

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1991

Forum Was Needed Before Gambling Charges Brought

Some people were recently hit with more than a jackpot while playing video games. They got slapped into handcuffs.

Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) agents recently swarmed the county, seizing slot machines and video-poker games from Long Beach to Sunset Beach. They issued 19 charges against eight defendants, tying up time in Brunswick County District Court to enforce on us their own definition of gambling.

I guess we're suppose to be impressed that law officers are out there protecting us from those harmful video games.

But shouldn't Brunswick County's high crime areas earn more attention instead, rather than a petty investigation of video machines inside respectable restaurants, clubs and pizzerias—where the victims are those who voluntarily give up their quarters?

The law says gambling and casinos are not allowed in North Carolina. Horse racing is out. So are dog races and a state lottery. Other states allow these things, but in North Carolina it's too great a risk to let individuals impose moral standards on themselves. We have to let someone else do it for us.

It began last month, when a sweep in New Hanover County gained quite a bit of media attention when several machines were seized from a truck stop along with \$4,200 inside the machines.

You slip a quarter into a video poker machine, press some buttons and five playing cards appear on the screen. Depending on the buttons you push, and if you push them at the right time, you can either lose your quarter or rack up on enough credits to win coupons to trade in on merchandise or eat: a free game.

Some people say it is gambling, while others say the games should be legal as long as no cash payoffs are made. "Winners" are given coupons, redeemable for up to \$10 in merchandise.

According to Webster's dictionary, gambling is to "play a game for money or property" or "to bet on an uncertain outcome." At question is whether one wins by chance or skill?

An illegal game will involve more chance than skill, like the slot machines that line the casinos in Las Vegas—where you insert the token, pull the lever and wait for the dials to stop spinning on their own.

There are so many questions that have not been answered regarding the influx of these new machines into the Tarheel state—whether they are legal or illegal, whether it is gambling or for fun, whether the businesses should be held accountable or the suppliers.

Until the answers are confirmed, it doesn't seem fair to businesses or to individuals that own them to suddenly become the target of some criminal raid.

During the recent raid on Brunswick County restaurants, even two waitresses were charged by ALE agents for slot machine violations. How would you like to take the rap for a decision your boss made, with or without your input? To you, it may be just a job. Charges against the waitresses were dismissed in court last week.

I do not gamble and I realize some people have problems with gambling and should not be around the machines. But machines do not come to people begging for quarters. Kids spend just as much money playing Pac-man or pinball machines.

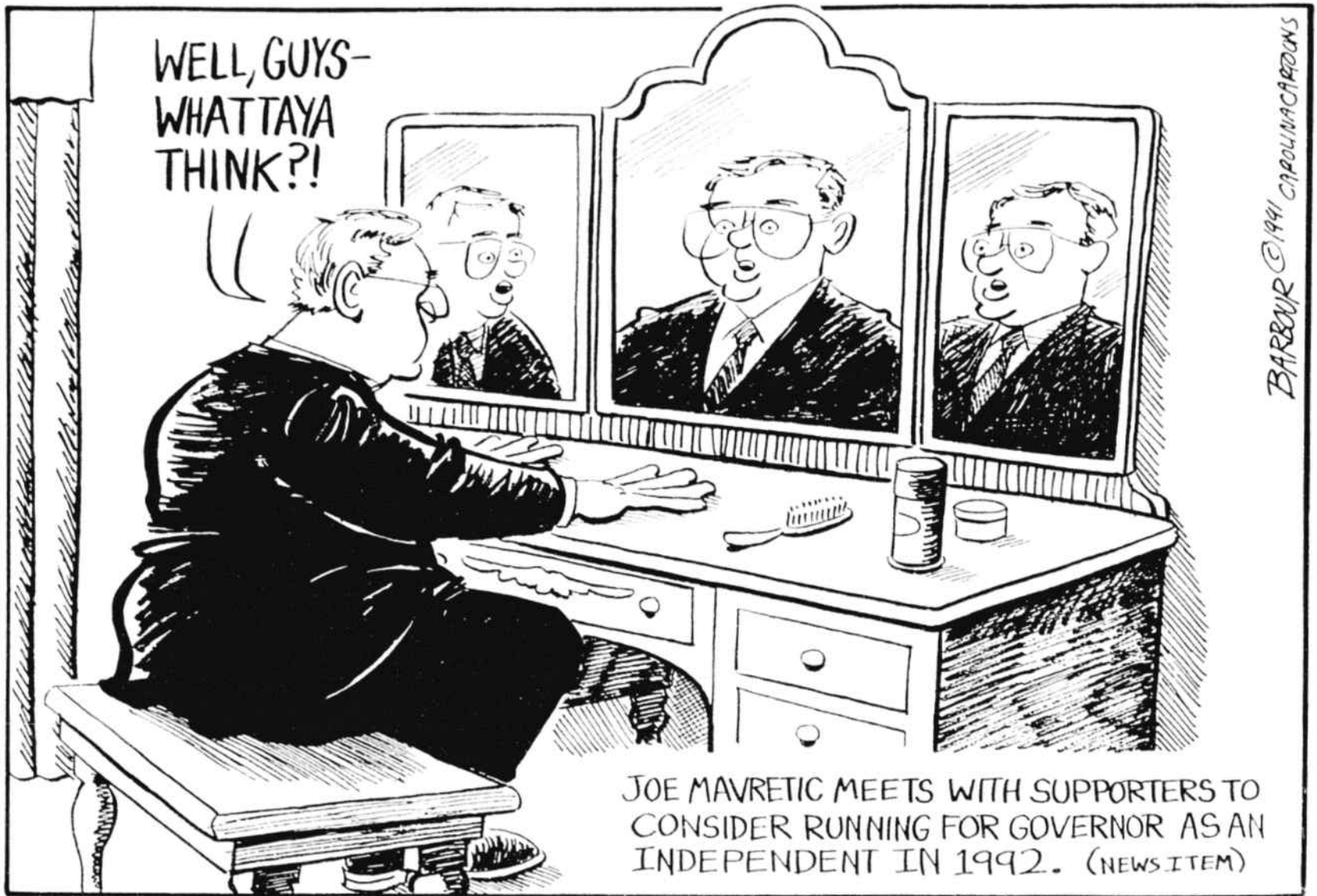
Just last month, District Attorney Rex Gore was quoted as saying he doesn't believe the machines that award coupons for merchandise or free games to be illegal, while machines that pay in cash jackpots were. The issue seemed settled in Brunswick County.

