

# Sea Levelers Become Revelers

(Continued from page 1)

business, started the hospital in 1953 because of his continuing devotion to Sea Level and its people.

The facility is located at the eastern end of state route 70 between the highway and Nelson's Bay, which is visible from the hospital's solariums. On one side of the hospital is a large group of white-washed tables which form a pavillion where the fish fry is held each year.

On the other side, to the north, is the community cemetery, where Sea Levelers have been buried since before the Civil War. People with names like Taylor, Salter and Gaskill sleep beneath the granite markers shaded by willow oak trees.

Breezes which blow up whitecaps on the bay rustle branches hung with Spanish moss and make the warmest day seem cooler. And in winter, temperatures average eight to 10 degrees warmer than in the Piedmont due to the proximity of the ocean.

Apart from the commercial fishing of shrimp, mullet, oysters, flounder and menhaden, the hospital is the main industry of Sea Level. It is staffed largely by natives, but also includes "foreigners"—people who come from somewhere other than the Outer Banks.

The people who are native to the area, those who work in Sea Level Hospital, man the fishing boats or haul in the surf nets off the Core Banks are a breed apart from the rest of North Carolinians.

Most Sea Levelers are descendants of the original English who settled along the Outer Banks and fished the southern end of the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" for a living. Their Liverpool brogue is unmistakable.

"They are an independent and intelligent group, with a particular



interest in education," said Jack Johnson, administrator for the hospital. "Almost everyone here owns his own home, and except for those who work in the hospital, they are largely self-employed. Also, as a group, they are healthy and live long lives. For example, Maltby Taylor, the father of D. E. Taylor, was 103 years old when he passed away earlier this year," he added.

The hospital itself is similar to many well-equipped community hospitals of comparable size. It has 100 employees—including three general practitioners, a surgeon, a radiologist and a physician's associate. It maintains emergency and operating rooms, a clinical laboratory, physical therapy facilities and has plans to initiate an inhalation therapy service soon.

When the hospital opened its doors in 1953 it had 20 beds. Since that time two

additional wings have been added, the first in 1957 and a second in 1963, bringing the total bed capacity to 88.

D. E. Taylor's gift to the people of Sea Level was clearly a labor of love.

"He allowed only the finest materials to be used in the building of his hospital," Johnson said, "and when he turned it over to Duke University, so that it would have the benefit of association with the medical center, he included a half-million dollar endowment and 1,500 acres of land nearby.

"People who staff our hospital, and all Sea Levelers, feel a real debt of gratitude to Mr. Taylor, and I think that helps us with our work. What we try to do here is to have the best small community hospital in the state through Duke's leadership and help. We want to become a model for other hospitals," he said.



COOL DRINK ON A HOT DAY



THE BAND PLAYED ON



SEAFOOD BY THE BUSHEL



Dr. Stuart Sessoms represented the medical center at the groundbreaking ceremonies.



TRY IT, YOU'LL LIKE IT. HONEST!



AND HE CAN COOK, TOO!—Jack Johnson, Sea Level Hospital's administrator, lent a hand to the men who performed the kitchen duties.



HOT SAUCE



MOMENT OF PRAYER—Monroe Gaskill, chairman of the Board of Advisors of Sea Level Hospital, gave the invocation at the groundbreaking for the aged mariners' new home.



(Photos by David Williamson)