

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1991

Top 10 Thoughts While On Red Bug Road

Terry Pope



If you travel the highways of Shallotte, chances are you've found yourself sitting in line recently.

A detour route of U.S. 17 on the north end of town sometimes gets backed up for miles and miles. During rush hours and weekends, traffic waiting to get into or through Shallotte is bumper to bumper with angry motorists.

For a while, you'll just have to grin and bear it. If you think there is another way to get around Shallotte without using the Red Bug Road detour, forget it. Not unless you've got wings or a big, red S on your chest.

The old U.S. 17 is being ripped up. Construction crews are busy putting the final touches on a four-lane U.S. 17 bypass of Shallotte. By Memorial Day, the state promises, the bypass will be open and residents along Red Bug Road can return to their normal lifestyles.

Those of us who work or like to shop in Shallotte will then be able to do so without that bumper to bumper traffic making it so difficult to make left turns in town or to pull

back onto the highway there.

By now, I've gotten pretty use to the detour route. I must travel it to and from work every day. I even know what one red light and a green arrow on the same fancy stoplight means, even though the three or four drivers in front of me don't. It means go, folks.

But I can't blame them for stopping and looking before making the turn. It's the stupid stoplight that's entirely contradictory. It's something new. New and improved always spells trouble.

Some people get to the N.C. 130 and Red Bug Road stoplight and have no idea which way to turn. Could it be because the state forgot

to install any directional signs along the detour route telling motorists how to get to Holden Beach?

Take the family from West Virginia that has been told by a friend exactly how to get to Holden Beach. Drive south on U.S. 17 and turn left at the first stoplight, right beside the Market Express.

Well, what are all of these orange and white barrels and where's the first stoplight? He didn't tell me about all of this. Should I turn left here or just go to Shallotte and look for the Market Express? See how confusing it can be for visitors or people who are not very familiar with the area?

By the way, save yourself some time in backtracking. It's a left turn to Holden Beach off of Red Bug Road. If you're heading to Shallotte or places south, sorry. Just follow the long and winding trail of cars.

Hundreds of other motorists will be there, too, thinking. You know how your mind wanders when you drive. You think about everything under the sun and can't remember what you've just passed. It's scary

sometimes.

Like David Letterman's top 10 lists, I've compiled the top 10 thoughts of angry motorists while they're sitting in line along the Shallotte detour route. We'll count backwards, just like Letterman:

10. Are engines supposed to smoke like that?

9. If I sit on my horn, it'll make the traffic move faster.

8. Go ahead. Cut in line, if you want a V-8 engine sitting in your backseat.

7. It's probably just a wreck right around that next curve.

6. I knew I shouldn't have bought that half gallon of cherry vanilla.

5. I should have bought some gas in Supply.

4. By the time I get to work, it'll be time to go home.

3. What's a Red Bug anyway? I've never seen one.

2. If I had a convertible, at least I'd be getting a tan.

1. This is your brain. This is your brain on drugs. This is your brain on the Shallotte detour. Any questions?

Pay Up Or Pay Consequences

Garnishing workers' paychecks for past-due taxes may seem like a harsh measure for Brunswick County Commissioners to authorize, but is it really?

While we may gripe about this government rule and that government rule, Americans enjoy—and often take for granted—an incredible degree of personal freedom and opportunity. Just ask anyone who has lived in another country.

Paying taxes, like voting, is one of the responsibilities we assume when we choose to live here. Unlike voting, however, paying taxes isn't optional. And it can hurt, taking money from other things we need or want. Most of us can afford to pay our taxes. It just takes a little budgeting to make sure money is set aside each month toward that bill. In cases of hardship such as unemployment or illness, a payment plan can be worked out. In short, there's no good reason not to pay taxes.

It's only fair to the majority who do pay their taxes that the county go after the handful that don't pay up. If the county doesn't, that would make the tax burden on the rest of us even greater.

The county's tried two types of foreclosures in the past to collect taxes. It ended up with some property it may never be able to sell—and it still doesn't have the taxes it set out to collect.