Defense attorney for those facing charges in court last week said his clients were not aware that these game machines were considered illegal.

Indeed, sometimes there's a thin line between just playing a game and gambling. We could all learn from an educational program on this new and developing issue.

I'm not at all impressed with this business of agents sweeping in and filing such charges ahead of any type of educational forum for local residents. It's like shooting first and asking the right questions later.

Terry Pope



JOE MAVRETIC MEETS WITH SUPPORTERS TO CONSIDER RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR AS AN INDEPENDENT IN 1992. (NEWS ITEM)

Get Smart About The Medicines You Take

A 70-year-old woman with a new prescription medicine reports feeling depressed and disoriented. But those symptoms are not usually associated with the medicine she's taking.

A low dose of a barbiturate unexpectedly causes a young mother to lose consciousness.

Some individuals deliberately abuse prescription drugs, others do so without realizing it. The medical problems that sometimes result could have been avoided, perhaps, simply by knowing how one drug reacts with another and by following the doctor's instructions in taking medicine. In short, by being a more informed consumer.

I've never had to take enough medicine for foul-ups to be a problem. But many of the elderly people I know spend a good portion of their monthly incomes on medicine. A lot of them are being seen by more than one doctor and getting prescriptions from them all. They may even be getting prescriptions filled at different places, the pharmacy near a particular doctor's office, for example. The patients may

Susan Usher



be the only individuals who know all the medications they are taking at a given time.

They are the people most likely to have problems like those described above.

As part of a month-long campaign, the North Carolina Medical Society is encouraging patients to bring their prescription and non-prescription medicine to their primary doctor for review. The doctor will examine the medicines and talk with the patient about whether the medications are likely to cause problems when taken at the same time.

What will they be looking for? You can check your own medicines over for some of the same potential

uh-ohs:

—Duplication of medicines. A patient may be taking the same product under more than one name.

—Contraindications and drug interactions. These can be very serious, depending upon a person's allergies, reported side effects and the potential for interaction among all prescribed and over-the-counter medicines the patient is taking.

—Drugs that sound alike. A patient taking more than one medicine may mix up the names of products. That can cause problems, such as going by the wrong instructions for use or not taking some medicines at all.

—Change in orders. The way a patient says he or she has been told to use a medicine and the instructions on the container may not be the same. A doctor may have verbally changed the regimen or a pharmacy may have not changed the refill label.

—Improper use. Sometimes a patient doesn't understand how to use a medication. He may end up taking a drug more often than he should or less often, taking it at the wrong

time or taking it on a full stomach when it should be taken on an empty stomach. Sometimes a patient intentionally chooses not to follow instructions as given, sometimes deciding the results are better when the medicine is taken "his way." If the results are better, the doctor may consider changing the directions.

—Expired medicines. Some patients don't use all the medicine prescribed. They may keep what's left over "for the next time." And some patients who have a prescription for only occasional use may not empty a container even after several years. A patient may also keep a prescription that has not expired but that he is no longer to take.

Dr. Ronald B. Mack, chairman of the North Carolina Medical Society's drug abuse and pharmacy committee, says the best thing to do is ask questions of your family doctor about the medicines you're taking.

That's sounds like good advice for anyone who's taking any combination of prescription and/or over-the-counter drugs. Be a smart consumer. Check it out.

Stingy Trojans Just Keep Steamrolling Along

Those Trojans are a stingy bunch.

