

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1991

To Poll Or Not To Poll?

Brunswick County Commissioners might want to think carefully about the idea of querying county voters on a series of issues when they go to the polls Nov. 5.

The idea of seeking out opinions of county taxpayers on major issues is fine, so far as it goes. Elected officials should listen respond to the people whom they represent.

The timing seems right. Since the voters will be going to the polls anyway regarding the issue of two-year versus four-year terms for commissioners and school-board members, why not gather some information? Ask more questions and why, more people might take the trouble to come out on election day. That would be a good thing.

There's even a chance that some people who don't normally bother voting might register this time around just to get the chance to tell all the commissioners a thing or two anonymously.

People with strong feelings on any issue can already voice their opinions to the commissioners through phone calls, letters or visits.

This referendum is a different opportunity in several respects. First, this would have commissioners stepping out and actively seeking the ideas of others. Second, residents could offer their opinions without having their names attached, and still stand up and "be counted."

However, in deciding whether to poll voters and what to poll them on, commissioners need to keep in mind some of the reasons we have a representative form of government as a nation, state and county in the first place.

Is it possible, for instance, for every county resident and/or taxpayer to research all the issues, or even just the major issues, that come before the board of commissioners each month for consideration?

Not hardly. We must rely upon, to a major extent, our elected commissioners and the employees hired by the county, to do that research and to then base their recommendations and decisions on the best possible information available at the time. They even have trouble keeping up.

Commissioners say that the issue questions they would take to voters in November would be "non-binding." In other words, once they've heard from the voters, they still wouldn't necessarily have to listen to or follow what those voters told them.

But politically, the questions might as well be binding. Can you imagine what would happen to the board of commissioners if those who went to the polls voted overwhelmingly for a certain position and the commissioners then did the opposite? Just look at the recent actions of our neighbors in Pender County.

If commissioners decide to take some issues to the people in a non-binding referendum, then they should also accept the challenge of voter education. Issues education should be something they're concerned with always, but even more so in this kind of situation.

They need to help make sure that people who go to the polls are just as well-informed, just as prepared to form an opinion, on each issue as commissioners would be if they had to vote on each proposal.

Anything less would be a cop-out, a shirking of the county board's responsibility. And the public's responses would be of little real value in guiding the county's decision making.

Brunswick County's Commissioners need to think carefully about what issues, if any, they want to poll voters on. They also need to figure out how to make sure that those who take the trouble to "vote" have some understanding of what they're voting on and why it's important.

Balance Life With Time Well Spent

A few years back, while vacationing in the North Carolina mountains, Don and I went shopping together at some of the area craft outlets.

Shopping, especially together, isn't something we do much of. That day we left, satisfied buyers, with something quite different from what we had set out to acquire.

We left with a supersize postcard, which we enclosed in an inexpensive, homemade frame from a hardware store at Beech Mountain and hung over the dresser in our bedroom.

There, it's a daily reminder to us to work every day at keeping our priorities straight and our lives, separately and jointly, in balance. It also reminds us of just how valuable a commodity our time is, something not to fritter away. How many times have you, like me, looked back and wondered, "Where has this day gone?"

Today, fresh from another hill-top vacation and trying to settle into routine again, I ran across the same sentiments, tucked away in the back of the cookbook published recently by St. James The Fisherman Episcopal Church in Shallotte. Thought you might enjoy them also.

1. Take time to work
...It is the price of success.

Susan Usher



2. Take time to think
...It is the source of power.
3. Take time to play
...It is the secret of youth.
4. Take time to read
...It is the foundation of knowledge.
5. Take time to worship
...It is the highway of reverence and washes the dust of earth from our eyes.
6. Take time to help and enjoy friends
...It is the source of happiness.
7. Take time to love
...It is the one sacrament of life.
8. Take time to dream
...It hitches the soul to the stars.
9. Take time to laugh
...It is the singing that helps with life's loads.
10. Take time to plan
...It is the secret of being able to have time to take time for the first nine things.

