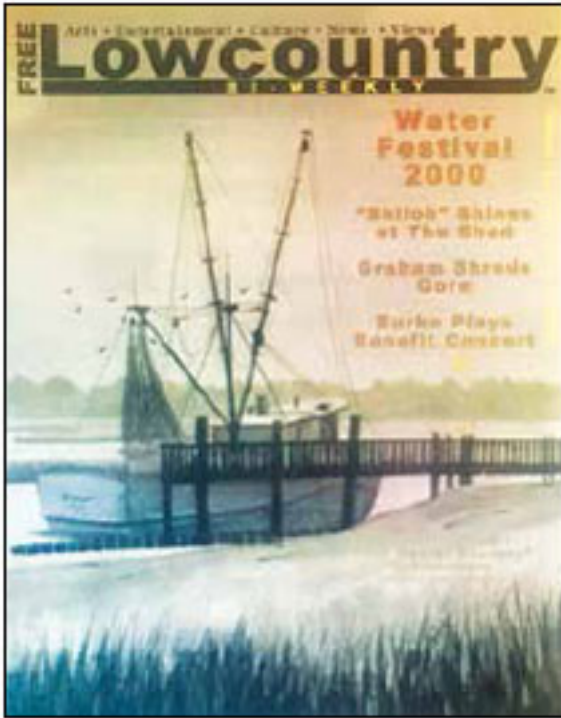


Happy 20th Birthday to Us!

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor

Tuesday, 07 July 2020 13:24 - Last Updated Wednesday, 08 July 2020 06:52



By Margaret Evans, Editor

Twenty years ago, Jeff and I were newlyweds with big dreams and



little common sense when we whimsically invested our savings in an obscure local rag, about a year old, called *Lowcountry Bi-weekly*. We hated the name – it was clunky – and we figured we'd soon go weekly anyway, so we dropped the "bi," spruced up the design, added some new features, and *Lowcountry Weekly* was born.

We're still biweekly. But, hey, it's only been 20 years. Give us time.

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From the beginning, it was a crazy risk. We had no idea what we were doing, or how to do it. We had a “vision,” but even that vision was vague. We knew we wanted to celebrate the amazing cultural and environmental riches that make Beaufort County such a special place on the map. And we wanted to be a space where writers could write. *Really* write.

But what kind of publication were we, exactly? Not a newspaper, per se, but not a journal or magazine, either. We played with the word “magapaper” for a while. Eventually, we settled on a tagline: *Reflections on the good life in coastal South Carolina.* It was never meant to sound fancy or high falutin’. By “good life” we meant just that. We did *not* mean the “high life” nor the “life of Riley.” Just the good life.

We wanted to tell you about our hundreds of visual artists – and *show* you their fantastic work. For 20 years, we’ve done that in our pages, and especially on our covers. To this day, we never “pre-promise” a cover, nor do we seek out cover art. Our policy has always been to choose our cover at the last minute – just pick our favorite image from the selection of artwork submitted since the last issue. In 20 years, we have never lacked for cover art. Our challenge is typically choosing between so many great options.

We also wanted to celebrate our theatre performers (so many productions over 20 years!) and our



musicians (so many concerts!) and our writers, both local and visiting. (Oh, the readings and signings and literary festivals we’ve covered!)

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We wanted to shine a light on our natural environment, our architectural wonders, and our culinary delights. Enter **Mark Shaffer**, who joined our LCW family around 2008. He showed up from Seattle, a seasoned journalist with impeccable credentials, and immediately invented 'The Backyard Tourist,' taking readers on adventures up and down the east coast. He wrote about fishing, oystering, learning to paddleboard. Took you to Palm Key and Cumberland Island, St. Augustine and Auldbrass. Through Mark's 'Moveable Feast' feature, you dined vicariously at the finest restaurants around; his 'Life Behind Bars' took you out drinking; his 'Burger Beat' pointed you toward the best burgers in the Lowcountry.

Speaking of food, where would we be without **Debbi Covington**, our fabulous foodie who's been writing her regular column here for 15 years. She started as our 'Everyday Gourmet' then later began to 'Celebrate Everyday.' Somehow, despite her hectic life as Beaufort's favorite caterer, cookbook writer and personal party-thrower, Debbi has never missed a deadline. There are literally thousands of her recipes on our website now, and miraculously, she never seems to repeat one. I am in awe of her endless energy and creativity, and it sure doesn't hurt that she writes like a dream.

