

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Brunswick County On The Road Again?

Call us eternal optimists if you will, but there seems to be a sense of forward movement in the air.

Both the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners and Brunswick County Board of Education have some tough times from which to rebound—decisions tainted by infighting, a reluctance to compromise and an unwillingness to respect, if not agree with, ideas that differ from their own.

The petty squabbling that has occurred in the past reflects some major philosophical differences that seem to exist not just among the so-called leadership of the county and their political parties, but among the people themselves. As a county, a community, we don't seem to have a strong sense of direction. We don't know where exactly we want to go or how much we're willing to pay to get there. It seems we've been doing just enough to get by.

But that's not why we elect leaders. We elect leaders because we want and need leadership. We want leaders to listen to our ideas and concerns and put them in countywide perspective; make the tough decisions in their collective "wisdom" to set course and destination; then lead the way, inspiring us to jump on board for the trip—maybe even persuading us it was our idea in the first place.

For the past several years we've watched these two boards mire along the road in what looked like quicksand, bogging a little more with every internal struggle. Their achievements have been clouded further by their mistakes and by the problems they've chosen not to address.

This month we've sensed forward movement on both fronts. The board of commissioners has set out to hire a new county manager. This time they plan to follow standard procedures. In recent years they've tried to handle personnel decisions their own way, with results that were damaging to the county as well as embarrassing.

The new school board chairman wants members of that group to show respect for each others' opinions, and to learn to work together to address problems. Cleaning up leftovers from the past, such as the system's financial concerns, should make it easier for this board to move ahead in 1991.

It could be that Brunswick County is climbing out of the quagmire and going on the road again—destination to be announced.

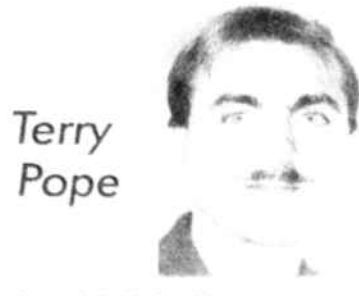
What's Wrong With The Original Route?

The construction of a Northern Outer Loop around the city of Wilmington will have a tremendous impact on Brunswick County. The entire county will be affected by the proposed highway, not just the residents of the northern end.

Hopefully, the effects will be positive ones for the continued growth of our county at the sacrifice of a minimum number of homes and businesses that presently stand in its projected pathway. Area beach communities can expect increased tourism and the industrial corridor on the northern end of the county can also expect to grow.

We'll know a little more in April when the consulting firm hired to do an Environmental Impact Statement on the project releases what it believes are the three best possible routes for the highway. Those routes will get further study by Greiner Inc. for another year before their final report is released.

I'm afraid that fear is starting to win over judgment for some people who feel threatened by the bypass. The bypass will exit traffic heading south to Brunswick County and South Carolina off of I-40 north of Wilmington and loop it via a four-lane route through Brunswick County to tie in with U.S. 17 near Town Creek. Presently, I-40 ends by



Terry Pope

merging with U.S. 132 north of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Motorists wishing to continue south into Brunswick County must now wade through an hour's worth of Wilmington's traffic.

Navassa and Leland officials are right to be concerned that the highway will disrupt their communities. All highways are disruptive to some extent. However, an alternative that somehow got railroaded into the minds of the consulting firm last week, was to study why the outer loop can't tie into U.S. 421 north of Wilmington and route traffic through Brunswick County on U.S. 74-76-17.

The Brunswick County Planning Department is very much opposed to this route, thank goodness. The amount of traffic already traveling across the Cape Fear River bridge on U.S. 421 is tremendous. The

amount of traffic filtering along U.S. 74-76 through the Belville/Leland interchanges is already at a congested level.

That plan appears to be a way of avoiding or delaying the project, which is needed even before the proposed 1996 date on the N.C. Department of Transportation's TIP (Transportation Improvement Plan). One question needs to be asked from this entire affair.

What's wrong with the original plan, the route that DOT and county officials all agreed on before the Wilmington Bypass Steering Committee started playing politics? It deserves a second, close look once all the land studies are done.

