

Opening Of Their Bookstore Brought New Life To The Lowells

(Continued From Page 38)

"Every time we crossed that bridge to go home, there would be tears in my eyes," Barbara recalled. "I didn't want to go back; I kept thinking there had to be a way we could stay."

They began actively figuring a way to do it. "We were going to do a photo processing job," recalled Jim, and decided to add a few books as a sideline—to give people something to do while they waited for film to be processed and to help even out business in the off-season.

It dawned upon them there was no local bookstore; a little research uncovered there was no bookstore within 30 miles. That was it; their key to a permanent move.

The timing seemed right. Their four children were scattered: a son and daughter in Denver, one daughter in Hawaii and another in Scotland.

In 1988 Barbara came. She didn't retire from her job at the hospital, she says, "I quit."

L Bookworm opened on Memorial Day weekend, with the Lowells' own sizeable library the foundation of its used book section, and Barbara, "a frustrated librarian" who was president of her high school library club, at its helm.

After a year-and-a-half of taking long weekends whenever possible, Jim became a permanent resident. He didn't retire either, he says, taking disability leave after 10 years

on the job and two hip replacement operations.

One of the last articles he wrote for his community reinvestment program newsletter, he says, described how to open a bookstore at the beach—from the dream stage on.

Today the Lowells still may not be "retired," but they love the new life they've fashioned—where they are and what they're doing.

Over the past nine years they have become an integral part of the community, always eager to pitch in, making friends by being friends to others, sharing their shop and themselves.

Barbara was elected secretary/treasurer of the Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association at the first meeting she attended in 1989. When Jim moved down permanently he began helping with the secretarial work, and sure enough, the jobs were split between them at a subsequent election. They've remained in leadership positions ever since.

These days the association is getting more organized and has more volunteers to help with projects that range from the N.C. Festival By The Sea to beautification of the causeway and entry to the beach.

In the process of collecting 1994 dues, Barbara says that in 1993 the association had 67 members, growing from an average membership of

about 20 to 25.

The association answering machine is based at L Bookworm, and the shop sometimes resembles "communications central," especially as the N.C. Festival By The Sea approaches at the end of each October.

"It's a good location for that," said Barbara. "It's convenient for people."

"We've enjoyed it very much," she reflected. "So many of the people who live here have expertise to share with the community, and we have that opportunity too. It's been

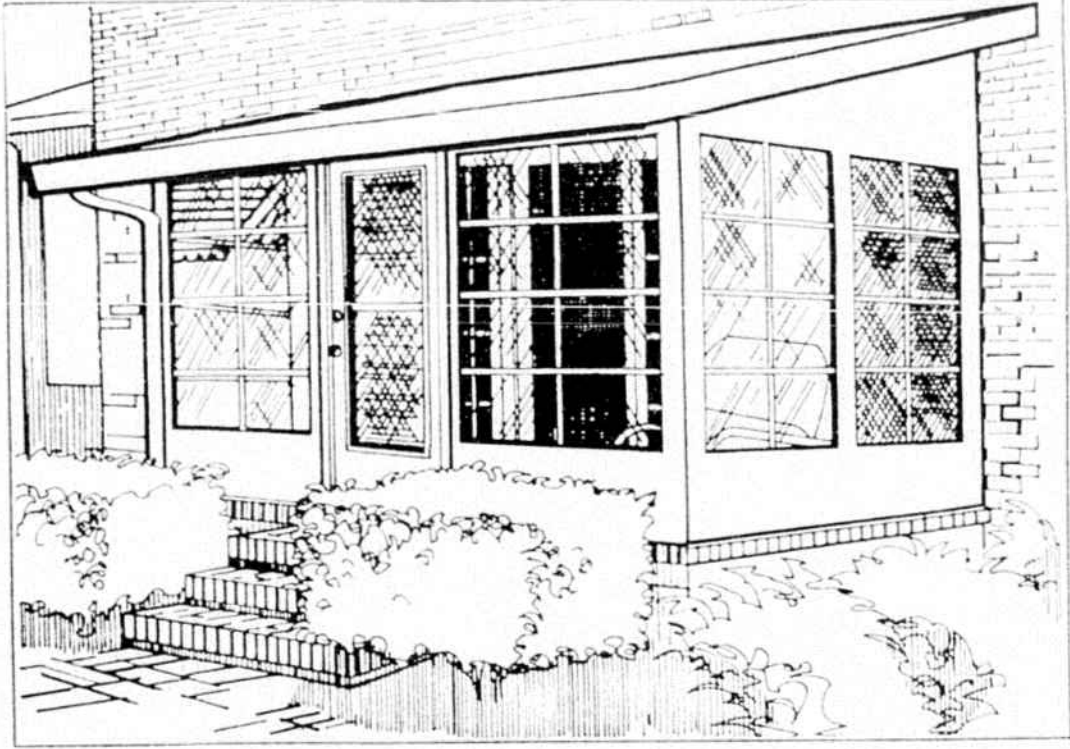
a great experience."

While customers have sometimes urged them to relocate the bookstore to Shallotte, the Lowells are adamant.

Holden Beach is home and, says Barbara, "We're not commuting any more."

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Beginning February 7 Seniors Offered Prizes For Memories Of Trains

For many of the Tarheel State's senior citizens, memories of train travel are part of their personal history.

The N.C. Department of Transportation wants seniors to relive those memories and share their stories about trains. The NCDOT is sponsoring the "Getting There is Half the Fun" essay contest for senior adults 62 and older. The contest began Feb. 7.

"Many of our older citizens have wonderful memories of the roles trains played in their lives. We want to hear those stories," said N.C. Transportation Secretary Sam Hunt.

To enter the contest, North Carolina seniors 62 and older should submit a short essay (300 words or less) about a memorable experience involving a train. It could be about coming home from the war, working at a local rail yard, a first train ride or meeting a loved one at the station—anything that makes a good story.

Prizes will be awarded for the best three entries. The grand prize winner will receive a special weekend for two including two tickets for the Carolinian, two tickets for a North Carolina Sympony concert, dinner and hotel accommodations for two in Raleigh. Second- and

third-place winners will receive passes for the Carolinian.

Hunt said while many remember the romance of the old trains, he wants people to know that rail travel in North Carolina today is much better than "the good old days."

"Today our trains have air conditioning, electrical outlets for computers and phone service," said Hunt. "It's a great way to travel for families and seniors who don't want to worry about driving or business people who want to work or relax while they travel."

Entries are due March 31 to the Carolinian Essay Contest, c/o NCDOT Rail Division, P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh NC 26711. Employees of Amtrak, the NCDOT and their families are not eligible for prizes.

County Population Projections

1995	66,171
2000	79,866
2010	92,623

SOURCE: NC OFFICE OF STATE BUDGET & MANAGEMENT, 1992

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