

MEET YOUR TOWN STAFF

Howard Henderson Department of Public Services

By Jacquie Pipkin

Howard Henderson began our interview by explaining that his story was not that interesting. I will let the reader be the judge of that. When I asked Howard what his position is in the Pine Knoll Shores Department of Public Services (DPS), I couldn't seem to get a direct answer. When I asked what his responsibilities are, Howard replied, "This, that and the other." Here's why.

"This" is maintenance of the town's buildings and highways on the right of way as well as the beach accesses. "That" would be investigating water leaks, assisting with meter reading for those meters not yet electronic, and driving the yard waste truck. "The other" would be whatever has to do with public safety in Pine Knoll Shores, including citizens' requests for assistance with yard waste removal.

Howard explains that while there are Pine Knoll Shores guidelines for the DPS responsibilities, the overall philosophy of the department is humanitarian in nature. Their motto: "Citizens First." For example, Howard once found a distressed dog walker whose dog was having a seizure. He was able to assist, then took the owner and the dog home. When sharks are found beached, Howard and DPS take care of the sharks, but not before turning the situation into a learning opportunity for the crowd that one typically finds surrounding a dead shark. Along with staff from the aquarium who join them, they identify the species of shark (usually it is a sand or nurse shark) and let those who want to examine it do so. Often this is the first experience for some, especially the wide-eyed children, to be so close to a shark. Howard enjoys taking every opportunity that comes his way to share his knowledge about the uniqueness of Pine Knoll Shores' maritime forest environment.

Howard was born in Kansas City, Missouri. Upon graduating from high school, he joined the Air Force, where he served as a B-52 crew chief. After his military service, he moved to Texas where he worked in an oil field until the gas crisis necessitated a change of career, working as a carpenter until he broke his back and was forced to leave the construction business. Howard's next chapter brought him to an auction house in Texas where he gained experience in auctioneering antiques and collectibles.

Howard's extensive knowledge and understanding of oceanic flora and fauna comes from his love of the water and the experiences gained from living and working on the water. He and his wife, Mary Ellen, live on a 46-foot Hunter sailboat on Pivers Island.

Howard met Mary Ellen in 1977 when he was in the Air Force. He knew immediately that he wanted Mary Ellen to be his wife, and he told her so. The time wasn't right, but they kept in touch over the years. In 2001, Howard received an invitation from Mary Ellen to visit her in Maryland where she lived. Self-described as hyper-

active, Howard found it difficult to remain inactive while Mary Ellen worked during the day. On the second day of his planned two-week visit, he mowed Mary Ellen's 20-acre farm where she raised horses. On the third day he found a job at a production framing company. Mary Ellen married him, and Howard never went back to Texas.

In Maryland, Howard gave sailing lessons at the Chesapeake Sailing School, specializing in teaching underprivileged children. In addition to providing sailing instruction, Howard developed a rapport with his students and they, in turn, began to trust him and their counselors.

In the fall of 2004, Howard and Mary Ellen started on a sailing voyage to Texas, but a fierce storm in the lower Chesapeake Bay halted their progress. After two days of 10-12 foot seas and 55-knot winds, the couple's 36-foot sloop and their spirits were severely damaged. They docked in Beaufort in winter and decided to wait for calmer weather before navigating the gulf coast. While in Beaufort, Howard worked at Town Creek Marina, where he served as Dock Master from 2004-2008. The trip to Texas was postponed indefinitely.

In 2005 Mary Ellen opened a boat detailing business; however, the oncoming recession negatively affected the business and she had to let her employees go. Fortunately, Mary Ellen saw an advertisement in the local paper for a part-time public services position in Pine Knoll Shores. Howard interviewed, was hired, and in three years his position became full time.

In addition to his town duties, Howard continues to auctioneer. With the aid of Mary Ellen, a realtor, his company, Auctioneers on Deck, is able to auction properties as well as their contents. The Hendersons contribute their auctioning services to benefit all local organizations conducting fundraising auctions, including Kayak for the Warriors, Friends of the Museum in Beaufort and the Carolina Chocolate Festival. The couple are supporters of arts education in the public schools and firmly believe that it should remain as part of the curriculum. Each year Howard conducts an auction for the Beaufort Women's Club, the proceeds of which go directly to public school students, specifically for the purchase of classroom art supplies.

The Hendersons have two daughters—Angie, a veterinarian in Washington, DC, and Anna, a veterinary technician in Roanoke, Virginia. They have one grandson, Hunter. Facetiously, I asked Howard what he likes to do in his spare time. He replied, "Pardon me?" Surprisingly, he answered that when time allows, he likes to go shooting on his daughter's farm.

Normally at the end of these staff interviews I ask the interviewee what people would be surprised to learn about him or her. Howard's life has been so interesting—and surprising—that I decided to skip that question this time. Our interview concluded with Betty Carr's informing Howard that a refrigerator had washed up on the beach. Just another "this, that and the other" needing Howard's attention.



Howard Henderson is a valued member of the Pine Knoll Shores Department of Public Services. He is pictured here at his daughter's farm in Glade Hill, Virginia, a favorite destination when he gets some down time.—Photo by Mary Ellen Eurich

This Month's Puzzle Solutions

OMEGA	MIST	FILL
RADON	ANTI	OLIO
AGING	SHIM	NEAP
LITERATURE	TUNE	
	YLEM	LLAMAS
BATT	ARA	YEN
AGUE	TINS	FETES
BANSHEE	NETLIKE	
ERATO	SEED	LEER
	ALP	LAGESSE
BRACER	EKED	
LODE	OCCIDENTAL	
AMMO	MOTE	CIRCE
BEAU	PROS	KNEES
SONS	TART	SEEDS

3	5	9	1	6	7	8	4	2
2	7	8	5	4	3	1	9	6
6	4	1	8	9	2	3	5	7
5	2	7	9	1	8	6	3	4
9	8	3	4	7	6	2	1	5
4	1	6	2	3	5	9	7	8
1	9	2	7	8	4	5	6	3
8	3	4	6	5	9	7	2	1
7	6	5	3	2	1	4	8	9