

MORE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I Told You So, 15 Years Ago

To the editor:
Saturday night, June 1, on CBS's Capitol Gang, Mark Shields of the Washington Post singled out North Carolina as being at the bottom of the education ladder in this country.

I do not dispute his claims, I only want to re-submit, *The Victims*, an article I wrote in this newspaper May 5, 1976 (15 years ago) as the reason why this situation still exists in our county as well as our state. But first some up-date and introductory information.

Several months ago when some long known but somewhat secret information was released by the state rating and testing office, a top administrator of the Brunswick County Board of Education stated that he was, "surprised" at the bottom-of-the-barrel rating of Brunswick among other state schools. Of all people, a top administrator with the system for over 30 years should be the last to express surprise. In fact, after 30 years he should be the very one able to identify the precise problems and have solutions for all! Since our school plants are relatively new, our problems are therefore in the academic, instructional and administrative areas. Our test scores put us at the bottom.

In 1980 (11 years ago), I wrote another article, "It Is Allowed," in which I again related why our scores continued to be low. Here are some selected paragraphs from that article:

"Low test scores in Brunswick County schools are not surprising to anyone who understands the term and is an advocate of quality education. Granted, Brunswick is at the very bottom but problems exist in other places, and partly for the same reasons we have the same problems here at home.

"When boards of education and top administrators allow crafty, self-serving politicians and pressure groups to dictate academic standards and personnel hiring practices, the tragic breakdown has begun. Unfortunately some board members as well as administrators and teachers can, from time to time, be identified as members of the crafty pressure elements.

"Personnel hired because of political connections rather than academic competence and ability to administer or teach cannot be expected to produce positive results in any area of the school system. Rather, they frustrate and destroy incentive and creativity in all children and staff members.

"When the silent, passive majority allows these other groups to continue to tear down the academic structure and replace it with a political cosmetic substitute, can

The Victims

REPRINTED FROM MAY 5, 1976 ISSUE OF THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

BY ROBERT H. SELLERS, PHD
PRINCIPAL,
UNION PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Arnold's letter in last week's *Beacon* was a most welcome critical commentary on the state of the basic reading, speaking and writing skills of students at every educational level from kindergarten through graduate school at the most prestigious universities.

The public education system of the United States has become, beginning in the early 1960s, the vehicle for social and political experimentation at the expense of basic education and learning skills. Standards of performance in the basics were diluted at the kindergarten through college entrance exams because these requirements were considered by the bureaucratic politicians as reflecting oppressive white middle class values and therefore discriminatory.

When did the correct writing, reading and speaking of the English language (American tongue) and also the adding of a single column of numbers become racist? Referencing "Why Johnny Can't Write" in *Readers Digest*, April, 1976: "The pervasive influence of the structural linguists, coupled with the political activism of the past decade, has also led many teachers to take the view that standard English is just a 'prestige' dialect among many others, and that insistence on its predominance constitutes an act of repression by the white middle class. This attitude ignores the likelihood that students who do not have the opportunity to master standard English will also lose the chance at higher-ranking jobs where standard English does prevail. 'Prestige' dialect or not, standard English is in fact the language of American law, politics, commerce and the vast bulk of American literature.

"Learning to write is the hardest, most important thing any child does," says Carlos Baker, professor of English at Princeton University. "Learning to write is learning to think." Adds semanticist S. I. Hayakawa, "You don't know anything clearly unless you can state it in writing."

I submit that all, i.e., teachers,

students, parents, taxpayers, etc., who are involved in the educational process today are victims of the turmoil of the 1960s, that period when all values were under attack and education was the main target; to paraphrase an outstanding 20th century author and founder of objectivism: When the indoctrination of children with a mob spirit—under the category of "social adjustment"—was conducted openly and explicitly, the supremacy of the pack was drilled, pounded and forced into the student's mind by every means available to the child buyers of the classroom, including the contemptible policy of grading the students on their social adaptability (under various titles). No better method than this type of grading could be devised to destroy a child's individuality and turn him into a stale little conformist, to stunt his unformed sense of personal identity and make him blend into the anonymous mob, to penalize the best, the most intelligent and honest children in the class, and to reward the worst, the dull, the lethargic, the dishonest.

The objective was a valueless society and a culture without standards of excellence in any sphere of human endeavor—from simple courtesy between fellow citizens to the destruction of the bastion of human achievement and enlightenment; the Great Universities.

How can you expect small public schools to stand up under the dictates of HEW when prestigious Columbia University and other colleges and universities have caved in under the threat of loss of federal funds and have carried out the ridiculous dictates which are irrelevant to academic achievement? How the elected political hierarchy uses HEW as a vehicle for political kickbacks. A culture without values will revert to the uncivilized state of the Barbarian. If the "best" is not the measure, the "worst" will be.

Any would-be dictator will first make the people ignorant by destroying the integrity of the academic system and standards of excellence. Reference the book "1984" by George Orwell, in the Day of the Big Brother and the Day of Double Speak when 6 equals 5; good equals to bad; and today exceptional equals

retarded (exceptional used to equal gifted). We have arrived full circle (note, children who have problems are "handicapped"). Historically democracy and ignorance are mutually contradictory and cannot survive in the same space.