Sometimes it takes garnishing wages to get a parent to assume financial responsibility for his or her child. Maybe that is also what it takes to get people to accept responsibility for sharing the costs of local government—to the tune of \$4.15 million still owed in property taxes for the past 10 years.

If they don't like the way county government is run, the place to express that is at the polls, not the tax office.

The county has one duty of its own in going after back taxes: To be fair, pursuing with equal zeal all overdue taxpayers, using whatever means are at its disposal.

Having one's wages garnished for taxes may be embarrassing, as one commissioner pointed out, but there is an alternative: Pay up.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't Shell Out Tax Funds For Shimperoo

To the editor:
 An article in last week's *Beacon* captioned "County Treats Legislators on a Busy Trip to Raleigh" brought tears to my eyes.

In essence, the news story reported the fact that County Manager David Clegg and two county commissioners shelled out approximately \$3,000 to entertain an unspecified number of N. C. legislators at a biennial lobbying event known as a "shimperoo."

Ostensibly, the purpose of the "shimperoo" is "not only to socialize" but to bring matters of concern to General Assembly members while they are in session. Most citizens have no objection to meetings between state and county officials as a legitimate course while conducting business, but events such as the "shimperoo" would appear to exceed the bounds of propriety and circumspection.

Less than a year ago county moguls were publicly agonizing as how to balance an already bloated budget and, ultimately, as to how they could squeeze through the fiscal year with some "belt-tightening." Officials bemoaned the fact that fiscal constraints would require a reduction of critical services such as police protection. Somewhat facetiously, I would recommend some additional "belt-tightening" by reducing the amount of shrimp supplied at taxpayers' expense by county and assembly members alike.

Presumably, General Assembly members already receive an allowance for meals and lodging while in session. Since they are the beneficiaries of free lunches or dinners, do they in turn deduct their meal allowance from their expense accounts?

The critical question here is, however, should one group of elected officials entertain another group of elected officials at taxpayers' expense in order to influence legislation? All of these individuals hold their positions in trust to the electorate, with a solid presumption that they will act responsibly on behalf of their constituents. Resorting to use of discretionary "slush funds" to finance such events as the "shimperoo" would appear to be unconscionable.

A final point: the "shimperoo" was catered by a Wilmington seafood restaurant. Are there no food emporiums in Brunswick County capable of providing the necessary fixings for a "shimperoo?" Have the culinary credentials of areas such as Calabash, the Seafood Capital, been reduced to a point where they are deprived of sharing in this distribution of taxpayers' money?

Francis W. Niland
 Shallotte

Someone Is Doing Something Right

To the editor:
 Thank you so much for your support of all the troops in the Gulf. It is heartening to see that there are still people who care.

I would also like to thank all those who supported the soldiers. You are the true heroes. You showed your stuff and you alone were victorious. You are saluted.

