

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Edward M. Sweatt and Carolyn H. Sweatt Publishers
 Edward M. Sweatt Editor
 Susan Usher News Editor
 Doug Rutter and Terry Pope Staff Writers
 Johnny Craig Sports Editor
 Peggy Earwood Office Manager
 Carolyn H. Sweatt Advertising Director
 Timberley Adams & Cecelia Gore Advertising Representatives
 Tamme Galloway & Dorothy Brennan Typesetters
 William Manning Pressman
 Brenda Clemmons Photo Technician
 Lonnie Sprinkle Assistant Pressman
 Phoebe Clemmons and Frances Sweatt Circulation

PAGE 4 A THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1990

There Are Ways To Make Our Roads A Lot Safer

Along with the growth and prosperity comes tragedy. Before the Christmas holiday period, Brunswick County had already surpassed its 1989 total in highway deaths for the year. Fifteen people have died as a result of traffic accidents on the county's highways this year while 14 were killed last year.

There is more bad news. During the holiday season, the number of accidents usually increases as a result of heavier traffic. Families travel to be together or folks are out driving while on vacation. Some plan to spend time at our beautiful beaches but never make it. Unfortunately, there may be more deaths before the calendar year ends.

There is something we can do to help make our highways safer that isn't being done.

As the number of Brunswick County residents continues to grow, from 35,000 in 1980 to an estimated 55,000 in 1990, the number of highway deaths will also increase. As more cars travel the roads, more accidents will occur.

The revelation in Brunswick County District Court recently that a man could be stopped 16 times for driving without a license and still be free to roam the county's highways was shocking. He was given a three-year active prison term by Judge William C. Gore Jr. for driving without a license and for speeding 74 mph in a 55 mph zone.

The courts need to follow that example and work harder to clear our highways of irresponsible drivers who increase the danger for others.

Stiffer penalties need to be imposed so those whose driving privileges are taken away because of driving while impaired convictions and other abuses of the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicle's regulations will think twice before getting behind the wheel of a car. Some traffic cases make a mockery out of the judicial system.

Tougher fines and jail terms may be the only deterrent to keep such criminals out of the driver's seat, to keep them from killing innocent drivers or themselves. How many months of a three-year prison term is someone likely to serve when our prisons and jails are already overflowing with criminals?

This holiday season, 15 people will not be sharing time with their families because they had the misfortune of meeting their death in traffic accidents in Brunswick County. Accidents will continue to happen and the death rate is likely to rise as does the county's population.

But knowing that the courts are treating the criminals like criminals will ease a lot of minds.

Get-Tough Stand On Green Boxes Overdue

Brunswick County Commissioners' get-tough stand on trash disposal sites comes none too soon. In fact, it's overdue.

At their Dec. 17 meeting commissioners gave the landfill department 30 days to clean up its public trash disposal sites. That includes green box sites and the county's three convenience stations.

Commissioners and Interim County Manager David Clegg are going to inspect the sites in one month's time. No one said last Monday what would happen if the sites don't pass muster.

It's true, as the county landfill director pointed out, that the public doesn't do its part. Dumpers use green boxes to dispose of items, such as furniture, appliances, land-clearing and construction debris, that should go only to the landfill. And vandals do cause a lot of wear and tear, setting fire to boxes, tearing down signs and the like.

But if the sites were better maintained in the first place, chances are the public would take better care of them as well. At most sites it would help if the boxes were emptied more frequently or if more boxes were available. By Monday morning most boxes are overflowing, sometimes surrounded by as much debris on the ground as is inside the boxes.

Only a cursory inspection is necessary at most sites to determine that past "clean up" efforts have been mainly just token gestures, picking up the most obvious loose debris and leaving the rest to decay—or rust.

Check out dumpster sites in surrounding counties—or even as far away as Watauga County—and the view overall is much better. Some of the larger convenience stations have paved access areas or are surrounded with solid, painted fences to keep loose trash from blowing away. Most are tidy, even at the end of a weekend.

There's no reason Brunswick County can't do as well.

To do any less is to say that Brunswick County people just don't care—that our property owners are trashier than those in other places, that our county employees are lazier or less capable than those in other places, that our landfill department isn't adequately equipped, staff or funded.