Educational decisions or policy affecting the academic achievement in our institutions must be made on the basis of what is good for students, not what is politically expedient at the moment.

Basic skills like structural foundations crack if not properly built. Inferior foundations eventually cause cracks, not only in the footing, but the entire structure begins to fall apart at the seams.

All are victims, but the most victimized group—ranging from Appalachia to the center-city educational systems—are those in whose name the destruction of standards of performance were enforced, they have been deluded in believing they are achieving an adequate education on which to base their future. The day of the "Blackboard Jungle," a 1950s motion picture once thought mythical, has arrived and under these circumstances no teacher can teach and no student can learn. This will continue until the voices of parents and taxpayers are heard in the communities and throughout the land.

Perhaps it is time—excerpting Dr. Slager in "Living With Freedom," *Wilmington Star News*, April 18, 1976—to see that "These issues are complex and call for us to pause to consider how we manage the freedom we cherish. Freedom implies responsibility. To be free to make choices for one's life entails the responsibility to live with the consequences. There is a certain risk in freedom. Perhaps that is why there are so many who are content not to be free, who choose rather to be the victims (or beneficiaries) of the choices made by others."

The concerned staff of Union Primary School applaud Mrs. Arnold's letter and are most receptive to continued conferences with parents on the improvement of educational standards for their children here in Brunswick. We cannot rewrite history, but we can sure make it!

Robert Sellers, Retired Educator
Shalotte

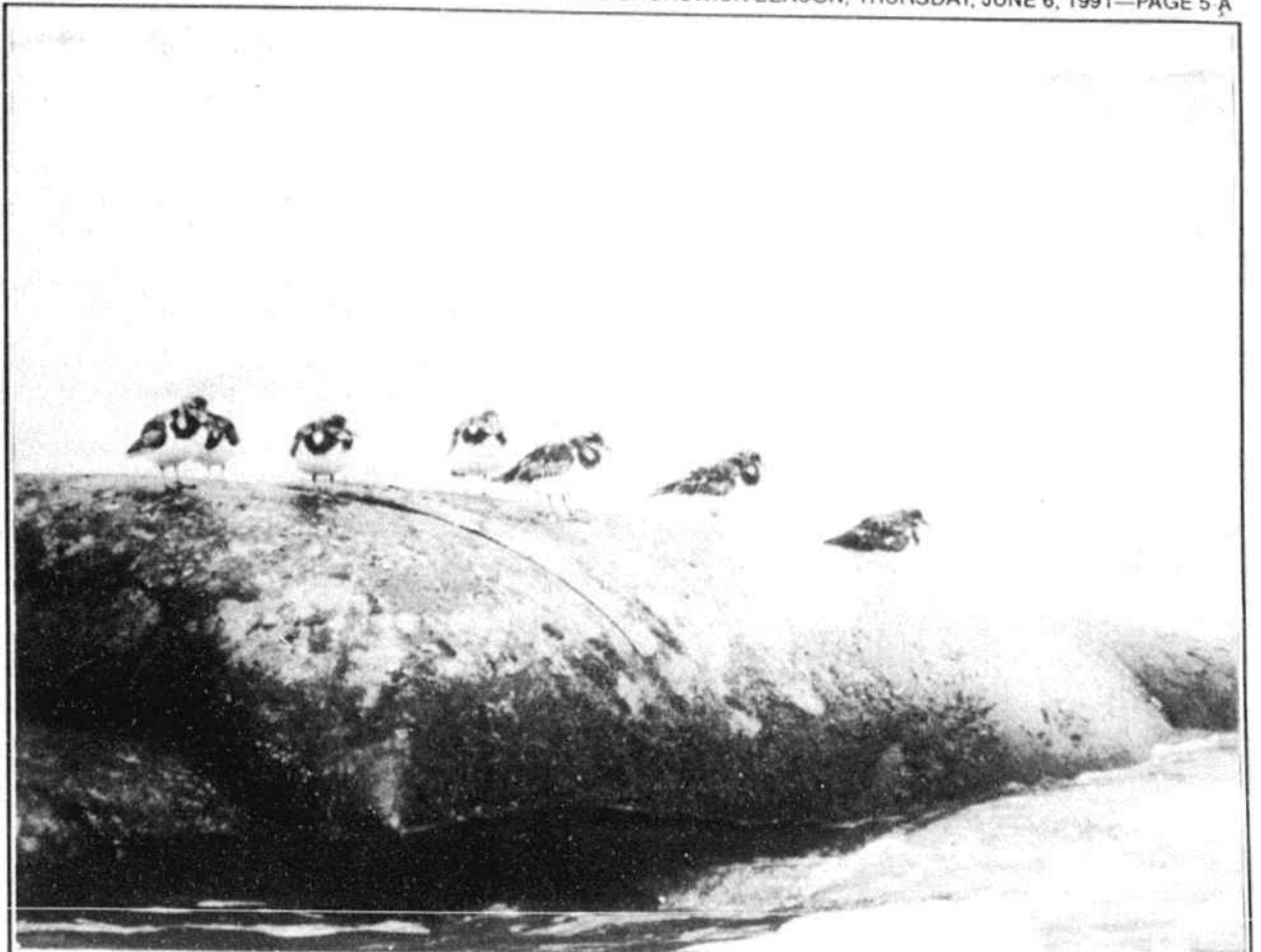


PHOTO BY BILL FAVER
RUDDY TURNSTONES feed among shells and debris on the beach and on rocks, oyster beds, and seaweed.

