



CARL SANDBURG wrote about the wilderness within us.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

From The Wilderness

BY BILL FAVER

One of my favorite poets, the late Carl Sandburg, seemed to have the ability to capture some profound understandings in a few well-chosen words. He loved the out-of-doors and wrote about natural things, usually relating them to himself or all mankind. A good example of such a poem is in "Wilderness," one of the "Cornhusker Poems."



FAVER

Sandburg begins by claiming "There is a wolf in me...fangs pointed for tearing gashes...red tongue for raw meat...and the hot

lapping of blood."

Then he moves to the fox in him: "I sniff and guess...I pick things out of the wind and air...I nose in the dark and take sleepers and eat them and hide the feathers..."

The hog in him is responsible for snout and belly, for eating and grunting, and for lazily sleeping in the sun. The wolf and the fox and the hog all come to him from the wilderness.

The poet acknowledges the "fish in me...I know I

came from salt-blue water-gates."

Then he says, "There is a baboon in me...clambering clawed...dog-faced...yauping a galoots hunger."

Also there is an eagle and a mockingbird. The eagle "flies among the Rocky Mountains of my dreams and fights among the Sierra crags of what I want...The mockingbird warbles in the underbrush of my Chattanooga of hope, gushes over the blue Ozark foothills of my wishes..."

All these come to him from the wilderness. They evidence his relationship to other animals and his dependence upon all forms of life for his own well-being.

Carl Sandburg sums it up with these lines:

"O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart - and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and mother and lover;

it came from God-Knows-Where: it is going to God-Knows-Where -

For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness."

A Lost Friend From A Past Life

Their little girl was born three weeks before our little boy. We followed each other's progress and shared all our pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum horror stories. We sent each other flowers in the hospital. We put our babies in a playpen together and joked about how they might grow up and fall in love. We had them exchange cards on Valentine's Day.

That was back during another life, 15 years ago, in a different marriage and a distant small town. The husbands had similar jobs and became personal and professional friends. The wives had little in common except pregnancy, then new motherhood. She was tall, blonde and loved the kind of clothes that made people turn and stare—the expensive stylish kind, not the outrageous tacky kind. I was decidedly not tall, not blond and most at home in jeans and baggy sweaters.

We were never close "couple friends," the real kind you can count on to keep on loving you even when you stop being a couple. But it was nonetheless a comfort, our being new in town and new to this parenting thing, to know we had someone to share experiences with. We agreed that when you tried to talk to friends who'd never been through it, you bored them; the ones who were old hands at it would just tell you to stop being such a repulsive neurotic

and insufferable braggart. As if that were possible.

He was the best kind of dad, ready for the role, utterly comfortable and fully competent at it. The kind who paid attention even when she wasn't misbehaving. Who made it a point to praise her lavishly and criticize her sparingly. Who would not hesitate to take a day off from work and care for her when she was sick. Who would beamingly tell other people—even other men—how proud he was to have a daughter. This wonderful daughter.

They moved away to a university town after he got a chance to make a bold career move—the kind most men in his respectable high-profile position would be scared to give a serious second thought. Their bright girl-child would be able to go to Montessori school in this town, to study dance and go to museums and the theater. The wife landed a job managing the trendiest boutique in town.

Lynn Carlson



We visited them once more, briefly, when we accompanied some mutual friends to a football game in their town. That was 11 or 12 years ago, and we never heard from them again.

I learned of his death last night when on a whim I called those mutual friends. I had not seen or talked to them in five or six years. My friends, who are still in the town where we once all lived, told me he had AIDS and lost the fight two weeks ago.

I don't know any of the circumstances, nor are they any of my business. I don't even know whether he was still married.

All I know is that I can't stop thinking about that baby girl he treasured so. When I saw her last she was in his arms, a toddler in footed jammies, having to be rocked to sleep because four noisy grown-ups had shown up and interrupted her bedtime routine.

I can imagine her now, though, just a few weeks shy of her 15th birthday. I'm sure she's beautiful, tall, blond, smart and sophisticated beyond her years. What I can't imagine is what she must have been through and how badly she must hurt.

Again tonight I'll go to bed and send up a little prayer that she'll be all right.

MORE LETTERS

SBTA's Recent Positions 'Too Much' For Former Sunset Resident

To the editor:

I have had it with the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association. I grew up in Sunset Beach and I still receive the *Beacon* to keep up with the area. Over the past few years I have read articles in your paper dealing with the SBTA and have held my tongue, but the article on the front page of your April 15 edition is too much.

Clete Waldmiller complained about a lack of representation on the town council of the island residents. If memory serves me correctly, several members of the SBTA have run for council seats in the past few elections. Obviously they were not elected because their positions on issues of concern were in conflict with those of Sunset Beach citizens.