People tend to live up to others' expectations of them. That goes for county employees and the public at large.

The higher the county's standards of performance and expectations, the more likely we are to have tidy dump sites.

It's about time someone put their foot down. It's up to the county commissioners now to see that their mandate is carried out, one way or another.

What To Do When You Need Another Word

The things a journalist will do. Like make up new words or hang on to ones he or she should dump in the garbage for good.

"The reporter necessarily writes under pressure and has not long to search for the right word. In the heat of the moment, he is as likely as not to strike off a new expression or wrench the language to fit his idea."

So says a textbook used in a "History of the English Language" class I took this semester at UNC-Wilmington. In its discussion of the influence of journalism on the English language in the 19th and 20th centuries, it credits news reporters for being sleazy and malicious abusers of the language.

I took issue with the writers Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable, professors at the universities of Pennsylvania and Texas, respectively, for blaming it on the press. They also seem to forget that not all reporters are male. But I had to back down from my defensive posture recently when I was caught abusing our language. Please don't tell anyone.

"In his effort to be interesting and racy he adopts an informal and colloquial style, and many of the colloquialisms current in popular speech find their way into writing first in

Terry Pope



the magazine and the newspaper."

Journalists have created the following terms that, the professors claim, are abuses of our English language: to "back" a team; to "boost" our community; to "comb" the woods for a criminal; to "hop" the Atlantic; to "oust" a politician; to "spike" a rumor; to "probe" into a department; to act as a "go-between"; a political "slate;" and to head the "cleanup" effort.

My reading of this chapter last week almost coincided with a mini-lecture I got from our news editor about the crime reports I write each week for the paper. Looking through the sheriff's department's reports each week, there are always some breaking and enterings and larcenies and it seemed okay to use the phrase, thieves "hit" someone's house while they were away.

Trying to pass that one through

was like trying to block one of Michael Jordan's shots. No way. The radar honed in on the "hit" part and I took some ribbing about the need to select a better word. After all, does a burglar actually hit the house, with his fists, a tire iron, a baseball bat?

Okay, so I used "thieves hit," a lazy choice of words, I admit it. When you really stop to think about it, the reader deserves a better description. Okay, so I used "thieves hit" once in a story.

"Three times," she replied. I'd been had. Caught red-handed. Pleading no contest, I really was surprised that in the usual rush to meet a deadline I wasn't even aware of that kind of usage. Abuser of the English language, 30 days probation.

Baugh and Cable continue their word game by picking on sports-writers who are "often hard pressed to avoid monotony in his description of similar contests day after day, and in his desire to be picturesque he seldom feels any scruple about introducing the latest slang in his particular field of interest."

Some examples they feel should be avoided: "neck and neck" and "out of the running", as in horseracing; "caught napping" and "off

base" as in baseball; "sidestep," "down and out" and "straight from the shoulder" as in boxing. There are some that they don't list that drive me crazy, such as "linksters" for golfers, I think; "gridiron" for football field; "pigskin" for a football; "spikers" for volleyball players and so on.

If the professors could have stopped there, too, I think their point would have been well made. But they continued. Did you know that "one of our popular news weeklies makes the use of verbal novelties a feature of its style, routinely identifying people through capitalized epithets."

Such as: Swedish Film Maker so and so; Candy Tycoon so and so; Pundit so and so. They also criticize the media's way of stringing together hyphenated words as descriptive, such as "show-biz-struck."

But everybody knows that those popular news weeklies are garbage, not journalism.

I'd like to spike the rumor once and for all to help boost our image here at the show-biz-struck Brunswick Beacon, we shoot straight from the shoulder in our news reporting. Nobody's going to catch us napping or abusing the language around here.



BARBOUR
 © 1990
 CAROLINA
 CARICONS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bridge And Sidewalk Are Needed At Sunset Beach

To the editor:
 I wrote a letter to the North Carolina Department of Transportation in March of 1990 giving my views of the bridge replacement. Since that time members of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association have been riding around with bumper stickers on their cars to save their bridge.

Most of these people do not even live near this bridge; how can they have so much to say in this matter? People who live near this bridge or on Sunset Beach see what goes on day in and day out. I think most of them are afraid to speak out; afraid just in case the bridge is replaced with a high rise and it turns out bad, they might hear, "I told you. Now we have to live with it."