Stay On The Line Until Someone Answers?

Joe Moore only wanted a bit of information, but what he got was a heavy dose of frustration. His beef is with the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles.

Moore owns a small business in Sandy Creek. He stays busy changing tires, fixing flats, inspecting cars and sending motorists on their way again down the Andrew Jackson Highway, U.S. 74-76.

He recently wanted to purchase a travel trailer from someone and had a question about its title. Playing it safe, he went to the Wilmington office of the DMV hoping someone could help.

But it is the Raleigh office that had the answer to his question. They gave him a telephone number to call, 733-3025. Sounds simple enough.

So on Aug. 15, he called Raleigh eight times.

"Each time, they put you on a machine," said Moore. "They tell you to stay on the line until someone becomes available. Then they tell you that you are being charged for this call."

Moore waited and waited for a human to answer his call. One time he waited four minutes. When no one answered, he hung up.

The next day he called twice. Each time, the machine answered and placed him on hold. When he got his telephone bill recently, it showed 10 charges for the calls to the DMV office in Raleigh, and he has yet to talk to a human being

Terry Pope



there. Machines can be programmed to answer telephones, give you cash when a bank is closed or even call your home with a prerecorded message. But man has yet to invent a machine that can intelligently respond to your questions about a motor vehicle title.

Moore ended up calling the Wilmington office again to ask if there was another number where he could reach someone at the Raleigh DMV office. He was told there was no other customer number.

"What number do you call when you have a question and need to contact someone up there?" he asked.

He had them there. They admitted that they did have a special number to call, but that it wasn't for customers. Would you expect an employee to put up with their own answering machine? One hopes that others would treat customers the way they would like to be treated.

"I still haven't gotten through," said Moore. "I had waited for the bill to arrive to see what I was being charged for those calls."

Folks in Sandy Creek are like people found all across Brunswick County. I'd venture to say that a majority of people would react the same way Joe Moore has reacted to his frustrating little experience.

Government bureaucracy has grown into a monster. The individual can be made to feel like an insignificant number—just wait and take a turn. The world has become too automated and impersonal. There comes a time to draw the line, to stop the merry-go-round and ask, just what are we doing to ourselves?

Moore has a solution to the DMV deal.

"They should either put you on a regular telephone or give you a busy signal until you get somebody," he said, "instead of leaving

you sitting there. I don't know how many other people have done the same thing."

This is no earth-shattering crisis and some may think it trivial, but it's the larger picture that's important here. Joe Moore isn't just angry at a telephone answering machine, for is the new technology really an improvement over the traditional busy signals? If we sit back and say nothing, just how far can the little guy be pushed around?

Moore has another beef regarding increases in state privilege license fees, from \$25 to \$100, and the posting of dealer bonds, from \$15,000 to \$25,000, but that's another story.

"They're just getting out of hand," said Moore. "How's the little guy going to stay in business?"

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

She Followed Orders

To the editor:

Yes, I am "the" bridge operator at Sunset Beach. It's been amazing how many of you recognize me. You know "the one" the headline was about in last week's paper. I didn't realize how infamous I had become until I went out to eat, did some shopping, etc.

It's time for my side of the story. I did what I did over Labor Day weekend because I was told to, although my boss later lied about that. I have given notice because of the situation and will move soon.

In the meantime, I don't care into which of my body cavities you'd like to shove the bridge, and I am not "that dumb a--." My name is (although you already know the face):

Laurie E. Belvin
 Bridge Operator, Sunset Beach



Is There A Better Time Than Football Season?

If there's a better time of year than the start of football season, I would like to know what it is.

Whether you're into high school, college or professional football, there's nothing like the start of the season.

Every team—no matter how pathetic they are—has high hopes at the start of the season. Weak teams are hoping to improve over the previous year, and strong teams are looking to win it all.