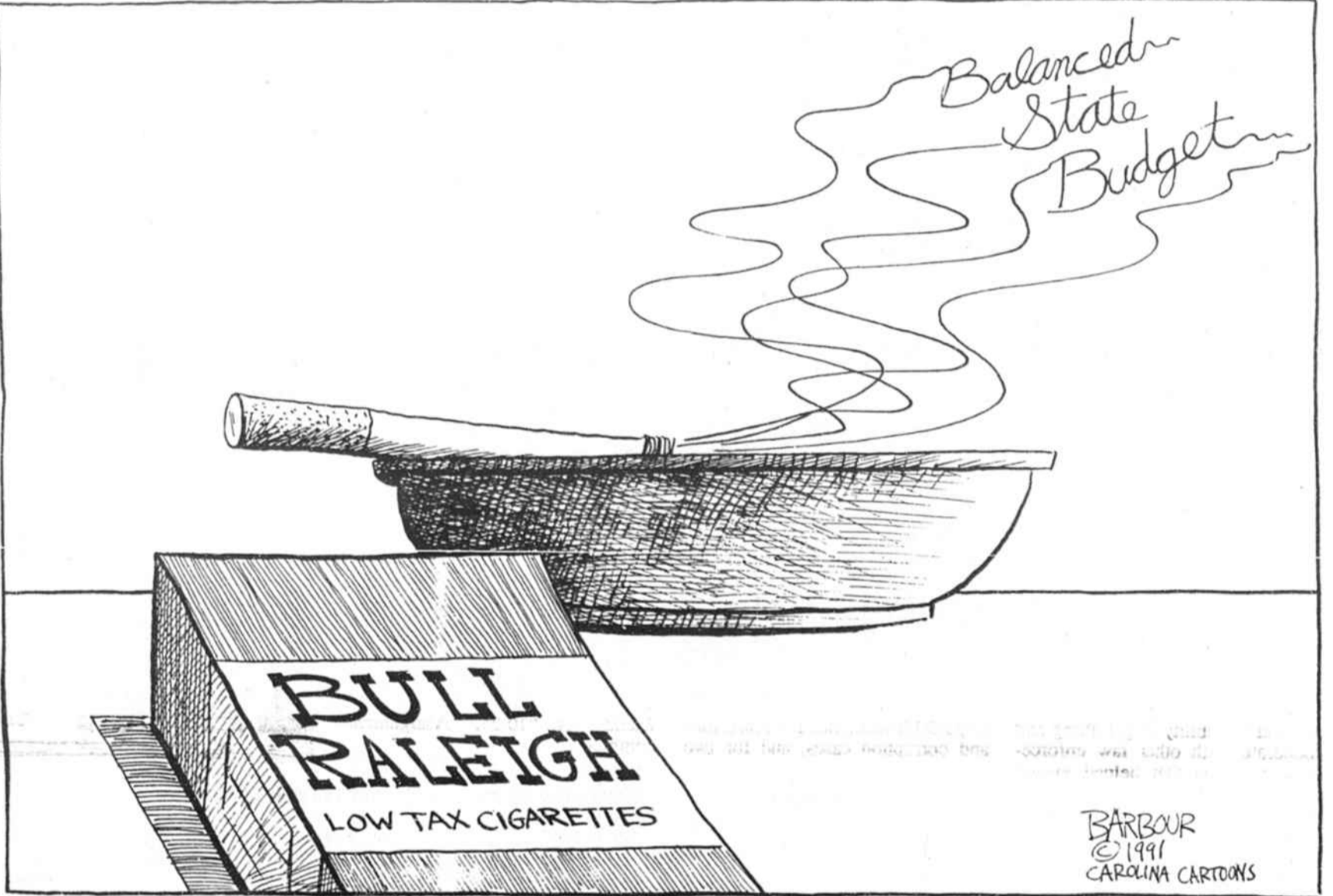
The following is in response to a letter in the March 7 issue written by Catherine Moore of Burgaw:

Repressive dictator? Before Saddam invaded Kuwait, every household received almost \$3,000 a month from high oil revenues. Before Saddam invaded, there were no homeless on the streets of Kuwait. Before Saddam invaded, not one count of rape had been charged in two years. Before Saddam invaded, school for children was free; there were no drugs or drug-related deaths in Kuwait.

Lady, if it takes a little repressiveness to achieve that, then by God someone is doing something right. By the way, there is a new democracy in Kuwait. Yes, women are allowed to vote!

Everyone has the right to speak; even you.
 To everyone in Brunswick, thanks for your support. All of us aren't home yet, so please don't forget us.

Sgt. Shawn Hewett
 U.S. Air Force, Operation Desert Storm
 (Letters Continue On Following Page)



Welcome To Another Season Of Fish Stories

Easter has come and gone, signifying the start of another fishing season and the resumption of the newspaper's weekly fishing report.

It has been my pleasure to write the fishing report for the last three years. Gathering reports from local marinas and piers and photographing fishermen with their catches somehow helps ease the Monday morning blues.

I don't know about you, but I've learned over the last few years that I have to mentally prepare myself for the fishing season.

I can't just go into the season with any old frame of mind. I've got to be psyched up about fishing, and more importantly, take everything I hear with a grain of salt.

