

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1991

County Needs No Smoking Policy In Public Places

It's time for Brunswick County to go smoke free. Commissioners should outlaw smoking in the county's public buildings, especially at the government complex in Bolivia.

The Brunswick Hospital last week made a dramatic step in prohibiting smoking at the hospital. Signs were placed outside the building advising visitors to leave their tobacco products in the car. Smoking receptacles were removed from the hospital and signs state that smoking is not allowed in the building. Smoking cessation classes are being offered to employees to help them break the habit.

The county should follow that example. If commissioners are concerned about the health and well-being of their constituents, they should readily adopt a no smoking policy at the complex.

Several years ago, former Health Director Thomas Blum tried to get health directors and commissioners interested in such a smoking ban, but his ideas were quickly shot down by those holding county office at the time.

The Board of Health should try again and draw up an ordinance which would prohibit smoking by both visitors and employees at the complex. If persons wish to smoke, they could do so outside the buildings.

While court is in session at the complex, the hallway is so smoke-filled that it stings the eyes. Signs have been placed inside the courthouse asking people to keep their feet off of the walls, by order of the Superior Court judge.

Footprints on the wall are not harmful to another person's health. Smoking, it has been proven, is harmful to others who might passively breathe in another person's tobacco smoke.

People have a right to choose to smoke, but it is just as appropriate for a health-minded community to limit where smokers may light up. The poorly-ventilated, close quarters of public office buildings are not the right place.

Perhaps the new Brunswick County Board of Commissioners will be more concerned about the health of the people who elected them, many of whom are non-smokers. Maybe the board will realize that non-smokers have rights that need to be protected, too.

If those rights are not guaranteed by the local government, then by whom?

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.

Guns To Flippers—Police Get It All

Shallotte Police had a busy year in 1990, busier even than the numbers of arrests and charges might indicate. To really get a feel for what they've been doing, you'd have to look in the department's property room. Better yet, look at their recovery report.

Last year, between going to school, speaking to groups and arresting drunk drivers, officers recovered property worth \$107,078, not counting an end-of-the-year car seizure. Most of the stuff was returned to the rightful owners where they could be identified. That was, however, with the exception of a few items awarded the department by the courts, such as several guns that were in good condition.

The haul also included another \$150,000 in illegal drugs that were destroyed.

Just about anything you could name is on the recovery list, some of it recovered from larcenies, others from embezzlements or shoplifting attempts. Some were seized in drug-related cases.

At the top of the list, 14 cars and trucks seized that ranged in value from \$500 to \$12,800, and a Harley Davidson worth \$10,500; Food Stamps and cash, guns of almost any type you could imagine. Officers claimed rocks of crack cocaine, marijuana plants, real and counterfeit marijuana, six packs of beer, mini-bottles of liquor, wine coolers and a bottle of Wild Irish Rose, hashish, L.S.D., alcohol, prescription drugs, and drug paraphernalia. While vehicles passing through on U.S. 17 might account for a good deal of the drugs seized, some of the stuff came from right here in peaceful little Shallotte, where most families don't care to admit there just might be a drug problem.

The rest of the goods in the officers' stash could have helped stock a variety store. Officers recovered a wheelbarrow, rake and square point shovel; hair styling goods, makeup and false fingernails; a circular saw; vitamins and calcium; screwdrivers, pocket knives and pliers; bicycles; eight cans of tuna; black mild cigars; jewelry that included a diamond and sapphire ring, clothing; a television and videocassette recorder. Even a jar of Vaseline and a clarinet.

But my favorite items come from a recent "diving" expedition at a local golf course, where some energetic entrepreneurs were recovering golf balls from the pond without permission of the course. Recovered along with a bucket of 750 golf balls worth \$245: two sets of swimming flippers, a SCUBA diving knife, two sets of snorkeling masks and a pair of wet suit booties.

It was all in a day's (and night's) work.

Susan Usher



Fighting Mini-Wars Here On The Homefront

This is a touchy subject because by this time next week the United States may be closer to war than at any time since the Vietnam conflict.

