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SULLIVAN'S ISLAND • ISLE OF PALMS • GOAT ISLAND • DEWEES ISLAND

Mystery lumberjack on Sullivan's Island

BY ALI AKHYARI

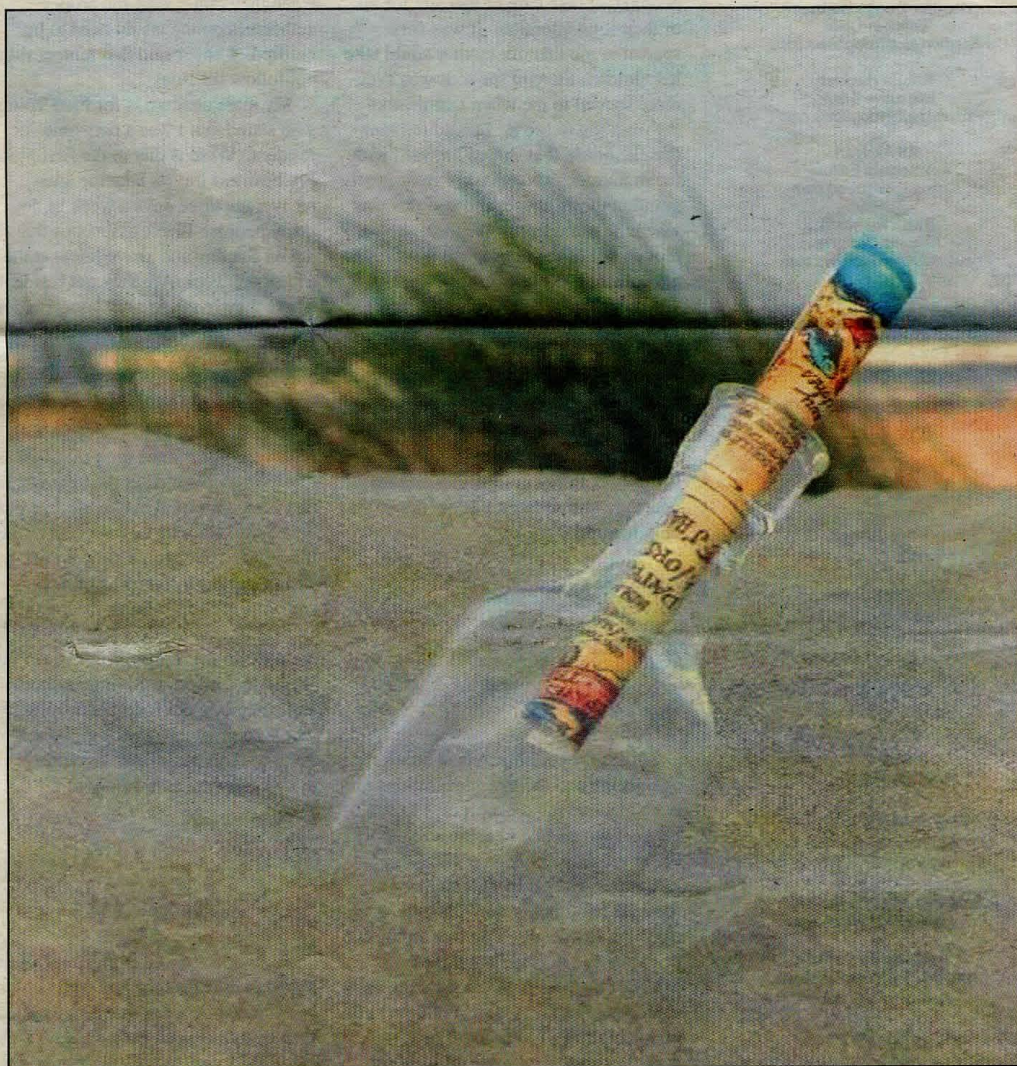
An outside investigation was required after the discovery of illegal activity in the environmentally protected RC-1 districts of Sullivan's Island adjacent to properties owned by Council member Jerry Kaynard, Planning Commission member Nicky Bluestein, and local contractor Pat Ilderton.

According to the ordinances of the Town of Sullivan's Island, plant life in the RC-1 district, known as the "accreted land", is largely protected from human encroachment. For example; Wax Myrtles, Eastern Baccharis, and Popcorn Trees are the only plants that can be trimmed in this area. Furthermore, these plants can only be trimmed to five feet in height and a \$250 permit is required to do so in addition to a \$5,000 bond. In addition, heavy equipment is restricted in the accreted land area in order to protect the erosion-preventing dunes.

However, when Jeff Jackson, the Town's vegetation consultant, and Randy Robinson, the Town's Building Inspector, conducted a routine investigation, they learned that not only had heavy equipment been driven in the dunes, but Willow and Cedar trees as tall as 30 feet had been removed in the protected areas adjacent to all three properties.

Kaynard, Bluestein, and Ilderton applied for and received permits to trim

see *Lumberjack* on page 17



STAFF PHOTO



Lumberjack from cover

vegetation in the adjacent accreted land area and all three contracted with Arborscape Tree Preservation to do the work. According to a letter from Robinson to Town Administrator Andy Benke, Arborscape owner David Christmas, along with partner Damien Rend, admitted to driving heavy equipment in the dune areas and accepted full responsibility. However, they denied illegally cutting any vegetation and stated that they only trimmed Wax Myrtles to the five foot height restriction. They also stated that they were not approached by Kaynard, Bluestein or Ilderton about cutting anything illegally. However, Christmas said that Morton Needle, another resident who had contracted with his company, did ask that his company cut below the five foot restriction and that he had refused. There were no cited violations in the RC-1 district adjacent to Needle's property.

Robinson and Jackson noted that a "reciprocating blade" was embedded in one of the Willow trees, which they stated was different from a professional tool such as a chainsaw that Arborscape would have used. This clue, along with a difference in cuts, led them to conclude that a professional company like Arborscape did not conduct the illegal activity.

According to the Charleston County Sheriff's Office report, Kaynard, Bluestein, and Ilderton all denied any involvement or knowledge of the illegal removal of the

Willow and Cedar trees. Although the trees averaged 20-30 feet in height, they all stated that they did not notice them missing or notice anyone removing them. However, it was also noted that resident Ron Coish told investigators that Kaynard had approached him two years ago to cut down trees in a manner that would have been illegal according to the Town's ordinances. In response, Kaynard stated that Coish's statement is an "outright lie".

"I enjoy my trees. I would never do that," Kaynard says. "Whoever did cut them down should be prosecuted." He believes Coish's statement stems from a deal that went sour in which Kaynard contracted him to do some work and later fired him when a six month project was still unfinished after a year and half.

Coish had not responded to a phone message as of our publication deadline.

Kaynard, along with Bluestein and Ilderton, denied having ever requested that vegetation be trimmed in an unlawful manner, according to the report. With the absence of any known witnesses, the Sheriff's Office was unable to make a clear determination as to who cut down the trees.

The Arborscape Tree Preservation Company is being fined \$1035 per violation and was given three citations. Furthermore, the \$5,000 bonds paid by Kaynard, Bluestein, and Ilderton have all been forfeited to the Town because of the heavy equipment and illegal cuttings.