LEGAL EAGLE

A bald eagle feather sits behind Blan Holman’s desk at the Southern Environmental Law Center on Broad Street, where he is the senior attorney. Even though technically the feather is from an endangered bird, he explains that the U.S. Supreme Court gave it to him, so it’s perfectly legit, and legal. It’s just a small token from a landmark case in ’07 against Duke Energy that he was second chair on, and won, upholding the standards of the Clean Air Act. Apparently, the nation’s highest court has a huge stash of these quills that they give to the great lawyers who argue cases before them.

Blan stepped into the local and national spotlight again this June when he filed a lawsuit against Carnival Cruise Lines on behalf of the SELC and some community organizations including the Coastal Conservation League. With a mayoral election coming up, the cruise ship issue in Charleston has become especially divisive. But being in the hot seat doesn’t seem to faze Holman, except on his bicycle, where he is trying to master the “slow roll,” so as not to break a sweat on his daily commute – quite a challenge in our sub-tropical climate.

His job is definitely serious business but his dream is to host “The Great American Slow Roll” in Charleston – a 20-yard bike race where the winner finishes last. “Here’s the trick,” he says. “You know how the hipsters can stand up on a bike and be still with a fixed gear? Well, that’s too much effort. You gotta be rolling slow.” Holman says he’s practicing but is a little fidgety and a bit impatient. He likes the humor in it, though, and finds a lot of good reasons to roll slow in Charleston, a city he loves passionately. “I feel lucky to live in a place where I can be at the beach in 20 minutes and jump in the ocean and surf. It’s phenomenal.”

Only a secure and confident man with a sense of irony could announce, “I love small waves!” in regards to his surfing. He started surfing just a few years ago, learning from friends. Now he rides waves on all of the local beaches, even Sullivan’s, known for its typically tiny but sometimes surfable waves. He seemed to hold his own at the CHARLIE photo shoot – a follow-up email from CHARLIE photographer Andrew Cebulka reads, “Bro, you charged a wave that broke your leash! And you walked away…FANTASTIC!”

He’s a sailor too, but not the foul-mouthed, tattoo-covered kind. “I have the honor of being the rail meat on the S.S. Slingblade (a vessel which won both summer series of weekly local races in the harbour)…pretty awesome,” he says with a big smile. The J-24 that his team sails is the smallest boat class in the races but Blan proudly states, “the spirited team members have the biggest hearts.”

Blan’s environmentalism activism is also his hobby. As part of the Liberty Fellows program (a group of select leaders who take action to benefit SC), his personal project is getting a much-needed bike lane on St. Phillip Street.

We’re betting that since Blan is involved, it will happen. And we can all roll slowly together, with our greatly reduced carbon footprints.

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