Ruddy Turnstones One Of Our Most Interesting Bird Species

BY BILL FAVER

The name is descriptive of this shorebird about the same size as the sanderlings. The "ruddy" comes from the rich chestnut color on the shoulders and wings and the "turnstone" comes from its habit of pushing and flipping shells, stones, and debris in search of food. It is one of our regular birds along the Brunswick County coast and can be easily overlooked because of its protective coloration and feeding habits.

This chunky, plover-like bird is about 8-10 inches tall with a wing spread of 16-19 inches. Its orange-colored legs are probably its best mark for identification because no other bird its size has orange legs. In summer its upper parts are rusty red which makes a strong contrast with the whitish under parts. Face and breast have conspicuous black markings which become duller but still visible in winter. In winter the upper markings become brownish and the legs may also become duller. In flying, the black and white patterns on their wings and the three white streaks down their backs make

them appear larger. Turnstones use their short, stout bill which is slightly upturned at the point to flick over hundreds of shells and fragments to find eggs, worms, and small mussels. When they are feeding in an area and the surf is calm, you can often hear the soft clicks of the stones or shells being flipped. Their colors give them almost complete camouflage on an oyster bed or along rip-rap or similar material.

These birds breed only in the Arctic areas on the coasts of Alaska to Greenland. Four buff-colored, olive-spotted eggs are laid in a shallow hollow lined with grass and dead leaves and concealed under low bushes. Both birds attend the nest and are territorial in defending their nest and offspring. Turnstones winter along the coastal areas from North Carolina to South American and along the west coast. We have birds here all summer as well, but our summer birds do not breed here.

If you are unfamiliar with the ruddy turnstone, take time to look for this little bird along our coast. Sometimes called "calico back," "calico plover," "chicken plover," and "sea quail," ruddy turnstones are one of our most interesting bird species.



FAVER

parts are rusty red which makes a strong contrast with the whitish under parts. Face and breast have conspicuous black markings which become duller but still visible in winter. In winter the upper markings become brownish and the legs may also become duller. In flying, the black and white patterns on their wings and the three white streaks down their backs make

9.75%

NEW CAR LOANS

Call for quotes on monthly payments

First Investors

FDIC INSURED SAVINGS BANK

642-8143 WHITEVILLE	754-5400 SHALLOTTE	371-1000 LELAND
------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------

Poem From Past Brings Forth New Meaning

To the editor:
A favorite poem that my entire 8th grade class of Shalotte High School was required to memorize by our teacher, Mrs. Muzette Arnold (now deceased), was "The House by the Side of the Road" by Edgar Guest. At that time, the poem had such a deep effect on us, but today, some 40 years later, it brings forth new meaning daily.

Having lived by the busy Highway 74-76 for 27 years, there have been an abundance of opportunities to be a friend to man as the poem emphasizes.

The most recent opportunity was

to experience the joy of seeing our troops and their equipment returning home from Saudi Arabia. They traveled so far to be a friend to mankind of another country as well as our own country. Their caravans really stood out like heroes yet blended in so beautifully and politely with the heavy civilian traffic.

Words are inadequate to express the sadness in the hearts of our countrymen last August when the caravans of troops and equipment were on the road day and night for weeks preparing for war, or to voice the joy we felt seeing them return.

To live in a house by the side of

the road and be a friend to man has been by far an enrichment to our lives. To fly the flag of the USA on the house by the side of the road is a privilege that these and many others before them have sacrificed so dearly to give us this freedom.

As the men who have served and are serving our country pass by the houses by the side of the road, may they be encouraged by the flags, ribbons, welcomes, and other signs of gratitude, and know that they are loved and appreciated.

Rutha (Lec Grissett) Phelps
Delco

Development, Inc.

"Your Professional Full Service Construction Company"

<h3>Sewage Disposal & Water</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting/Permit Application• • Designs/Plans/Installation• • Conventional Septic Tanks/LPP Systems• • Drainage Plans/Fill Dirt Plans• • Maintenance Agreements• • Water Line Installations• 	<h3>Site Preparation & Paving</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing Chipping• • Fill Dirt Grading• • Sock Tile Installation• • Minor Paving• • Home Driveways• • Parking Lots•
---	---

Ricky Parker – Owner

842-4003 Mon.-Fri. 9-5, Sat. by appointment only

Hwy. 130, Holden Beach Rd., 1/2 miles from Shalotte