

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Speed Controls, Signs Could Make Shallotte Bypass Safer

A double fatality last Friday at the intersection of the U.S. 17 bypass and N.C. 130 near West Brunswick High School has spawned a "told you so" rehashing of the earlier debate over the need for an overpass rather than the existing grade-level intersection because it would be used by so many school buses and young, inexperienced drivers.

"It was just a matter of time," was the comment heard most often in the wake of the accident.

A logging truck apparently ran the red light on the bypass, striking two autos before overturning and bursting into flames. The drivers of both cars died, while the truck driver was treated for injuries and released.

Certainly an overpass or a bypass relocated farther west beyond the school would have been better in terms of safety. Unfortunately, right-of-way acquisition and other preliminaries to bypass construction had begun before the high school was ever envisioned. Revamping those plans might have been a good idea, but would have involved major delays and a great deal more money. The state Department of Transportation wasn't open to either at the time local officials were pushing for something better.

The only concession offered: a traffic signal at the grade-level intersection instead of simply stop signs on N.C. 130 for traffic crossing the bypass.

Now even the light's effectiveness has been questioned, with motorists and observers alike complaining that too few vehicles have time to cross before the light changes.

The debate is over as to relocating the bypass or replacing it with an overpass.

However, there are things state and local officials and all motorists can do to make that intersection and the entire bypass safer.

Make Bypass Safer

Motorists can start by observing the 55 mph speed limit. At times the bypass resembles nothing more than a race track during qualifications, with almost every driver a would-be Richard Petty jockeying for pole position.

Second, the Shallotte Police Department and State Highway Patrol can become more diligent in enforcing that speed limit in their jurisdictions for local and through traffic alike. An officer could stay busy full time writing speeding tickets on the bypass.

Also, the state should monitor the traffic signal for more than a single day and seriously consider adjusting the lights to provide more crossing time, especially during heavy traffic periods such as the beginning and ending of the school day.

Signs warning motorists of school-related traffic might also make a difference.

These are small things, but each could contribute to making the bypass a safer place for all of us who use it.

If you agree, let those who can help bring about these changes know. Meanwhile, slow it down.

We Can't Give Up On Recycling Yet

As I drove up to the recycling trailer in Shallotte last Wednesday, my car filled with what I thought would be my last load of recyclables, I was greeted by the trailer's closed doors.

I had heard that the Shallotte bin was full and would close that day, but I still thought I might have time on my lunch hour to drop off some more stuff.

Another hopeful recycler drove up. The woman inside of the car asked if the recycling bin was closed. We talked with heavy hearts for a few minutes and she drove off, declaring that she "hated to see it go in the landfill."

I stood there for a minute thinking, why does it have to go in the landfill?

The idea of the loss of recycling opportunities in Brunswick County has become a nauseating reality to me.

I have so many questions, but so few answers.

I wish I knew why recycling is such a struggle.

I cannot say anything negative about Brunswick County, because the full condition of the Shallotte trailer, and the worried response of local residents is evidence enough for me that I'm not the only one who thinks this is a serious issue.

I was glad when I relocated to this area to see so many people taking their recyclable waste to the neighborhood bins.

But I still wonder, why doesn't everyone across the country do this?



Dori Gurganus

Why can't people everywhere, especially in Congress and the White House see that recycling is one of many solutions for saving a green planet for our children?

Many people think this is not an immediate concern.

These are the people who probably weren't watching Peter Jennings about a month ago reporting on television that the Environmental Protection Agency, which normally is very conservative, is saying that ozone depletion is taking place right now. I watched, stunned, as a scientist said that we must stop filling the air with pollution that makes the hole in our life-saving ozone layer bigger.

But, overloaded landfills aren't really killing anyone right now. Scientists may even come up with a solution for supplying clean air and water to cities once we have no choice in the next five to 10 years. It may not matter if we never stop throwing it all away.

I hear that logic too often, that it's not affecting me now, so why should I recycle?

Well, I guess that question is a

Exit Polls: A Mistake From The Beginning

The results from an optional exit poll taken by voters Tuesday are not in this week's newspaper. Those ballots had to be tallied by hand, after the official election totals were in.

For what they are worth, the poll results should be available for next week's issue.

Brunswick County Commissioners added the exit poll to get public input on three issues—county zoning, fire and rescue service districts and non-partisan school board elections.

My ballot isn't among those now being counted, for I chose to ignore the poll. I voted on the binding referendum items—two- or four-year terms for commissioners and school board candidates, plus a redistricting plan—but felt the exit poll was a bit too much.

The present board of commissioners has made some brave and valiant decisions since reorganizing last December, when newcomers Donald Shaw of District 5 and Jerry Jones of District 2 joined hands with those already seated to make an all-Republican board.