Closer to home, there has already been a mini-war of sorts. Recently, officials at Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal near Southport had to deal with a bomb threat.

Sunny Point is the largest ammunition port in the free world. It lies just a mile north of the Carolina Power and Light Company's Brunswick nuclear plant on the Cape Fear River. You don't want to think about the kinds of bad things that might possibly happen should an accident occur at either place.

With the conflict in the Persian Gulf against Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Sunny Point has been a hotbed of activity in recent months. Who knows how many rounds of ammunition or bombs have passed through the terminal since the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia began last September?

The live rounds are loaded onto ships that come and go through the treacherous mouth of the Cape Fear and then out to sea and to the Persian Gulf. The ships that pass the quiet town of Southport head for the terminal riding high on the waves.

Terry Pope



When the ships return on their way out to sea, they look like pregnant guppies, as though their bellies are scraping the bottom of the river while loaded with explosives.

With so much at stake, security is of utmost importance at Sunny Point. There is no room for error or for a laxening of the tightened controls. Military experts know that it's next to impossible to infiltrate the elaborate security system at Sunny Point, but on the morning of Dec. 28 a call came into the terminal saying that a bomb would go off inside around 2 p.m.

Longshoremen loading the explosives had to stop their \$51 an hour jobs while a search of the area began, looking for a bomb among the bombs, like a needle in a haystack. The FBI was called in. Brunswick County Emergency Management

Coordinator Cecil Logan temporarily canceled his vacation to assist. The State Highway Patrol sent five troopers to assist with a possible evacuation. The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department added patrols and Interim County Manager David Clegg was kept abreast of the situation.

In effect, the county's emergency response team jumped into action as though a major hurricane was about to hit the coast or as though a nuclear disaster was threatening to contaminate the county. CP&L officials were notified of the potential danger to its nuclear reactors.

FBI bomb experts rushed to the scene. Every precaution was taken to protect lives in the event of a bombing at the terminal. What upset officials about the call is that the man's voice had a foreign accent and he was very vague about the bomb threat. Telephones at the terminal are wired. An attempt to trace the call proved unsuccessful.

Logan began a ground search outside the terminal, taking a count of how many families might have to leave their homes until officials were confident the threat was over. He counted 32 mobile homes and five houses in the immediate area.

While all of this was going on, it appeared in the Southport area that nothing was going on. Unmarked police cars came and went quietly. No sirens were used. Fearing a panic among citizens when officials were 99.9 percent certain that it was just a prank, no residents were notified to leave. It was quietly kept under wraps.

The construction of the terminal is designed to protect area homes against a blast. Earthen berms wall the storage and loading areas so that if a blast does occur the debris and shrapnel won't blanket outward. The berms will bear the brunt of the blast instead.

"It was a good drill," Logan said. "I took it pretty seriously. It helped me think about what am I going to do in the event of a bomb. You just never know what can happen. And it's always better to be prepared."

If there is a positive note to end on it would be just this. Emergency response teams were ready. They acted quickly and avoided a public panic while taking every precaution to see that no one would be harmed.

But every nut is to be taken seriously, especially in the war-threatened period we are facing.

Isn't this a crazy world we live in?



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Choose To Be Involved In BCKAB

To the editor:

Reading Bill Faver's column in *The Brunswick Beacon* is an enjoyable experience and particularly the one in the Dec. 27 issue entitled, "Choose To Be Involved In The New Year."

Mr. Faver mentions several national organizations for us to become associated with and, in so doing, express our concerns and "make a difference through them." I would like to add the Brunswick County Keep America Beautiful (BCKAB) organization to the list.

This group has set recycling as its

number one priority and the ultimate goal is to have every Brunswick County citizen recycling.

Great strides have been made in this field. There are currently seven recycling (collection) centers in Brunswick County. BCKAB is doing an excellent job in educating our people to the recycling way of life. Getting involved with one of the centers would be a way of expressing our concern for the environment. One could form a neighborhood movement by taking turns hauling recyclable items to the nearest center. We could volunteer some

time at the actual center, crushing plastic, sorting glass by color or even making appropriate signs for the various containers. The Shallotte center has been opened a month now and is manned practically single-handedly by Bill Potts; that is, he opens the trailer every day at 10 a.m. and locks it at 4 p.m., sorts items people have left and makes sure the area is neat and tidy. He could use some voluntary help (579-5079).