In case you haven't heard, the West Brunswick High School football team was undefeated after four games and definitely on a roll.

Going into last week's game at Fairmont, the Trojans had scored 99 points and given up only 14. That's impressive, folks.

They had outscored their opponents by an average of three touchdowns a game. And things weren't expected to change at Fairmont, which hadn't won any games this season.

While the Trojan offense has been busy racking up points, the defense has been nothing short of awesome, posting two shutouts and holding the opponents to two passing scores over the first four games. Is that a stingy defense or what?

Doug Rutter



That's tighter than two coats of paint, if you ask me.

The Trojans' biggest win to date came two weeks ago against arch rival Whiteville, which had been ranked third in the Associated Press 2-A high school football poll.

West Brunswick won 19-7 on the strength of its defense, which held the mighty Wolfpack to minus eight yards rushing and one first down in

the second half.

Just how tough is this Trojan defense? Head Coach Marshall Seay compared them to sharks during a feeding frenzy. Ouch!

The coach said they love to hit so hard that they can't practice defense during the week without injuring their teammates. Double Ouch!

That might be locker room talk. Then again, maybe it isn't. One thing's for sure, they love to hit and they've got some big dudes on that defense.

So why am I suddenly on the West Brunswick bandwagon?

I'll be honest with you. I normally don't get too enthused about high school football, even if a local team like the Trojans is unbeaten.

But the way it looks now, West Brunswick is about the only football

team I can pull for this season.

I'm really not a big college football fan. I wouldn't be too upset if Penn State won another national championship, but that seems highly unlikely at this point in the season.

And the bad luck has gotten even worse for my Philadelphia Eagles. It's hard to play pro football with your top two quarterbacks on the sidelines clutching their knees in pain.

So the Trojans are my last resort. If they can't continue their great season, then we might as well skip football season and go right to college hoops and March Madness.

I hate to put pressure on those impressionable high school athletes. But I think they're up to the challenge. All I ask is that they do their best.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Good Old Days Always Seem Better

To the editor:
 I don't recall seeing William H. Stanley at the school board meeting when I spoke in favor of Lion's Quest and Pathways to Excellence.

I spoke, not as a professional, but as a concerned citizen and President of Rx Excellence Foundation. If Mr. Stanley had been present, he would know that Janet Pope had implied that the Quest program and Pathways to Excellence and their supporters were involved in a surreptitious and nefarious attempt to "brainwash" children away from God and parent. My opinion was that this thinking did not meet the burden of proof, hence my reference to "smacks to McCarthyism."

I never said schizophrenia which, as Mr. Stanley knows, would require a professional assessment and diagnosis.

And as Mr. Stanley states in his letter, "this county was built on the free exchange of ideas." I stated in my remarks to the board that I respected Janet Pope's opinions as her right. I simply disagreed and gave

my opinion and for that I have no apology.

Lion's Quest and Rx Excellence are simply interested that each student have the knowledge to enable him/her to fulfill their God-given talent—nothing more; nothing less.

As for the remainder of Mr. Stanley's thoughts—the good old days always seem better; students and teachers ARE responsible and I have faith in both to be their best.

Lee Langston
 President
 Rx Excellence Foundation
 Shallotte

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.



THE LARGE, VELVETY LEAVES of the common mullein can be attractive in the early morning dew.

One Of The Best Of The Weeds

BY BILL FAVER

Some people call it the velvet plant or flannel leaf because of the large, hairy leaves. Others know it as Jacob's staff and shepherd's club, names inspired by the tall, stout stems of yellow flowers during the summer. The scientific name of this weed introduced from Europe is *Verbascum Thapsus* and it is known to many of us as the common mullein.

These wild plants can be found in fields, old pastures, along roadsides and in waste places. They are biennial plants, requiring two seasons to reach maturity. The first year the basal rosettes, with leaves sometimes as long as one foot, develop and spread close to the ground with gray-green, oblong leaves.

The second spring produces a tall stem with leaves similar to those on the ground and a dense spike of flowers at the top. This stem can reach from 1 to 8 feet tall and will have small yellow flowers in clusters of three, with the center one usually opening first. Each flower can be an inch or less in size and has five petals. They seem to open a few at the time and will last all the second summer, from June through September.

Mulleins were grown in early gardens for their woolly, absorbent leaves which some thought could be used for healing wounds. Sometimes the leaves were used as bandages for wounds to absorb bleeding. We are told mullein leaves were used like tobacco by the native Americans to relieve asthma.

These "weeds" belong to the Figwort family and are relatives of the fox-gloves and toadflax. The species has been hybridized and some ornamental varieties for the garden can be purchased in pinks, blues, and reds as well as the pale yellow of the natural plant.

The hairy leaves are just right for catching early morning dew and provide a source of water for small insects which can sometimes be found on the large leaves. The velvety leaves are attractive and we can understand why someone decided "velvet plant" and "flannel leaf" were good names for this imported weed.



FAVER

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER