



STAFF PHOTO BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
BUMPER TO BUMPER was the state of affairs Friday afternoon as traffic backed up and slowed to a crawl, nearly all the way from Shallotte to Supply.

Easter Holiday 'Terrific' Despite Weather, Traffic

While heavy traffic through Shallotte may have slowed their arrival, less than ideal weather didn't keep the crowds away from South Brunswick Island beaches this Easter holiday.

They took to the strand when the sun allowed. Sunday morning, a crowd estimated between 3,000 and 4,000 strong gathered on the strand at Ocean Isle Beach for an early morning worship service sponsored by Shallotte Presbyterian Church. "It was more than last year," said Mrs. Dan Norman, wife of pastor.

Estimates of the crowd attending sunrise services at Holden Beach Pier vary from 60 to 400, but everyone agreed there was standing room only for Easter services later at Holden Beach Chapel.

At other times, visitors crowded local shops, bringing smiles to proprietors' faces.

In fact, business was great, according to managers contacted at the close of the long weekend that here on the coast marks the beginning of the "season."

"We had real good traffic," said Debbie Sloane Fox of Sloane Realty at Ocean Isle Beach. "It seemed to be up from last year despite some of the weather forecasts we kept hearing."

While most people were down for only the weekend, she added, "there were probably more people here for the week than last year. We're delighted."

Schools in South Carolina and Mecklenburg County were on holiday last week, and most North Carolina schools this week, extending the holiday for many families.

The mix of renters and property owners this Easter was about the same as past years, she estimated, approximately 50-50.

Fox said she'd heard surprisingly few complaints about heavy traffic in Shallotte over the weekend.

At 5:30 p.m. Friday, southbound traffic approaching Shallotte was backed up five miles north of town on U.S. 17, moving at a snail's pace. Homeowners along the route reported impatient drivers attempting to pass on the right shoulder and several near-accidents when traffic moving at 60 miles per hour faced sudden stops on the main highway.

Shallotte Police Chief Don Stovall said some of the slow-down was caused by lack of synchronization between

the light at the intersection of U.S. 17 and Holden Beach Road (N.C. 130) and the light at Smith Avenue. After traffic from N.C. 130 turned left into town, he said, it was blocked at the second light. Then only a few southbound vehicles on U.S. 17 could make the light. The problem was reported to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

He added, "When there were blockages, we tried to help as best we could."

At Sunset Beach, Tom Tucker at Sunset Beach Realty also reported an excellent holiday weekend.

"We were at capacity," he said. The beach had traffic problems of its own. "There were horrible waits at the bridge. The stop lights were terrible," he said. "Everyone hates them."

Friday afternoon and again Saturday morning, officers were assisting traffic on the mainland.

A lot of people might have preferred better weather, Tucker added, "but they adapted."

And reports from stores in the area suggests they spent the time shopping for everything from paint to swimwear.

Business was brisk in both the food market and clothing loft at The Beach Mart on the Holden Beach causeway. "I don't know the sales figures, but we were busy," said Assistant Manager Charlene Loyd. "We look forward to it (Easter). It kicks off our season. We saw a lot of familiar faces we hadn't seen since last summer."

A.B. Willis, owner of Bryan's in Shallotte, said the mixed weather probably helped business there.

"It was great, better than last year," he added.

As for the traffic, he continued, "It never helps when you can't turn off, but only one or two people mentioned it."

At Shallotte's Ace Hardware, owner Beamon Hewitt said business was "terrific," better than he had anticipated for his first Easter in operation. "We could have used another helper or two," he said. "I wasn't prepared for what happened, but I will be next year."

Hewitt estimated about half his business came from locals; the other from non-resident property owners down to fix up their cottages for the season.

Gerald Long, manager of Shallotte Piggly Wiggly food store, said he saw a "noticeable increase" in lines, and didn't hear much about the traffic.

"People who don't like it don't stop," he suggested.

Terry Causey at the Western Auto store on the north end of the business strip did hear about the traffic.

"One customer Friday said it took him an hour and a half to get from East Sing Restaurant to Western Auto," she said.

The store's business, added Causey, was "hectic."

On Holden Beach Road, hostess Faye Pittman at East Sing Restaurant said business wasn't so good there Friday, but picked up on Saturday. The customers were mostly tourists, except for regulars at the Sunday luncheon buffet.

"Lots of people said traffic was 'murder'," she noted.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER
BETWEEN 3,000 and 4,000 worshippers attended Easter morning services on Ocean Isle Beach, undaunted by threatening skies.

Holden Beach Awards Public Parking Lot Contract

BY ETTA SMITH

A construction contract awarded by Holden Beach commissioners Tuesday will soon kick off construction of the largest public parking project on the Brunswick County coast.

The contract went to APAC Carolina Inc. of Myrtle Beach, which will begin construction immediately on a 90-space parking lot on Jordan Boulevard. MAC Construction Company of Shallotte underbid APAC, but did not include a performance bond

in the bid, as required by state law for any municipal project costing over \$30,000.

APAC's bid was \$28,564, MAC Construction bid \$25,308.20, and Jerry McLamb Construction Company of Shallotte bid \$34,676.

The project will also include restroom facilities and picnic tables. When bids were opened April 16, only one for \$46,440 was received for construction of the restroom facilities. That bid also lacked a performance bond, which disqualified it from consideration.

Commissioners voted to reject the bid and review the project before

seeking more bids for the restroom facilities.

The project is being financed by a \$60,480 grant from the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, and \$6,520 in town money.

Access Offered

The board also heard a request from Kemp Holden that he be allowed to give the town two 15-foot strips of land on either side of the north end of Canal Drive without having to have his property re-subdivided.

The strips are located where Conch, Mullet, Iron Age and Blockade Runner streets intersect

with Canal Street on the east end of the island.

According to Planning Board Chairman Alan Holden, who explained the request to commissioners, Holden would not be increasing the number of his lots, receiving no building advantages, or changing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers easement line.

Town Administrator Bob Buck said that to allow the request, Holden's property would have to be re-subdivided in order to meet the subdivision regulations.

The board voted not to take any action on the matter.

Point VFD Elects Officer

Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department members elected officers April 15, re-electing Mike Potts as president and fire chief.

Other officers for the coming year are Donald Pennington, vice-president; Eleanor Hoff, secretary; Bob Hoff, treasurer.

Membership on the board of directors is unchanged, with J.B. Harrison, Joe Pigott, Jimmy Pigott, Joyce Land, Helyn Phillips, J.R. Chadwick, Palmer Suggs and Ray Jackson serving another year.

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