model citizens.

Manley was ferocious enough to be called "Manster" during his earlier days, when he was a Pro Bowl player. And there are rumors that at least five teams are interested in tapping into that animal instinct.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and predict that Dexter Manley will be picked up by somebody before the NFL season is over. In fact, he may already have a team by the time this commentary is published. He won't be playing with the Redskins, but I wouldn't rule out any other teams.

And one more prediction, Dexter will never star again as a football player. He will never be quite as good as he used to be. But he will make a fortune from his yet-to-be-written autobiography.