You see, if I've learned anything after three years of fishing reports it's that fishermen, as a group, don't always tell it like it is.

I'm not saying that all fishermen are liars. But for some reason, the

Doug Rutter



fishing community is allowed to bend, stretch and twist the truth and get away with it.

This probably dates back to cave-man times when big, hairy cavemen would venture out of their caves to hunt for food.

When a caveman came back to his cave empty-handed, he had to tell his wife something. So he made up some goofy story about a big fish that got away. The rest is history.

There was general agreement last year that we had a good fishing sea-

son in the South Brunswick Islands. That was pretty impressive, because general agreement among fishermen isn't easy to come by.

Nobody knows what the 1991 fishing season will hold. There's no way to tell if it will be a success or a flop.

But one thing I know for sure is that fishermen will enjoy the season whether they catch anything or not. Fishermen may tell tall tales and complain a lot, but deep down inside, most of them fish just because they love to fish.

Regardless of what type of season we have this year, I've set several goals I hope to reach as a fisherman.

First of all, I want to catch a flounder. I've eaten flounder since I was a kid, but I've never caught one.

From what I've heard and read, flounder are pretty tough to catch. They lie on the bottom of the ocean or waterway and wait for their prey

to float overhead.

I'd love to catch a real big flounder, like a 10-pounder. I'd probably have it stuffed and mounted on the wall. I'd even settle for a small flounder, as long as it meets the 13-inch minimum size limit.

Another goal I've set this year is to purchase a small boat. I know I wrote about purchasing a boat last year, but I'm a little more serious about it this year. If the right deal comes along, I'll probably take it.

My biggest goal this year is to go king mackerel fishing. If I can't catch a flounder or buy a boat this year, the least I want to do is go king fishing. Catching a king mackerel would probably make the whole year.

If I don't reach any of my goals this year, I really won't worry about it. The way I figure it, I can always take after my fellow fishermen and blame it on the weather. Then I'll start over next year.

CP Bill Warrants Close Examination

A bill introduced recently by Rep. George Miller of Durham deserves a close look by the General Assembly and the public. If it actually works the way the sponsors predict, the bill would be a very humanitarian effort.

It would create a privately funded trust fund to help pay for the medical services and rehabilitation needs of people with birth-related cerebral palsy. These would be needs not covered by existing government programs or by private insurance. Care for a family member with CP can deplete a family's resources quickly, even when existing limited sources of assistance are tapped to the fullest.

Cerebral palsy is the term used to describe impaired muscular power and coordination due to brain damage at or before birth. Only when the state can prove that the cerebral palsy was caused by substance abuse or genetic abnormality would a person not be eligible for the program.

To finance the trust, the bill proposes assessing hospitals and doc-

Susan Usher



impairments it determines were caused by malicious, willful or wanton conduct of a physician. Any civil penalties won would go into the fund.

Sponsors of the bill estimate that the average amount of lifetime unmet needs would be approximately \$107,310 per person. A family would qualify regardless of the extent of their own resources.

The bill also would require all physicians who practice obstetrics to participate in an obstetrical care coverage plan developed by their local health department or community, migrant or rural health center. This would, say sponsors, assure continuity and quality of care and provide services to indigent pregnant women.

Offsetting these costs: Sponsors predict that passage of the bill would 1) put "downward pressure" on delivery fees as well as 2) reducing the cost of malpractice insurance. The theory: That by barring families from suing, the bill should

lead to reduction in malpractice insurance premiums for doctors who deliver babies. The cost now is about \$30,000 a year, compared to \$13,000 for family physicians who do not deliver babies.

High costs of malpractice insurance have supposedly driven some doctors away from delivering babies and one in three doctors who do can expect to be sued under the current system. Sponsors of the bill think it reasonable to assume that the number of doctors delivering babies will increase when the threat of lawsuits is reduced. We shall see.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the bill is this: Children would get treatment early, when they need it most. Presently care is sometimes delayed for those involved in court cases. For others, it may be nonexistent or minimal.

This idea of a privately-supported fund administered by the state is worth close examination. The alternatives, after all, are not very attractive.