Let's look at the record. They

Terry Pope



have:

- Interviewed county manager applicants in open session;

- Hired the logical choice for county manager, David Clegg, who is also county attorney—two for the price of one;

- Moved to consolidate the county's 67 ugly and costly green box garbage disposal sites into mini-transfer stations;

- Went after delinquent taxpayers by legally digging into their bank accounts and garnishing their wages for those who owe the county more than \$4 million;

- Got to the bottom of employee problems within the water department by hiring an outside consulting firm to study the situation;

- Stood behind Winnabow residents' who fought against a pet crematory for their neighborhood, at a state permit hearing in April;

- Hired a tax auditing firm to uncover, at no cost to the county, hidden taxes owed from large companies with outlets in the county;

- Revived, held a public hearing on, and adopted a much-needed new subdivision ordinance to protect consumers;

- Began looking into fire and rescue service districts as a possible way to fund volunteer services;

- Cut \$7.5 million from departmental budget requests to avoid a tax increase, even during a lean year with cuts in state funding;

- Followed a firm's recommendation to cut five employees from the water department that had been labeled as top-heavy;

- Voted to seek bids on possibly hiring a private company to take over the county's garbage collection and disposal service, in an effort to save county funds;

- Determined that parcel fees for

garbage collection were unfair to all taxpayers, and dumped the proposal after public protest;

- Financed a \$7 million water project, Phase III and III-A of the capital improvements, that will route lines to Seaside and Shallotte Point.

Commissioners voted 4-0 in September to have the exit poll. Since then, one commissioner has privately admitted it was a mistake and wishes he could take his vote back.

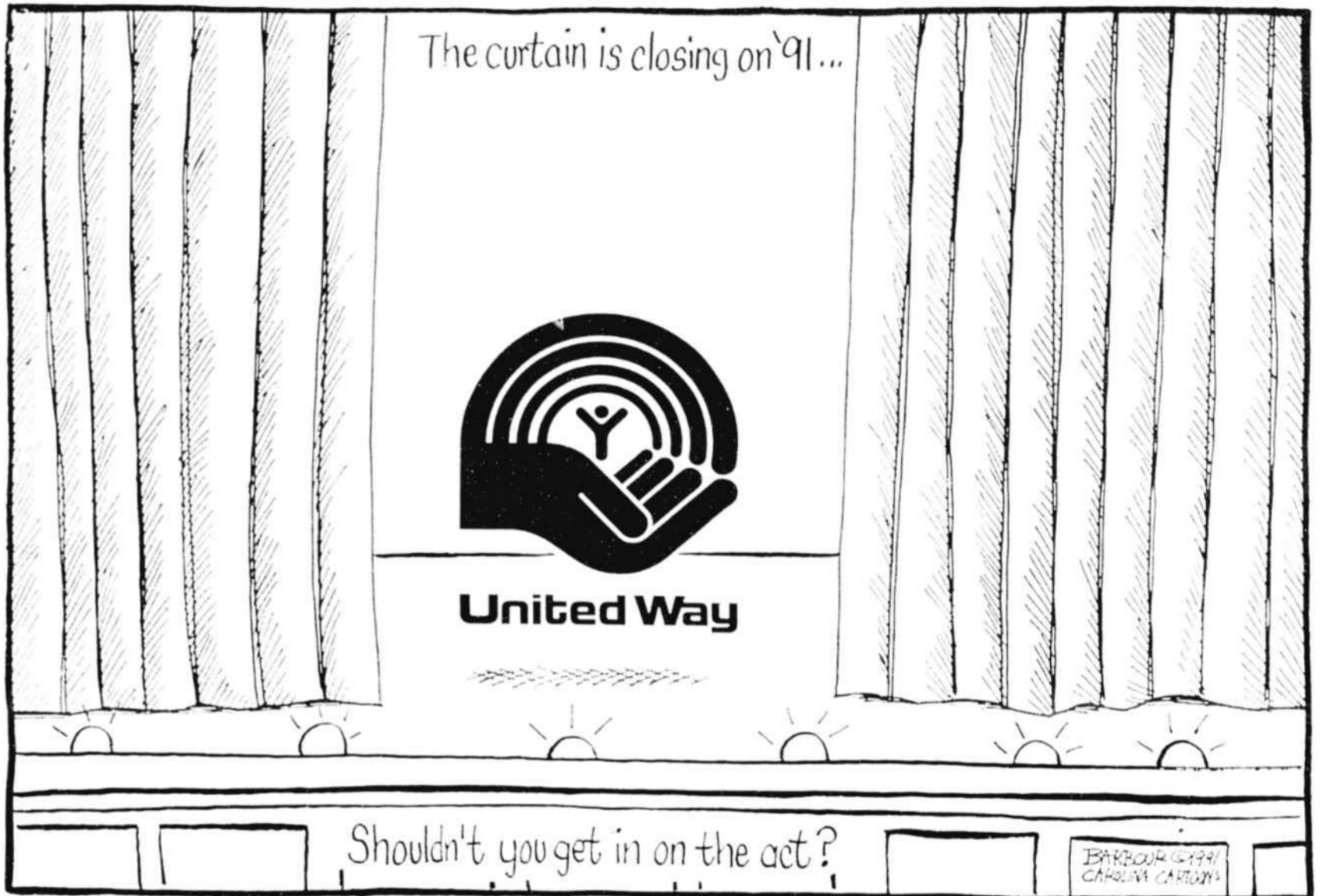
Why all the uneasiness? Reality settled in.

