

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Political Campaigning Courtesy Of The Public?

The heavy, cream-colored legal size envelope bearing the letterhead of the Brunswick County Register of Deeds looked too important to throw away.

A rectangular safety yellow sticker on the front bore this message: "This Envelope Contains **IMPORTANT** Legal Documents Returned For Your Safekeeping."

Inside, on official letterhead with the Brunswick County seal, a grammatically faulty, computer generated, personalized letter congratulating a local couple on their wedding anniversary. It reads in part, "...In these time when so many marriages end in divorce, you are to be commended for yours."

The letter is signed, by stamp or machine, by Robert J. Robinson, register of deeds.

From all appearances, this letter and unknown others similar to it, are being created and mailed at public expense by the Brunswick County Register of Deeds. Who gets them, anyway? Any couple who has celebrated a wedding anniversary? Or just those marking their 10th or higher year together? Democrats? Republicans? Non-voters? Prominent residents of the county?

What nerve!

Given that the typical business letter costs approximately \$8 to produce, it's our duty to question the propriety of such an expense.

County residents should be offended by this use of office equipment, staff time, public records and county revenues.

Misrepresentation of this puffery as "important legal documents" should be an embarrassment to Robinson.

It doesn't matter whether county property tax dollars are covering the tab. If the cost is being borne entirely by fees generated by the register of deeds office, that would be just as wrong.

If Robert J. Robinson, register of deeds, is paying for the letters with his own money, then he should be sending them out on a personal, not official, letterhead.

Under no circumstances should such a letter appear to be official county business. It doesn't matter if the letters are a clumsy public relations maneuver, an effort to simply get before the public the name of the register of deeds, an elected public official.

Such a letter as this should never have left the office of the Brunswick County Register of Deeds or any other publicly funded office.

Let's hope this isn't the kind of activity being promoted by the North Carolina Association of Register of Deeds, which Robinson serves as legislative chairman.

## Just A Little Preventive Maintenance Hurts No One

Some people say low pressure pipe (LPP) sewer systems are polluting our coastal waters. Others say there is no solid proof, that an attack on LPPs is just an attack on local developers.

Whether LPPs are a true danger to humans and shellfish remains to be seen—they've been around less than 10 years and no one has yet written the definitive book on the subject. However, a little preventive maintenance hurts no one.

That's the reasoning behind the Brunswick County Board of Health's policy adopted last week that will try to keep tabs on future LPPs permitted by the health department. Local officials want to "ensure their proper maintenance" to allay the fears of those who question why the same soil that's not suitable for a traditional septic system can work miracles for an LPP.

LPP systems were developed and approved by the state as an alternative for soils where traditional gravity-fed septic tank systems do not function well. Such systems must be wired and equipped with a mechanical pump. They also contain a series of small pipes that make better use of top soils for drainage fields.

If not maintained properly, the pumps fail, the nitrification fields can erode and leachate may surface. The policy aims at making sure LPPs are maintained properly by requiring that owners hire contractors who will inspect the systems regularly. It's a way to make sure the systems work as expected.

This health board took a tremendous step when it adopted the policy. The N.C. Health Services Commission should be embarrassed.

The commission dragged its feet in adopting LPP regulations while the public demanded that attention be given to a potential polluter of our estuarine waters. Word flowing from Raleigh now indicates the commission may delay its regulations again, until July 1993.

No one is trying to block LPPs from being used in Brunswick County. The health board simply wants to make sure that a system that needs maintenance gets that maintenance.

A former board of health chairman, who is also a septic tank contractor, speaks from authority when he says, "The only thing I have found, as a contractor, is that they do need maintenance."

Sometimes you have to take a stand. The Brunswick County Board of Health has progressively pursued measures to try to protect the public's health.

What the state couldn't, or wouldn't do, little brother has managed to accomplish.

## Shrimpers Have Real Good Cause To Complain

Brunswick County shrimpers are fed up with the federal government and its rules mandating the use of turtle excluder devices in shrimp nets.

That's not really big news. After all, it seems commercial fishermen are always complaining about one regulation or another.

In fact, fishermen as a group like very few of the rules that are imposed on them. They feel that every little regulation cuts their ability to harvest seafood and hurts their income.

But in this case, I think the shrimpers have good cause to complain. I think the federal government is giving shrimpers a raw deal requiring the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs).

For those of you who don't know, turtle excluders are contraptions with escape hatches that are sewn into shrimp nets to keep endangered sea turtles from accidentally getting caught and drowning.

Tests have shown that TEDs sig-

nificantly reduce the number of sea turtles that are caught in nets. But the problem is, TEDs also allow shrimp and marketable fish to escape along with the turtles.

Rules require boats 25 feet or longer to be equipped with TEDs while working in the ocean. Smaller boats in the ocean and all trawlers working inshore have the option of using TEDs or lifting their nets every 90 minutes.

For the past two years, North Carolina shrimpers have been required to abide by the rules between May 1 and Aug. 31. That's when most of the sea turtle activity occurs

in North Carolina.

But the National Marine Fisheries Service recently announced that the rules would be enforced year-round. That's what has local shrimpers up in arms—and rightfully so.

I'm all for the protection of sea turtles. But North Carolina officials and shrimpers question the need for regulations in a state where there are relatively few turtles most of the year.

I guess what gets me is that federal fisheries officials themselves have been reluctant about these turtle excluder rules from the time they were first implemented in 1989.

Shortly after the rules took effect, the Coast Guard temporarily stopped enforcing them because sea grasses were clogging nets in the Gulf of Mexico.

Then enforcement was resumed, but only long enough for the U.S. Secretary of Commerce to issue a 45-day moratorium on the rules.