It is just as obvious that the motivation for this proposal is to increase representation of the SBTA (which is dominated by non-residents), not that of island residents. The bottom line, however, is that "majority rules," and as long as the SBTA's views are in a minority, they will not be carried out by the town.

In reference to the proposed sewer system, SBTA treasurer Minnie Hunt said there is "no conclusive ev-

idence that septic tanks are polluting our environment." This seems to be a rather hypocritical point of view. A 1990 SBTA lawsuit is holding up the proposed high-rise bridge until an environmental impact study is completed. The SBTA claimed that the possible ill effects of the bridge on the environment outweigh its necessity. What about the "possible" pollution from septic tanks?

If Mrs. Hunt would like some objective information on just how quickly contaminated ground water flows through a medium like coarse quartz sand, a good reference is *Groundwater* by Freeze and Cherry. My master's degree project here at N.C. State University deals with ground water flow, and I refer to this and other texts quite often.

Finally, Bill Ducker, in reference to Janie Price's proposed development of Bird Island, said that a "bridge and causeway built for access" essentially converts public lands for private use. I wonder how Mr. Ducker got onto Sunset Beach last time he went? He probably used the causeway, which traverses public marshland. Is there any public land on Sunset Beach except for the strand and one parking lot? If Mrs.

Price plans to sell property on Bird Island, it is just as public as Sunset Beach is.

I sincerely hope the people of Brunswick County see the hypocrisy in the positions of the SBTA.

Julius A. King
Raleigh

Support Symphony With Tickets, Cash

To the editor:

Brunswick County residents and businesses are urged to support the North Carolina Symphony concert at Hatch Auditorium on May 10. Since the late 1940s, the symphony has annually given three concerts—one for adults and two for the school children. In the '90s, the adult concerts were increased to two.

Now Raleigh is threatening to cancel the May 10 concert for lack of support. As all businesses (and the symphony must be run as such) they must meet a budget. In jeopardy also is the November concert scheduled for our new Odell Williamson Auditorium.

The amount needed urgently—by April 30—is \$20,000.

If you want to retain this mar-

Duncan King: Warrior And Pirate For A King

If you've lived in southeastern North Carolina very long, you've probably heard the story of Duncan King, captain of a privateer for the King of England.

He was a colorful figure whose life has added to the richness of local history, though I never know how much is fabrication and how much fact.

Duncan was a native of Scotland and later served as an officer under General Wolfe at the Battle of Quebec. But he's most remembered in these parts for the food and munitions and other prizes he wrestled away from French and Spanish ships in the name of the King George II, and the romance for which this career was indirectly responsible.

In autumn of 1752, King was sailing along the coast and spotted a vessel. Depending on who is telling the story, it may or may not be described as a pirate ship. In any case he pursues this vessel and opens fire, and wins the battle. Aboard the vessel, King found a beautiful dark-haired girl who was about three years old and wearing dainty, fine clothing. The child had been taken by the Spanish a few days earlier when they had sunk a merchant ship bound for the West Indies and had killed the child's parents. For some reason, this waif touched a chord in King. He turned his vessel back to-

Susan Usher



ward Smithville (now known as Southport), the story goes, and left the child in the care of a Mrs. Holmes.

The little girl was Lydia Fosque, origins uncertain.

Duncan King sailed away on the king's business, fighting with Wolfe at the Battle of Quebec and otherwise serving King George II. The king was grateful and rewarded Duncan King with lands in Vermont and long the Hudson River.

However, these holdings were naturally confiscated during the American Revolution.

After helping wrest Canada from the French, King decided to give up his role as warrior and return to North Carolina, where his ward remained.

As the story goes, he arrived in Southport and found that Lydia was no longer a child but a beautiful teen-ager with sparkling eyes, lovely curly hair and a smooth olive com-

plexion. Duncan King fell in love and they were married. Lydia didn't like the northern temperatures of King's granted lands, prompting him to buy several thousand acres in Bladen County.

Lydia was instrumental there in organizing Shiloh Church, the story goes.

King supposedly remained neutral during the American Revolution. Though he lost his northern lands, those in North Carolina went untouched. One story goes that King was visiting with a Loyalist friend, William White, when Whigs showed up at the church. Lydia managed to slip away and warn King, who again escaped capture and managed to protect his status as a neutral, unlike White.

Lydia and Duncan were the founders of a southeastern North Carolina dynasty. They had at least five sons: Alexander, who is one of my forbearers, and Moses, James, Duncan and Solomon, plus daughters. They and their families spread all over this part of the state. Today Shiloh Church is in Columbus County. The graves of Duncan, who died in 1793, and Lydia, who died in 1819, are in woodlands.