That original route would carry the highway on this path: north of Navassa, missing the town and missing the incorporated areas of Leland; through the 2,200-acre Leland Industrial Park, which it would please county officials to see showcased; through a relatively undeveloped area of the Malmo community; tying in with U.S. 17 near Bishop, far enough from the Belville/Leland interchanges to avoid added congestion.

The alternate route the steering committee came up with is a disaster. Some argue it's a shorter route, thus a money saver. But one must

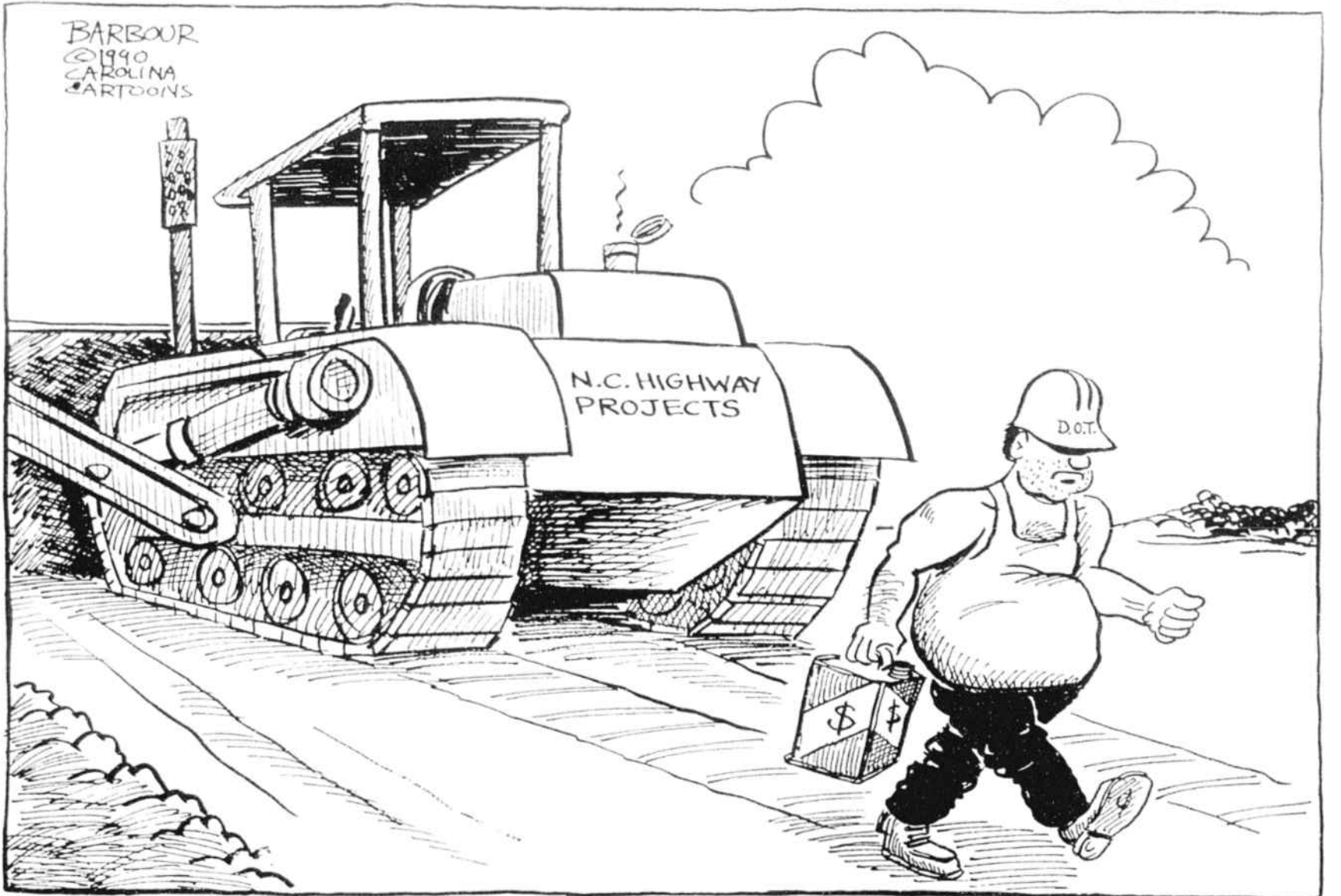
look at how devastating it would be for the towns of Navassa and Leland and how costly it would be to have to purchase homes and town halls rather than undeveloped acreage.