The tough and not always pleasant decisions outlined above were all made without exit polls.

After such a powerful start, the armor could start to tarnish on our commissioners if they keep this up. Perhaps they are beginning to realize this, too. They should be guided in their decisions by a much deeper commitment than a stupid exit poll.

By law, public hearings would have to be held if commissioners want fire and rescue service districts or a county zoning ordinance. They can gain their public input that way.

Exit polls are for wimps.



Can You Have Your Cake And Eat It Too?

The trail sign said "Closed To Hikers." Just a year earlier the mountain trail had been open, a favorite place to ramble.

Apparently too many of us liked it, though, and often strayed from it as well, damaging a beautiful natural area and making it more vulnerable to erosion, drought and other problems. As a consequence we now have to stay away from the area and give it time, hopefully, to heal.

We've moved on to other areas, and soon these trails may also be closed to the public because of overuse. Seems we tourists are sometimes as much a bane as we are a blessing.

How do you balance protection and sustenance of North Carolina's seemingly abundant natural resources with the demands of tourists for recreational areas?

Especially when a survey of 6,200 tourists in 1989-1990 indicated the things they liked most about our state are its unpolluted natural resources and its friendly people. How do you keep it that way and still accommodate growing numbers of visitors?

For that matter, how do you define tourism? How do you ensure that what a tourist expects of a given location matches his perceptions after arriving there? How do you determine what "drawing cards" will lure tourists to stop in a particular locale?

These are just a few of the questions researchers at N.C. State University are trying to address as the state's tourism industry shifts to accommodate the leisure needs of a more mobile and sophisticated society. I don't envy them the task.

North Carolina relies heavily on tourism—its third largest and fastest-growing industry. State leaders would like to be able to predict trends, to know what direction things are heading in and to capitalize on that knowledge.

Associate Professor Larry D. Guske and Assistant Professor Gene L. Brothers are, among other things, developing a "tourism barometer" for the state's Travel and Tourism Division that would monitor and measure the various components of tourism.

"In North Carolina—and at NC-SU," said Guske, "we are more apt to define tourism as recreation and enjoyment as it relates to the natural resources and the heritage—the state from the mountains to the shore."

The researchers are looking not only at the economics of tourism, but also the sociology—the aspect that concerns a person's recreation, enjoyment and interaction with na-

Susan Usher



ture, and their source of motivation. The researchers envision rural communities tapping their own traditions and developing them into marketable ideas that offer visitors an activity with a local twist.

As they look at tourists, the researchers are also learning a lot about the clashing of expectation with reality with perception.

That's when you conjure up an image of a place or experience in advance, only to find that the reality isn't the same, or at least doesn't appear to be the same to you. Helping get the three in line can make a difference in whether or not visitors have a disappointing or satisfying vacation experience.

Example: You've read the ads describing unsullied mountain lakes with boating, fishing and hiking.

"This is it, our dream get-away-

from-it-all vacation," you tell the family as you pack the Eddie Bauer hiking boots and Land's End Henleys.

But on arrival, you find the lake not at all what you had anticipated. Instead of a serene, pastoral setting you find noisy, racing powerboats. Reality doesn't live up to expectations. Sure, the lake has lots of room for powerboats, but they weren't what you expected to find.

With this barometer and some related studies, the two researchers say that they're going to examine "the whole picture" to help the state develop "a responsible management plan that will sustain the natural resources which are used by tourists for recreation."

It's an idea I'd like to see work. For now, though, I'm putting it in the "wishful thinking" file, right alongside the governor's Coastal Initiative Program which promises to help coastal communities figure out ways to protect their natural assets while using them to attract tourism and other industries.

My mother always told me you can't have your cake and eat it too. But still we keep on trying, and trying again. Was she wrong on this one? Only time will tell.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Nothing Wrong With AA/Quest

To the editor:

My name is Crystal Widener. I am in the seventh grade at Shallotte Middle School. That, of course, means that I am in the AA/Quest program.

I have read and heard many disturbing comments about the program. In my opinion, they are very untrue. There have been several letters printed in *The Brunswick Beacon* written by people opposing this program. Now it is my turn to express my opinion.

There is nothing at all wrong with AA. It teaches you many things that you can't learn in the ordinary math or science class. In the Quest program, you learn such things as how to express your feeling, how to build your self-esteem, how to get along with others, and how to say no to drugs and alcohol.

I do not see how these people can judge this program when they haven't sat down in the classroom with us and listened to what goes on between those walls. You can write as long a letter as you want to the editor about Quest, but it's a waste of time until you've set foot in that classroom.

Crystal Widener, Supply
 (More Letters On Following Page)