Which brings me to our revolving stable of columnists. From the get-go, we were blessed with an array of terrific contributors who just love to write. Sometimes they were sharing their expertise. (Remember 'Fashion Granny'? 'Travel Tapas'? 'Ask the Yogi'? 'So You Want to Start a Business'? 'Civitas'? 'Calling Card'?) And sometimes, they were just sharing their thoughts. (**Bernie Moscovitz**

mused freely in 'Standpoint.'

Jim Tatum

made us laugh with 'Reflections and Refractions.'

Laura Von Harten,

may she rest in peace, wrote colorfully of her lifelong home in 'My Lowcountry.'

Vivian Bikulege has been in and out of the paper for 16 years, with her poignant reflections on 'Whatever.'

Laura Packard graced us with her humor and heart for a few years ('What I've Learned by Accident') and

Susan Murphy

is still bringing her sense and sass to the page as 'Aunt Bossy.'

Jack Sparacino

never named his column – probably a good thing, since you never know what you're gonna get with Jack. (That's why we love him!)

Terry Sweeney

wrote the uproarious 'Happy Winos' column for a while, then

Terry Connor

took over with the slightly-more-serious "Drink Globally."

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And let's not forget our spectacular garden columnists. We've been publishing 'How Does Your Garden Grow?' since 2009, when **Lanier Laney** came to us with the idea. In 2011, Lanier passed the baton to **Alice Massey** and

Laura Lee Rose,

who lured

Will Balk, Jr.

into the mix a year or two later. Alice moved away a couple of years ago, but she left us a stellar replacement in

Sandra Educate.

These columnists are all master gardeners and delightful writers and we've been privileged to publish them year after year.

Our newest "regulars" are **Katherine Tandy Brown** and **Sutty Suddeth**, who – along with an occasional guest contributor – write the 'Wholly Holistics' column, which is always fascinating to me. And **Mindy**

Lucas

has joined the team as our Staff Writer, bringing some serious reporter's chops to the table. Like all our contributors past and present, these latecomers teach me something new with every issue.

Of course, the oldest "regular" is this column. My baby. I've been writing it since before I *had* my baby, and

that

baby is turning 19 this month. Looking back at those early columns, I feel a tenderness for the young woman who wrote them, but I hardly know her anymore. Reading forward through them is a revealing, amusing, and often deeply humiliating experience – like reading the story of my adult life. (Some years were more 'adult' than others.) For two decades, I've poured everything I have onto this page . . . done some serious "oversharing," as my husband likes to say. It has been the biweekly bane of my existence and my greatest joy. Thank you, readers, for indulging me.

From the start, *Lowcountry Weekly* developed organically, with some wonderful surprises along the way.

Pat Conroy asked to write his first (and last) restaurant review for us (singing the praises of Griffin Market) and

Daryl Ferguson's

series 'Where America Really Began' evolved alongside the Santa Elena Foundation. We partnered with the

Beaufort International Film Festival

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in its infancy, and though BIFF is our younger sibling – only going on 15 – it feels like we grew up together. For a while, we held an annual Poetry Contest, which turned into an annual Short Story Contest. You may not have noticed, but we also have an annual Chicken Issue, featuring chicken art on the cover. Yes, chicken art. We have always been a little loopy.

And did I mention we've always been free? For 20 years, we've depended solely on advertising, and it hasn't always been easy. Thank goodness **Amanda Hanna** joined us as Sales & Marketing Manager five-plus years ago. She's worked absolute magic, not to mention working her way into the hearts of advertisers all over Beaufort County. Without Amanda and her sales team, I'm not sure we'd still be in print, especially during the late unpleasantness known as Covid 19.

And without our advertisers – and you, dear readers – all bets would have been off a long time ago. Thank you for supporting us. Thank you for *getting* us. Thank you for loving us.

▯ *Lowcountry Weekly*▯ has always been about love. So I hope you don't mind if I end this reflection by thanking my husband, **Jeff Evans**,▯ who holds it all together. Jeff calls himself the "publisher," but he is also the graphic designer, the business manager, the IT guy, the bill payer, the dispute settler, the maker of uncomfortable phone calls, the re-stocker of toilet paper, and the guy who takes the trash to the dump. Jeff is our rock and our foundation.

And because we decided long ago that I should work from home while he works from our downtown office, we are still happily married after 20 years.

Thanks for the memories, y'all. Here's to the next two decades.