So, "Think Globally, Act Locally," become involved in the New Year and let's make Brunswick

County an environmentally aware place to live.

Chance Scrantom
BCKAB Member
Sunset Beach

Investigate, Make Public

To the editor:

The year 1990 finished with a change on the county board of commissioners. Voters showed their disgust with a split board and backroom politics. Now the papers tell us we have the same situation with the Board of Education.

One would assume that the Board of Education would have more integrity while dealing with the education of Brunswick County students. Some members failed to honor their rhetoric after they were elected. It appears that they became self-serving, enmeshed in deals and perhaps bargained to use positions as a stepping-stone to benefit their own ambitions.

Recent reports in county newspapers lead the public to suspect that some members of the Board of Education have personal goals that do not embrace the education of the school children.

According to the papers, one member of the board used her elective office to try to gain re-employment for her husband with the school system. Both candidates for the superintendent's position, Dr. Rogers and Mr. Hanks, rejected Dot Worth's proposal.

All members of the school board should feel a personal responsibility to do what is best for the education of our children.

As to the matter of Mr. Worth having five years additional insurance coverage after his departure from his position, the board has a responsibility to examine all the facts and determine who was responsible. (See LETTERS, Following Page)

My Tiny Niece Eats Like A Horse

I was fortunate enough to get to Pennsylvania between Christmas and New Year's Day to visit my brother's family and some old friends.

I even got a Christmas wish while I was there. In this column a few weeks ago, you may recall that I wished for a few inches of snow for Christmas.

I didn't ask for a foot or anything close to the 17 inches we got in 1989. All I wanted was three inches to blanket the pine trees.

As you probably know by now, we didn't get any snow in the Carolinas for Christmas. But I did get my wish a few days later when a solid six inches fell in Philadelphia. It happened to be the first snow of winter in those parts. Pretty good timing if you ask me.

As always, I had a lot of fun visiting the old stomping grounds. My niece, Nicole, will be two years old next month. She walks and talks and does everything that a child her age is supposed to do.

Nicole also eats like a horse. I actually saw her eat two juicy oranges in approximately three minutes. She was cramming the slices down her throat faster than her mother could peel and separate them. Oh well, at

least she's eating healthy foods.

I'm afraid I couldn't say the same thing for Uncle Doug while he was on vacation. Did you really think he could go all the way to Philadelphia without eating some unhealthy foods?

Shame on you. I had a genuine Philadelphia soft pretzel with mustard, and we ate hoagies one day for lunch. We bought the hoagies at the place that catered the celebration for the Phillies when they won the World Series in 1980. My hoagie was so big I couldn't eat it all. But I had fun trying.

I didn't eat the whole time I was there. I also played the Nintendo video game system for the first time. It was a lot of fun. I particularly enjoyed the tennis game because you play against the computer, and you can smash the ball at the

Doug Rutter



computer man's head.

It's one thing to beat a human opponent. Humans tend to make mistakes. It's an entirely different thing to beat the computer. Beating the computer somehow makes you feel superior.

Anyway, I didn't drive all the way to Pennsylvania to eat hoagies and sit in front of a television set and pretend I was playing tennis.

As I said earlier, the first snow of winter occurred while I was there. It made driving difficult for a couple of days, but we made the most of it. No, we didn't go sledding or bumper riding or skiing. We didn't even have a massive snowball fight.

Some old pals and I played tackle football in the snow. It reminded me of some of the football games I played in when I was young and my bones weren't so brittle. The snow was coming down in big flakes. Everybody was breathing frosty smoke and sliding all over the field.

This was classic, grind-it-out football. Even though the game didn't last very long, it was the kind of game John Madden would have killed to announce. I think Madden would have abandoned his old bus and hijacked an airplane to watch this one. It would have been worth it.