High school and college ball are fine. But I'm partial to the National Football League brand of football. And I have high hopes that this will be a great season for the NFL.

If I went with my heart, I wouldn't hesitate to pick the Philadelphia Eagles to win the Super Bowl. But I learned a long time ago that betting with your heart often leaves you flat busted.

Even though the team's star quarterback, Randall "The Ultimate Weapon" Cunningham, is out for

Doug Rutter



the season with a knee injury, I expect the Eagles to have another good year.

Say what you want about back-up quarterback Jim McMahon. He's weird, has a history of injuries and wears his hair in a pony tail, but he's proven that he can lead a team to the championship.

I still think the Eagles will make the playoffs, and I wouldn't dismiss their chances at winning the Super Bowl.

The reason is simple. A lot of interesting and painful things can happen during a 16-week football sea-

son. Every starting quarterback in the league could go down before it's all over.

I guess I have to say something about the Washington Redskins, given all of the fans they have in these parts. A few of them seem to work in this building.

The only good thing I can say about the Redskins is that I don't hate them half as much as I hate the Dallas Cowboys. The Redskins also have a pretty cool logo on their helmets.

It's a long season, but I'm going to stick my neck out anyway and make some predictions while it's still anybody's ball game. Please keep in mind these predictions are subject to change at any time without prior notice.

Although there are some strong teams in the National Football Conference, I think it will once again come down to the New York Giants and San Francisco 49ers.

The Giants barely won the con-

ference championship last year, and I think the 49ers will barely win it this year. I've got a feeling the quarterback duel in New York will prevent the Giants from repeating as champs.

In the American Football Conference, Buffalo is clearly the dominant team. Houston and Kansas City will contend for the title, but they're really no threat with the Bills high-powered offense.

If it weren't for a missed field goal, Buffalo would have won the Super Bowl last year. The Giants got lucky.

The Bills will return this year for another shot at the Lombardi Trophy and won't go home empty-handed. They'll beat the 49ers rather easily.

With four Super Bowls, San Francisco was considered the team of the 80s. I think this year's Super Bowl will represent a changing of the guard—the team of the 80s losing to what might become the team of the 90s.

Nonreading Adults: Who They Are, How We Can Help

Hanna Arlene Fingeret

I'm often asked to respond to the question, "Who are illiterate adults?" I find myself struggling to answer.

My first inclination is to respond academically, citing the research literature. But this response is fundamentally unsatisfactory, because it puts me in the position of speaking for persons who are quite capable of speaking for themselves.

The skills, worldview and attitudes of nonreading adults differ in some ways from those of highly literate adults; these differences are viewed as problems and the skills are dismissed or downgraded.

Even worse, educators have inherited a literacy mystique that implies that adults with low literacy skills are unable to develop good moral character. As a result, educators and the general public tend to turn to researchers for information;

they do not consider nonreading adults to be credible or competent sources of information about themselves, their lives, their dreams, or their views of what a literacy program ought to look like.

Many people who are unable to use print as a way of making sense of the world are nonetheless quite able to use other modes of learning and communications. But the image of nonreading adults as fundamentally incompetent has become deeply embedded in our conventional wisdom, even though this image is not supported by critical examination or by current research and theory development. In addition, many nonreading adults are productive workers, family members

and, in some cases, community leaders.

Adults with low-level literacy skills are not a homogeneous group. Their experiences, motivations, aspirations and circumstances vary, as in any community. However, they are all creators of their own social lives and they participate in the ongoing creation and maintenance of the social world in which they live. This is not a trite statement—understanding that nonreading adults may nonetheless communicate quite effectively leads to fundamental questions about the assumptions underlying the stereotypes.

Like members of all oppressed groups, adults with low print literacy skills have had to invest far more energy in understanding the ways of mainstream culture than is true in reverse.

Even when unable to read and write, nonreading adults are productive workers, family members

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