

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## To Victors Go The Perks?

Community residents are understandably proud of the grid record posted this season by the West Brunswick High School Trojans in the highly competitive Waccamaw Conference and by their post-season performance in the state 2-A playoffs.

Unfortunately a system set up in advance of the playoffs by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association has taken away some of the glow. (These are the same nice people, by the way, who insist that the North Brunswick Scorpions continue competing as a 2-A team when they want and should be 1-A.)

The Trojans went into their first third-round game without the traditional home field advantage due winners like themselves.

NCHSAA says it was chance that West Brunswick ended up on the road for last Friday's showdown.

While sympathetic to underdogs, we see no reason why game location in the playoffs should be left to the luck of the draw or predetermined bracketing.

A longstanding tradition in scholastic athletics calls for the team with the best record to have the home field or home court advantage in playoff competition. Such was not the case here, which added fire to the bellies of the traveling Trojans.

The outcome of that game isn't known at this writing, and it doesn't really matter. Win or lose, the Trojans didn't get the perks due them.

While not the Waccamaw Conference champion, the Trojans had the better season record of the two teams.

The Trojans were seeded higher in the conference than their third-round opponent.

The Trojans had beaten Whiteville 19-7 at Whiteville in regular season play.

From where we sit, no advantage comes to mind to the NCHSAA or to its members in having predetermined brackets for the playoffs. If anything the system has resulted in an injustice. A system that puts the team with the best record on the road for a semifinals match diminishes the significance of the regular season record.

To the victors should go the spoils, or this case, the home advantage.

West Brunswick players and fans were fortunate that Friday's trip was short. But that doesn't really matter. What does matter is the system.

A predetermined neutral location would be preferable to the system in place this playoff season.

NCHSAA needs to take another look at the way it does business.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Walkway Over Dunes Appreciated

To the editor:

Congratulations to the Sunset Beach Town Council and their administrator, Linda Fluegel, for the planning and construction of the fine parking lot at the beach.

Especially appreciated by our senior and handicapped residents is the walkway from the parking area over the dunes.

We also are thankful to Minnie Hunt, who as a member of the taxpayers association and, later on the town council, led the movement to restore the parking lot to its rightful owners, Sunset Beach.

Dr. Arthur Templeton, Bonaparte Landing

#### Renovation Makes Store Attractive

To the editor:

On behalf of the Town of Shallotte, I would like to compliment Mr. Fred Mintz of Coastal Drug Store on the very attractive renovation that he had done to his drug store. It certainly makes this place of business a pleasurable place both for viewing and for shopping.

It is dedicated citizens like him who make our town a beautiful place to visit and live. I feel he is truly an asset to our community and to our lovely town.

Sarah L. Tripp, Mayor, Shallotte  
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# Which Will It Be, Artificial Or Live?

There is a major and controversial decision approaching that has to be made within the next week or so. Which will it be this year, artificial or live?

I'm talking about Christmas trees.

A part of me enjoys having live trees in the house, just so the family can smell the pine needles. You can also spray that artificial snow on the tips to give the tree some color and to make it look better.

But you don't want to spray an artificial tree with artificial snow. That ruins the tree and makes it look cheap. Also available now is a powdery snow that comes in a plastic bag, a fake type of artificial snow.

There is an artificial tree in the attic at home that hasn't been used in years. It may or may not get a workout this season.

We've been debating for weeks now about the size of tree we feel is suitable, given the limited space available. We've also been checking out artificial trees at the local stores, but they never look the same in person as they do in print. Sort of like the pictures on TV dinner boxes.

The tree in the attic is a six-footer and looks anemic. It was purchased so needles wouldn't fall into the car-

Terry Pope



pet, as if vacuum cleaners don't exist. I think it was bought when Jimmy Carter was in the White House.

You see, artificial trees are like polyester pants and wigs. They are fake, trying to be something they are not. You can't get rid of a pair of polyester slacks for they never wear out.

The same is true for an artificial Christmas tree. You feel guilty about buying a new one when one is already in the attic, for that defeats the purpose of buying an artificial tree—so you will never have to buy another tree again. It'll last a lifetime, they tell you, and eventually you grow to want something different.

