

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1991

## Tentative Water Policy Shift Is Move In Right Direction

In a rare show of unanimity last week, Brunswick County Commissioners voted unanimously to ask the county's Utility Operations Board to develop a means of having water customers along the county's main transmission lines pay a more equal share of the cost of putting in those lines.

The move may have come reluctantly, but the important thing is that the commissioners did decide to act before the next major transmission line project began. It was a now or maybe never kind of proposition.

The UOB should have time to recommend a policy for the commissioners to adopt before extension of lines south of Shallotte and in the Shallotte Point area begins.

It should come as no surprise to learn that UOB members were getting a little antsy about the prospect of having to continue to defend the existing county policy to residents of new SADs.

All county taxpayers are helping pay off county water bonds, whether they are actually served by the water system. Most don't complain, reckoning the county overall is benefitting economically.

But for those who live in areas designated for special assessment districts (SADs), the bonds were just one more example of "unjust" treatment.

We've heard it over and over again at public hearings: Not only are they paying their fair share to reduce the water bond indebtedness, they must also pay an assessment for the water line that runs along their property line whether or not they plan to buy water from the county. Then, if they choose to buy county water, they must pay the tap-on fee.

Depending upon the size and/or alignment of the land, the assessments can be steep—running into several thousands of dollars each.

While their neighbors in SADs around the corner pay once, twice and then again, those who live on major trunk lines such as those running along N.C. 179 and U.S. 17 haven't had to pay the line assessment.

It's been a longstanding policy, dating back to the very start of the water system when Brunswick County had no vision or intention of getting into retail water sales.

What the UOB will be exploring is the use of something called a "point of delivery" charge.

It or a similar device won't alleviate inequities in the cost of water service, but it's a good start.

Legally, the county can't make people along the major transmission lines tap on to the system and, unlike in the SADs, it can't make them pay an assessment.

Without a zoning ordinance, the county couldn't hardly charge an impact fee that could be associated with increased demand for water and other services.

What it can do, though, is up the tab for those who live along the trunk lines and become county water customers now or at some future date. Those who benefit more, pay more.

That policy apparently would affect anyone who applies for water after a certain date.

If other policy adoptions are any example, we can probably expect a small rush from residents along existing main lines to tap on now in order to avoid a point of delivery charge.

But those who are already connected cannot legally be assessed a delivery charge.

Obviously, a point of delivery charge isn't a salve for all the water system's cost-sharing ills, but it would be a move in the right general direction.

With a little research and ingenuity, the UOB might even come up with something better. They should be encouraged in that direction.

## It Had To Be A Mouse—Didn't It?

It had to be a mouse. What else could leave droppings the size of BBs all over the rattan chest and on the hearth of the living room fireplace?

For two weeks running, Don and I tiptoed into the living room each morning and there they were: more BBs. We'd clean them up, but sometimes when I came home for lunch there would be still more. This was a bold mouse, venturing out into the open day and night, it seemed.

We checked inside the chest. No sign of a mouse, though it was an ideal hiding and nesting place.

We checked the fireplace. Sure enough, the damper was open. Maybe a mouse had slipped in by that unlikely route. Don shut the damper and the two of us breathed a sigh of relief, certain the invader was in for an unpleasant surprise that night.

We brought in Sweetpea, our 16-year-old mostly dachshund that at one time was an excellent mouser.

"Mouse?" I asked, directing her toward the rattan chest and the fireplace. She stuck her head behind the chest and then stuck her nose into the fireplace, snuffling. Then she turned and looked at me as if to say,

Susan Usher



"You've got to be kidding. There's no hint of a mouse around here. Why are you wasting my time when I could be snoozing?" She snoozes a lot lately, but that's another column.

Unconvinced, I told Sweetpea she was just getting old and losing her nose. She slunk away, an inch closer to the carpet than usual, stung by my apparent disapproval.

Next morning, even with the damper closed, more BBs appeared. Where was this critter coming from? We determined to invest in a few traps and some likely mouse food.

Meanwhile, with Halloween just over and Thanksgiving approaching, a Scottish prayer kept coming to mind: "From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggety beasties And things that go bump in the night, Good Lord, deliver us!"

## Holidays Can Bring Out My Mushy Side

I vowed to myself, my husband and my friends that I wouldn't do it.

I've wanted to stay away from writing a column about being a new-comer to Brunswick County, but the Thanksgiving holiday just makes it so timely to say something about my new home.

What I want to say, at this appropriate Thanksgiving time of year, is that Brunswick County is something to be grateful for.

I know it sounds mushy, but there, I said it. And I'm not "just saying that," either.

This is beautiful country up here, and I hope that all Brunswick County residents know that.

To someone who lived all of her earlier life in slightly larger towns with huge billboards, flashing shop signs, lots of smelly traffic and freeways, living near the ocean in a small, quiet, clean town is very special.

Walking on Ocean Isle Beach



Dori Cosgrove Gurganus

with seagulls during a fiery sunset or watching the sun shine on the majestic, painted-white houses in Southport is just about the closest to paradise I think most of us will reach in this lifetime.

And the ocean beats a chlorinated swimming pool any day.

Of course, to people who love mountains, the beach might not be the greatest place.

I love mountains, too, but there's something about a beach that brings a person so close to fish and birds and all sorts of crawling creatures

and allows you to investigate them with what seems like more intensity.

I just can't seem to describe the beauty, but if you live here or have visited here, then you know what I'm talking about.