I am a resident of the northern end; my family owns property in the Maco community on N.C. 87. It appears this area will not be directly affected by the highway; it's not a threat to displacing my family, which has lived in Maco for more than 30 years.

However, I look at the project and think about the future. I must drive those highways with those idiots. Ammunition trucks rumble past my home at all hours of the night, heading for Sunny Point because N.C. 87 is a shorter route than U.S. 17 at Belville. But a short route isn't always the best route.

Look at how the city of Wilmington's backward thinking over the years has gotten the town into some serious traffic problems already. Look at how far behind we are in four-laning U.S. 17 through Brunswick County. Look at how far behind we are in getting a bypass around Shallotte.

By the year 1996, even if this northern loop project survives, it'll be 10 years too late.



Quake Predictor Had His Head In Clouds

It was probably the worst earthquake that never happened. I'm talking about the New Madrid Fault earthquake of 1990. Or the Hayward Fault earthquake of 1990. Or the Tokyo earthquake of 1990. Take your choice.

None of these earthquakes had taken shape by the time this column was written. But a lot of people had braced themselves for disaster based on a prediction from one man who had no experience calling these kinds of things.

In case you missed it, this guy said there was a 50-50 chance of a major earthquake occurring on or about Dec. 3 in one of three areas. They were the New Madrid Fault in the Mississippi Valley, Hayward Fault near San Francisco, and Tokyo.



Doug Rutter

His prediction was based on tidal forces the likes of which hadn't been seen in 179 years. He said the earthquake would register at least 6.5 on the Richter scale, which is a pretty intense quake.

I followed the earthquake story pretty closely as the day of The Big One came and passed. I was very interested—not because I was afraid of an earthquake—but because I couldn't believe so many people would panic about such a prediction.

The prediction created a legitimate scare along the New Madrid Fault, where schools were closed and people left town temporarily to stay clear of the mass destruction. Of course, nothing happened. The earth stood still.

To me, the whole thing was unbelievable when you consider the source of the prediction—a business consultant and weather-watcher named Iben Browning.

This man had no formal education in seismology or geology, which is what you should have before you start walking around predicting earthquakes. This guy was an unknown, but he still managed to get the world's attention.

The whole earthquake prediction thing was hard to figure out until I learned that this Browning fellow lives in New Mexico.

I've never been to New Mexico, unless I count that family vacation to Four Corners National Monument. It's the only place in the United States where you can have different sections of your body in four different states at the same time. It's where New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado come together.

The monument is nothing more than a slab of cement that marks where the four states meet. The neatest thing about this place were the Indians who sold artifacts and hand-made jewelry out of their shiny new pickup trucks. It was a sight to behold.

Anyway, I think you can tell a lot about a state by its state bird and state flower. North Carolina claims the cardinal and dogwood, which are two pretty good choices.

New Mexico, on the other hand, chose the roadrunner as its state bird and the yucca as its state flower. I think that about says it all.

But there's more. Did you know 85 percent of New Mexico is over 4,000 feet elevation? That tells me there's a lot of people out there with their heads in the clouds, including this Browning fellow who predicts earthquakes.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It's Time To Hear From The Majority On Bridge

To the editor:
 It's amazing what a handful of people can do when the majority sits back and says to their neighbors: Those few people cannot stop this bridge from being built.
 Well, folks, everybody knows the facts by this time. The judge made the only decision he could pull out of a hat to sympathize with a hand-

ful of people that half of them don't live here all year 'round.
 From what I hear and read, the bridge has to be built for safety, cost going up, inconvenience, etc., and if Sunset Beach cannot control what is built on the island, then again there is something radically wrong.
 If I were a member of that group and something happened on the is-

land, I don't know if I could live with myself.
 A 25-cent stamp and a short note saying: We want the new Sunset Bridge; that's all you need, date it and sign your name. Send it to Secretary of Transportation Thomas J. Harrelson, P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.
 We heard from the minority; now

let's hear from the majority. This bridge has to be built and Raleigh needs your letters.
 This continuous waste of time is ridiculous because this bridge should have been half constructed by this time.
 Ray Norbrich
 Landing Drive
 Calabash