But I feel it is about time other people who live right here by the bridge be heard. We all could not make their meetings to be heard and if they would all just write in letting their feelings be known, we just might get a new bridge.

They want to save that bridge. Well, do it, but open it on the side. Then they can come look at it.

I live across the street from the Intracoastal Waterway a mile down the road from the bridge. The bridge opens on the hour (during the season) to let boats pass. We have boats backed up past my house circling, wasting all that gas until the bridge opens for them to pass.

We had a big sailboat capsized from doing this. That poor fellow's boat had to stay on it's side until the

tide came in the next morning to bring it right side up again. We had barges hit the bridge and put it out of order for days. The residents who live on the island all year long had to be transported back and forth by row boats, including the school children.

We had a man years ago die on the other side of the bridge because it was stuck and they couldn't get to him.

My daughter and son-in-law went to the beach while I baby sat. When they were late coming home, I was frantic thinking something happened to them, but finally got a call from them. They were in bumper traffic stuck on the other side of the bridge and walked back to the pier to call us to say to feed

the baby because the bridge was going to be stuck for two hours more while they repaired it.

Other times the tide was extra high and there was nothing to be done until the tide went out so the bridge would meet for the cars to drive over it. Meantime cars are backed up for miles with screaming babies that are hungry but these cars cannot turn around. The people inside are frustrated, some trying to get to a tee-off at the golf course, others trying to get to work or home from work.

If those in favor of saving this bridge would live here and see all this and think of others instead of themselves and that cute little bridge, we could get on with
 (See BRIDGE, Following Page)

Warning: Guns And Children Just Don't Mix

Guns and kids don't mix. That was the message that came through loud and clear in two type-written pages of information on gun safety that recently found their way onto my desk.

The separate sheets of paper came compliments of two Brunswick County residents and faithful Beacon readers—Shallotte Police Chief Rodney Gause and Holden Beach resident Crawford Hart.

They've probably never met one another. But they share a genuine concern about gun safety and children, and they thought I might be interested.

The fact of the matter is, I wasn't really interested at first. I don't have any children, nor do I own any guns.

But the more I read, the more interested I became. I'd like to share some of the information with you, because I know some of you do have kids and guns. Maybe the words on this page will help someone. Maybe they will help save a child's life.

First of all, the police statistics

Doug Rutter



tell the story. Gunshot wounds to children under the age of 16 have increased by 300 percent in urban areas over the last four years.

Certainly, Brunswick County is not an urban area. But I'd be willing to bet we've got just as many guns per household here as there are in New York City or Chicago or Atlanta.

If gunshot wounds don't worry you, how about deaths? Gun accidents were the fifth-leading cause of accidental death in America two years ago. Do you think the number of accidental gun-related deaths has gone down since 1988? I seriously doubt it.

Chief Gause tells me an Am-

erican is accidentally killed with a gun every day. Hundreds more are wounded every year. It's clear that more children are handling, carrying and shooting guns today than ever before.

So what can be done about it? Certainly, you can't single-handedly change the world. But you can make a difference in your own home. And if you think about it, that's not a bad place to start.

Gun safety is largely a matter of education, and children are never too young to learn. Parents can promote gun safety just by setting a good example for their kids. If kids see their parents treating guns with care and respect, they are likely to do the same thing.

Children are natural explorers. Like it or not, many kids will develop a healthy curiosity about the use and operation of guns. As part of gun safety education, parents should emphasize to their children that guns are not toys.

But merely telling children that guns aren't toys isn't enough. Kids

tend to have an unrealistic idea of what guns are all about. Their knowledge of guns is based on experiences with toy guns or what they see in cartoons on television. In other words, they don't know what they're messing with.

The quickest and surest way to show youngsters the power of firearms is to take them to a firing range. A child who hears the sound of a gun firing and witnesses what damage that gun can do will learn a lesson.

It's a serious mistake to assume that keeping children in the dark will prevent accidents. Nothing could be further from the truth. Keeping youngsters in the dark only ensures that they will not understand the potential danger of guns. And it increases the likelihood that they will satisfy their natural curiosity without proper supervision.

If you own guns and have children, take the time to teach your kids about safety. Instead of hiding guns from your kids, teach them to respect the power of guns. You'll both be better off.