Of course, I know many natives here don't go near the beaches and instead drive to the mountains for their vacations.

I guess the way I feel about living inland is the way many seaside residents feel about living by the water. Enjoying the ocean just hasn't become commonplace to me yet.

A seafood-lover can't get really good seafood inland, either. I've eaten pretty much nothing but fresh shrimp since I moved here and I plan on eating many more before I grow tired of them.

I never realized that I was dining on weak imitations of seafood during my time in northeastern Georgia, but now I've seen the truth.

I will never eat at that chain seafood place again.

All my friends and family down there don't know what they're missing: beautiful scenery, good food and a pleasant, quiet community.

Well, I've done what I said I wouldn't do.

I hate to write a sweet, sentimental column, but the holidays seem to call for it.

And Thanksgiving is supposed to make us think of and be grateful for our home and family. My family isn't nearby, so I'll tell Brunswick County what I think about it.

There are many different things about living here that I'm enjoying getting used to, and as much as I didn't want to say it: I'm grateful that I do live in Brunswick County.

It'll even be easy to become used to not having a winning baseball team or any baseball team in this area, like the Atlanta Braves, as long as I get TBS.



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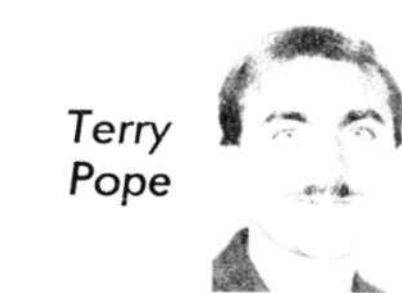
## Bears Share A Home In Our Neighborhood

From the headlights I could see something large and black by the side of the road, but as I approached it became obvious that it wasn't a dog—too large.

The black object turned slowly, crossed a ditch and headed into the woods along Maco Road (N.C. 87). I had gotten an uncommon glimpse of a bear in the wild last week, just a few miles from home. It looked like it may have been drinking water from a ditch near Goodman Road, an area not very heavily populated but where there are homes.

Bears are among those creatures that are found in Brunswick County but rarely give humans a show. They quietly roam in the Green Swamp and bays.

Since most people rarely see bears, they don't think about them either. Out of sight, out of mind. It comes as a shock when a bear wanders into a neighborhood, onto a golf course or crosses paths with someone who immediately thinks of



Terry Pope

grizzlies and man-eaters when they see the furry creatures.

At UNC-Wilmington, English professor Gerald Rosselot teaches a course on Southern literature. Among his required readings is William Faulkner's "The Bear."

Bears are a fascination for Rosselot, too, for he brings to class his collection of bear facts, bear memorabilia and information on people's odd curiosity about bears. It seems to be a southern curiosity.

He invites students to add to that collection—news clippings on tragic or humorous accounts of bears.

In Rosselot's class, which contained a mixture of Wilmington area and out-of-state students, the general reaction was one of surprise that bears are as commonly found in southeastern North Carolina as they are in Faulkner's Mississippi.

When I was very, very young someone shot and killed a mother bear and two cubs behind my parents' home in Maco. That wasn't yesterday, but there are still signs that bears still make their home nearby.

Last summer, when my folks spent a week in the mountains they came home to find the garden had been raided by animals. We think it was a bear that harvested the corn. Something had picked each ear from the stalks and carefully shucked it clean. Strange.

That deer hunter, years ago, had stumbled upon the mother, whose fierce protectiveness of her young cubs apparently scared him and triggered him to waste their lives. I've thought about that every since, how it was such a waste.

For just west of my parents' property is a vast tract of empty woods, logging roads and Green Swamp, a good home for bears. It shouldn't be a surprise that a hunter should stumble upon one or two.

Some do end up dead. A South Brunswick High School student got in trouble a few years ago for having a bear paw in his car in the school parking lot. A news report last week told how a couple was arrested for selling jewelry to an undercover of-

ficer in western North Carolina. The jewelry, it seems, is a hot commodity, for it is made from bear claws, which is against the law.

For a few dollars, vacationers pouring into the Cherokee village in the Great Smoky Mountains in western North Carolina can watch a man wrestle with a live bear, so the sign says.

Indian reservation laws differ from state wildlife laws, so the shows continued, although animal rights activists have moved in more recently, wanting the bears freed.

It's not uncommon to see bears wander about campgrounds and picnic areas in the Smokies, rummaging through trash containers or looking for a handout from tourists. While hiking up a trail to a waterfall, I happened upon a mother and a cub, who patiently swaggered across the path and continued downhill, not paying any attention to the people.

So when the headlights revealed a true black bear near my home last week, some questions were answered, but it also raised some questions. You know bears are here in Brunswick County, too, but seeing is believing.

When you tell someone, "I just saw a bear," they'll probably think you just saw a large dog.

That is, if they think you saw anything at all.

I hope man appreciates having the bears around and will be careful not to invade the privacy or territory they need.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Investigate Thoroughly Before Writing Report

To the editor:

We at Shell Point Acres feel the article in the Oct. 31 issue (Shell Point Residents Want More Responsive Commissioners) was really unjustified. We have been selling property in that area for 15 years and have only had two problems with water. After a water softener was placed on the well the problem was terminated.

I believe you should investigate this claim more thoroughly before writing a report. We are very upset that one man's opinion can stand for such a large community. We would definitely like to pursue this matter further.

Rick Robinson  
 Shell Point Acres

(Letters Continue On Following Page)