The moratorium was lifted a few

weeks later, when the feds implemented another plan giving shrimpers the option of using TEDs or limiting their tow time to 105 minutes.

This all happened over the period of about a month, which sends out a very strong signal that federal fisheries officials didn't really know what they were doing when the rules took effect.

Now the government has extended the turtle excluder rules so they remain in effect year-round.

Why did they do it? It wasn't because they believe the rules are working so great. The government simply wants time to develop new rules for sea turtle protection.

That's sounds good to me. Sea turtles need all the help they can get. But in the meantime, the federal government should not make the shrimpers suffer.

It seems to me that the government needs to get its act together on turtle excluders before they can expect the shrimpers to follow suit.

**Doug Rutter**



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Is This How You Want Your Child Taught?

To the editor:

In answer to Ms. Usher's questions in *The Brunswick Beacon* dated Sept. 19, this is what all the "flurry over Quest" is about.

I am not against future Miss Americas picturing themselves achieving their goals. Nor am I opposed to the acting out of history, thereby creating a more exciting learning experience for children. This type of visualization is not harmful. This uses the imaginative capacities of a child.

The type I oppose is one in which a child is asked to do relaxation exercises in which they completely clear their minds and then are asked to dwell on one particular thought (meditation). When they completely clear their minds it allows for the views and thoughts of other persons to be put there in place of their own.

As for the claim that Quest helps children to gain self-confidence and self-esteem, it is alright to a degree. As parents we spend a good deal of time training our children during their growing up years not to be selfish and to have considera-

tion for others. This program feeds children on "I, me and mine" to the extent that egos are blown out of proportion and the consideration and love for others is gone. They thereby lose respect for their parents, their elders, their peers and, most of all, God.

Now don't get me wrong, I believe in self-esteem and confidence, but not to the extreme that you esteem yourself higher than your fellow man.

Our country was founded on the principles of all men being created equal. Will we be equal when our future leaders look down upon their fellow man?

Another concept of Quest I don't understand is the journals. Why are the children required to record their's and their family's private lives in a journal? Why aren't parents allowed to read these? Mr. Owens (principal) says they're no more than a personal diary that anyone might keep. I personally would not want my diary (if I had one) to be viewed and scrutinized by teach-

ers and anyone else's eyes who may happen to see it. Would you?

Look at the test scores; are they wasting valuable school time (that as taxpayers we pay for) on a so-called drug program that does not put emphasis on saying no, but puts it on you have a choice?

Instead of teaching academic skills, Mr. Owens says middle school philosophy is exploring, not academics. Academics will be emphasized in high school. Parents, is this how you want your child taught? Is your child getting the education he or she is entitled to or are they being used as guinea pigs? Since there is a need to have a drug program, why can't it be one that's just that without all of the extra baggage along with it?

As for me being a religious fanatic, if loving God and trying to instill my children with Godly principles is wrong, then so be it!

Marty Euper  
Shallotte

(Letters Continue On Following Page)

## BCC Foundation Helps Open The Doors

Brunswick Community College, like its sister institutions across the state, has an open door policy.

That means it is to try to meet the educational needs of any person who crosses its threshold, taking them from wherever they are—non-reader to Ph.D.—and helping them get where they're wanting to go. A student may want to pass a written driver's license exam or get a high school diploma, retrain in a technical field.

Meeting the diverse needs of these students is a challenge anytime, and especially so when a school lacks the faculty, equipment, textbooks and other materials required.

BCC has been through some tough times. After passage of a major bond referendum and the start of a major building program, it lost students following a statewide enrollment scandal and fired its first president.

Then, just when its student body began increasing again and with it the need for more instructors, books and supplies, state budget woes that have led to one cut in funding after another.

And management staff has been handling an extra workload, since no successor has been named to the

late dean of continuing education, Jesse Clemons, and several other persons have had to take extensive sick leave.

To make morale even better, Ben Deblois, vice president of administrative services, has found himself saying "No" to a lot of requests that involved money.

However reluctantly, he's had to block routine requests for work-related travel to training conferences, lab or shop equipment and other supplies.

One group has helped significantly to bridge the gap between what the college can afford to do and what it would like to do: the BCC Foundation.

Its supporters have raised funds for student scholarships and loans as well as for computer software and auto mechanic shop equipment. The Foundation serves also as a vehicle for BCC to receive in-kind gifts such as equipment and books for the library, as well as cash.

At the Foundation's annual meeting last Thursday night, guests heard a virtual litany of how the Foundation has made a difference for the better at BCC. Students and

instructors shared one inspiring story after another. Students who would not have been able to continue in school without help from the Foundation. Instructors who would not have been able to teach properly without equipment the Foundation made possible...

The needs the BCC Foundation has met in some instances are so basic, so essential, one wonders if the college would have survived this long without this type of community support.

It becomes very clear that the BCC Foundation could use a little more help from the rest of us.

With our gifts, you and I can help make it possible for the doors at BCC to truly be open and for the college to do more to meet the needs of all its students.

Outgoing director Paul Dennis summed up the Foundation experience nicely last Thursday night as we left the Sea Trail conference center. "You never know who you're helping," he said.

That's the beauty of it. If you're interested, contact Vicki Spencer at BCC. She'll be delighted to let you know how you can help too.



**Susan Usher**

gotten worse. Last year BCC had to actually call back an order for books temporarily because of a spending freeze.

This year employees aren't getting pay raises. And the state left BCC to either pass on or pick up the tab for increased health insurance premium costs—about \$300 for each of its 68 or so employees.

BCC hasn't had the financial flexibility to take on more full-time faculty, relying very expensively on part-time instructors. Staff members have had to wear multiple hats, teaching one or more courses each term in addition to their other responsibilities.

And management staff has been handling an extra workload, since no successor has been named to the