

LITTERING

REMEMBER IT'S YOUR EARTH, TOO!

By Brenda Coxé

I remember as a teenager in the 1960s taking my allowance and riding the public bus to downtown Wilmington. The city was bustling then, full of life, and a place where everyone could meet their friends and hang out on a Saturday. A movie was under \$.50, and you could sit in there as long as you wanted (I sat through Help! Four times one afternoon). If you didn't want a movie, there were plenty of stores to visit, including the now defunct Woolworths.

Some 30 years later, you can't recognize the town and others like it. Gone are the stores that used to occupy our weekends as teens. Gone are the payphones where you used to stop and phone home for a ride or to tell your parents what time you would be home. Worse yet, gone is the sense of pride that used to consume every single person who walked the streets of the downtown business district. The trash bins have been removed except in remote areas---why bother? No one uses them anyway. Rodney Square, the hubbub of downtown Wilmington, and the main connection point for most of the bus routes, used to be the center of lunchtime events: bands, magic shows, and speakers. Today nothing remains of the days gone by is some people who occasionally sit on the steps and concrete walls and eat their lunch on a warm day, leaving their empty cups, plates, and other remnants for someone else to dispose of.

One park close to the city limits where I used to take my grandchildren to play is now an eyesore from all the trash and debris that is scattered on the ground. I recall when my children were elementary school age taking them on a summer afternoon if I wasn't

working and allowing them to play. While the girls played on the equipment, I lay back and enjoyed the warm sunshine kissing my exposed flesh. There was no need for a blanket or towel because all that touched you was warm, wonderful grass. I recently went there to take my two grandchildren and was appalled to find that not only has the playground equipment become in dire need of repair or replacement, but also it looks like a tornado came through and uprooted all the trashcans at the same time! I left and took them to another park that was only marginally better. How sad that some pleasures of days gone by have become remnants of the past, a period in which only very few of us remain who can remember it.

Let's not pass blame here, let's just get to the root of the problem and correct it. Don't blame the guy next door, your neighbor's dog, your nephew, or even the sanitation department that doesn't work after hours. There is no one individual who is to blame for the litter that now engrosses our streets. Each of us can do our part to correct the problem and return our environment to the beautiful place it once was.

How do we do that? There are many simple and small ways for us to begin this process. Remember, it took time for this to happen, so it will take time to fix it. It's going to take time, but with a collective effort by every single man, woman, and child, it can be done.

- Always leave your area clean; throw all your trash away.
- Pick up any trash you see whether it belongs to you or someone else.
- Teach your children and other family members to be responsible and not litter.
- Always take a bag and scooper when you take your pet for a walk.

- Take trash bags when you go picnicking in case there are no trash bins or they are full.

These things are simple and take very little of your time, but if you become a leader instead of a follower, it can make a difference. Of course, one person can't do it alone, but be the one to start it. If you set an example, it will amaze you how many other people follow your lead. It only takes one person to start a trend, and cleanliness is one of the best ones there is. Show your children the importance of preserving the quality of the earth's atmosphere by not having all that trash lying around. Believe me, every one of us can make a difference, but we have to do it together, work as a family and as a nation. Let's start now!