And like wigs, you can bend the limbs in all directions, twist and turn the entire thing around to see its better side and still have a cheap-look-

ing, plastic, wiry, bean pole. But hey, you don't have needles in the carpet, and you don't have to saw off the bottom two or three times before the height is just right.

When you pick out a live Christmas tree, no matter how conservative you think you are being, the tree you bring home will be three feet too tall. You end up using your father's hand saw while sticky sap turns it into a major project just to cut through three inches of pine. You huff and puff and pull on the saw and lose all of your Christmas spirit when the season is only just beginning.

Then you can't get those tree stands, with the legs that come apart so it will fit into the box, back together again. You twist and twist on those three screws that are supposed to hold the tree in the stand, and no matter how far you turn them the tree is still leaning and one screw is missing the trunk entirely.

But not with an artificial tree, which is about a tenth the weight of a live tree. No sawing, no pouring water and having to remember to put aspirins in the pan to prevent shedding, no ugly mess. The wired limbs are not flimsy when you're

trying to hang figurines. You can hang your cat from those limbs.

Some artificial tree manufacturers are now trying desperately to capture the tree market by making some that look almost yellow, while others have some brown plastic twigs added along with the bright green. The aim, I think, is to make the trees look less artificial, for nothing is perfectly green.

In the end, you simply can't hide the artificial look of an artificial tree. And those solid white and silver trees that may have been popular the same time black and white loafers were hip, forget them entirely. Table-top models—no way.

If the final decision is to go with a live tree, then care must be taken. Pre-cut trees should be considered potential fire hazards to the home for some have been cut months in advance.

I tested that warning one year.

After Christmas, I took the tree from the home, set it on fire and stood amazed as it exploded into flames, as though a gas can had ignited. It made me realize those warnings are for real.

By next week the verdict will be in. Artificial or live? I'll sleep on it some more.

HELP PUT AMERICA BACK TO WORK - READ THE LABEL BEFORE YOU BUY!

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## Helping Others A Way To Give Thanks

Sometimes we forget to be grateful for the basics: Our families, our friends. Work that is productive. Income that covers the basic necessities. Good health.

Sometimes it takes someone else's misfortune to remind us to be thankful, and to stir us into action on behalf of those who are less fortunate than ourselves. These are hard times for a lot of people, something that's all too easy to forget as we rush about minding our own business. But we should never forget.

So it's a little late for a Thanksgiving column; bear with me.

Last week, I was concentrating on getting some work out of the way so as to leave town for a long holiday weekend when the phone rang. An elderly acquaintance was calling, at the urging of a family member, to share what had to have been a traumatic experience.

The family had had a running account at a local business for many,

Susan Usher



many years, with the balance owed at times running into the thousands of dollars but down by now to less than \$1,000. While the money wasn't always easy to come by, the payments went in regularly—until of late.

Both man and wife are elderly, with health problems. Some unexpectedly high medical expenses put them in a bind, with the choice of buying medicine or paying on the appliances. They fell behind on the payments, thinking they would have a chance to catch up without having

to ask anyone for help in meeting their expenses.

That they might actually stand to lose the goods they had been paying on didn't really seem possible.

"Sometimes I just couldn't make it," the woman told me.

Naturally the store attempted to collect what was due it, but the couple simply didn't have the cash.

A long history of doing business and paying regularly wasn't enough to make a difference. In the end, the store chose to repossess a refrigerator and a freezer. Businesses have to survive, too, and rules are rules, it seems. Get too far behind, the goods come back.

But the lady was determined not to give up either item until she could find a place to store their contents. Everyone she asked had a freezer, but it was already full, like hers, with the bounty of summer. Her freezer contents represented hours of labor in garden and kitchen to pro-

vide food for the winter.

She lost everything in the refrigerator, but fortunately was able to salvage much of the freezer's contents. Otherwise winter expenses would have been even more difficult to manage.

She didn't do it alone. Neighbors, family members and friends came to the couple's aid, rounding up another refrigerator and a freezer for their use.