But near Shiloh Church, a granite monument stands to their memory—and to one of the more fascinating tales of southeastern North Carolina.

GUEST COLUMN

Go Slowly On Year-Round Schools

BY JOHN HOOD

The year-round bandwagon is rolling, and many of North Carolina's school districts seem poised to leap on board.

The number of year-round school programs in our state will double in July, from the current 40 programs in 22 North Carolina school districts to 80 programs in some 40 districts.

At a March meeting of the Year-Round Education Institute of North Carolina in Winston-Salem, year-round advocates released a survey of administrators at North Carolina's 132 school districts. Of the 107 responding districts, 102 say they either have year-round schools or are studying the merits of implementing such programs.

Emotional debates about year-round schooling currently rage in Forsyth, Wake, Davidson, Watauga, and many other North Carolina counties.

I certainly hope that these school administrators will study all of the available evidence on year-round schooling, not just the claims of the idea's most zealous boosters. There is little evidence one way or the other about the effects of year-round schedules on student performance—and the scanty research that does exist offers no unanimous verdict.

The National Association for Year-Round Education reports only 13 recent comprehensive studies on the impact of year-round education. Seven of these studies show that students in the year-round programs do significantly better than those in traditional programs.

That's little more than half. And even those studies are weakly constructed, according to education researchers—some lack control groups and proper breadth. Furthermore, eight of them were performed in California, where a fourth of the na-

tion's year-round schools are located. Rigorous findings on year-round education must be based on duplication in various settings, not on the possibly idiosyncratic California experience.

There are several studies which suggest little relationship between year-round schooling and achievement. One study, published in the *Journal of Education Research*, found that many middle-class students actually gain in academic skills over summer vacation, while poor students show a decline—suggesting that year-round schooling may be an appropriate tool to help some, but not all, children.

Overall, according to a survey of literature on year-round schools by education researcher Gary L. Peltier published in *The National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, "studies have indicated that there is no significant difference in achievement (as measured by standardized tests) between students on a year-round schedule and those on a traditional nine-month schedule."

What about research here in North Carolina? All of the state's year-round school programs are of relatively young vintage. One study by an Appalachian State University researcher of a year-round pilot program in Blowing Rock found no significant differences between year-round students and traditional students in student achievement or attendance, but in fairness the study was based on only one year of data.

Experience is really our only guide right now. Many parents in counties with year-round schools are satisfied with their performance; others are not. There is clearly interest in North Carolina communities, as applications for year-round schools continue to escalate. But as

far as solid evidence is concerned, we will probably have to wait.

That suggests caution should guide North Carolina school districts' decisions about year-round schooling. Since there is no clear evidence of educational benefits, the analysis must turn to the idea's other benefits, mostly financial.

Unfortunately, as Peltier's paper argues, financial gains are often difficult to achieve, and almost always require that "participation cannot be only voluntary"—though most North Carolina year-round programs are, properly, not being forced on all parents.

There are additional costs for air conditioning, instruction and transportation. "Because many of these expenses and considerations are overlooked in the planning stages," Peltier notes, "savings in some instances have been so minimal that year-round schooling has been abandoned after just a few years of implementation."

If year-round schooling does not provide generalized academic or financial advantages, its proper role would seem obvious: as a voluntary program specifically designed to serve poor or remedial students or parents who seek such schedules for their children on the basis of personal judgment or convenience.

Naturally, given the scanty research available thus far, no sweeping judgment should be made yet. But school officials should not be hoodwinked by year-round devotees into believing that the idea is a proven, documented success so far at improving performance or saving money. Far from it.

John Hood is research director of the John Locke Foundation and a columnist for the *Triangle's Spectator* magazine.

Don't Close Library During Renovations

To the editor:

I can't believe the Brunswick County Library Board would consent to the closing of the Shallotte Library for a period of six to seven months as proposed.

I realize our area of southeastern North Carolina has grown tremendously in the past several years; we do indeed need larger library facilities. This enlargement can be done without shutting down the entire library; other buildings have been enlarged and modernized without closing the entire building—Belk and K-Mart, for example.

Brunswick County schools rate very poorly compared to other school systems. Are we willing to

deprive our children of the use of their local library and the many children's programs offered by the Shallotte Library?

Closing the library would be for the convenience of the contractors without ever considering the inconvenience of the people who support it. This is irresponsible on the part of the library board.

I urge everyone interested in the welfare and education of our children to write to the library board and to the county commissioners protesting the proposed closing of our Shallotte library.

Phyllis Manning
Calabash

Write Us

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