Volunteer Departments Need More Support

To the editor:
 It was with sorrow and anger I read the heading, "Fires Destroy Two Homes; More Daytime Volunteers Needed."
 Those of us currently participating in the Brunswick County Fire and Rescue Association, whether as firefighter or EMT/EMS, are acute-

ly aware of what your editorial spoke of.
 Sadly, though, you have only scratched the surface of a complex set of problems. No easy solutions exist.
 More volunteers alone will not solve our problem, nor will more money alone solve this dilemma.

Once you get new blood in your departments, they must be properly trained for their, as well as your own, safety. This training must meet a standard set by many different agencies which takes a lot of time and effort.
 Every year more and more training is mandated by federal and state

laws that take more time and money. We are all struggling to keep current in the field while trying to lead normal lives with jobs, families and other day-to-day activities.
 But yes, we do need more dedicated people. We also desperately need more and better financing. The normal operating cost of running such an organization is high and climbing steadily. A new truck will start at \$85,000, unequipped. Add to this another \$15,000 to \$25,000 to meet current outfitting standards.

Keepsakes Tell Story Of Love

Don and I don't have room for a "real" Christmas tree among the plants we tend year round, so we make do with our own variation on a theme.

Each season we light the balled and burlapped tree planted after our first Christmas. It's growing well, demanding more and more lights each year as it gradually returns to its natural, unpruned shape.

Though we'd enjoy having a tall, lighted tree in front of the living room window, Don and I also like tying small red velvet bows on the ficus and one other "tree" whose name I can't remember.

Our standard glass balls are tucked away in the Christmas box; they'll keep until we have room for a tree that looks, and more important, smells like a Christmas tree. But there are special ornaments that we'd find a place for even in the most cramped quarters. These ornaments are from people whose love has made a difference in our lives



and those of others.
 A suncatcher stocking in stained glass, a gift from Don's Uncle John, hangs in the living room window. The angel, a wedding gift from the Carmichaels, has her own special place on the bookcase.
 From the small branches of the ficus dangle the golden apple, red cotton stocking and handpainted geese made by my sister, Jean Barricklow. They're not too far from the blue and white beaded bell from her mother-in-law, Nell Barricklow. The handmade Santa was a gift from Glenda and Frank

Murray, former neighbors in Raleigh. The straw wreath came from a friend in Morganton; the crocheted wreaths and stockings, from Faye Simmons, a friend from Ash. Crocheted snowflakes are reminders of my former pastor emeritus in Morganton, and a lifelong friend, Patty Jones, right here in Shallotte.

It seems just about every holiday decoration in our home is a gift from someone—friend, family member or thoughtful stranger, including the table linens and candlesticks we use during the season.

As each piece comes out of its packing box a flood of memories pours out as well, recalling the faces, smells and sounds of Christmases past.

Christmas is a time to celebrate God's gift of Christ to the world. But, as the keepsakes on our holiday ficus help Don and I remember, it's also a time to celebrate the gifts of loving and being loved that were and are part of Christ's example to us.

You also may want to purchase protective clothing at \$600 to \$900 per set, breathing apparatus \$1,200 to \$1,600 each, ladders, axes, nozzles, high volume fans, generators, ropes, lighting, etc.

All of this equipment now needs a home, which won't be free, either. Nor will the gas to heat it, the electricity to power and light it. Plus, please remember, those little things like gasoline, tires, oil, etc.

Are your eyes open yet? We need help. More people, more instructors available, more funding, more donations, newer, safer equipment.

And finally, folks, the bad news, national studies show it all getting worse. If we don't get support from John Q. Public, and federal and state governments soon, we will all suffer, and some will needlessly die.

Michael R. Smith
 Shallotte Point
 Volunteer Fire Department
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