"It all worked out in the end; the good Lord will provide," she said, relieved just to have shared her story and knowing there was little anyone could do to change the situation.

The good Lord does provide—but he does it by working through people like her friends and neighbors. We need to be willing to do our part and more.

What better way—in good times or bad times—to express gratitude for what we do have.

# Let's Stop Joking And Start Taking AIDS Seriously

Many people are learning some basic, scary facts about AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) these days.

People are realizing, since Magic Johnson's announcement that he is HIV-positive, that AIDS is not something to be joked about, or to be considered as a homosexual disease.

It's on the television and in the newspapers every day; you can't get away from grim reports about AIDS.

It's unfortunate that so many heterosexual people have not taken AIDS seriously enough to protect themselves. It's also unfortunate that so many parents don't realize that their own children are at risk.

The U.S. Surgeon General has said it; respected athlete Magic Johnson has said it; and countless health workers in magazines and on television have been saying it for years: Either don't have sexual relations, or use protection, such as a condom, when you do.

Dori Cosgrove Gurganus



I know that this sort of statement disturbs many people who think that it condones premarital sex.

But look at the facts:

■ Teen-agers do have sexual relations; not all of them, but a large enough number that parents should know about it.

■ A large number of heterosexuals have contracted AIDS from intravenous drug-users.

■ Women are contracting AIDS faster than any other segment of the U.S. population, according to an article in a regional newspaper last week.

■ Many heterosexuals have con-

tracted AIDS from fellow heterosexuals: people who (are you listening?) are not gay.

Believing that all teen-agers will abstain from sexual relations is like believing that every person who walks past a \$100 bill on the sidewalk will not pick it up and put it in their pocket.

Some will, some won't.

It is very important for everyone to understand that if they have sex without using a condom, they have just increased their chances of catching AIDS. It has also been publicized again and again by health workers that AIDS does NOT discriminate.

Straight, gay, male, female, black, white, Hispanic, rich, poor, white-collar, blue-collar: you can get AIDS if you don't know the facts.

That doesn't sound very funny to me.

Many schools across the country, namely in New York City this past week, have begun handing out free condoms on request to students.

AIDS support groups have been passing them out on the streets in NYC, to mixed reaction, as was reported on the CBS news last Tuesday evening.

Condoms don't prevent AIDS completely, but the Surgeon General has reported them to be the most effective means of protection against infection.

Many people think that if you hand a kid a condom it's like saying, "Go ahead, it's perfectly all right to engage in premarital sex."

The fact that teen-agers will have sex regardless of their parents' wishes exists even here in Brunswick County.

I believe that most teen-agers and young, unmarried adults have the sense and moral strength to abstain from premarital sexual relations.

I also believe that most people are using condoms, too.

However, this can't be true of everyone.

Some parents right here in Brunswick County are thinking,

"Oh, I don't have to worry, I've taught my kids that you should wait until you're married to have sex. My kids won't do anything immoral like that."

Or they might even be thinking, "Well, my kids know the facts about AIDS; they wouldn't do anything silly like not use protection."

Parents, please, ask your kids to use protection. Wouldn't you rather have a child who is sexually active and alive? The alternative might be a child who doesn't know the facts about protection and dies because of AIDS infection.

Or, ask them to wait to have sex until they're married to a person who is also not infected. Teach them what you believe is the right thing to do.

I would like to be able to say that teen-agers everywhere have been taught not to engage in premarital sex.

But I know that's not true. Even if it were, not every teen-ager would listen.

This disease has been publicized for 10 years now, and the public has been told for about the last five or six years that it's not just for homosexuals.

The newspapers and television reports are full of depressing news about the increasing rate of AIDS-related fatalities.

It's very sad that it took Magic Johnson's tragedy for massive numbers of heterosexuals to listen.

Not all teen-agers are having sex or unprotected sex. Many of them know what's best for them and are looking after themselves and their boyfriend or girlfriend.

I just want us to make sure that Brunswick County looks after them as well.

Students need to know that condoms are available at local clinics. Parents should have the facts about AIDS, teen-age sex and what their child is doing.

Let's not allow this disease spread in our community by closing our eyes.