

HERMIT NOW LIVES AT FORT FISHER

Students Journey To See Hermit At Fort Fisher

(Editor's note: Jimmy Williams and Dwight Thomas recently journeyed to Fort Fisher to obtain the following feature for THE BLACKBIRD. Fort Fisher, now a fisherman's haven, is inhabited by only one person, the Fort Fisher Hermit.)

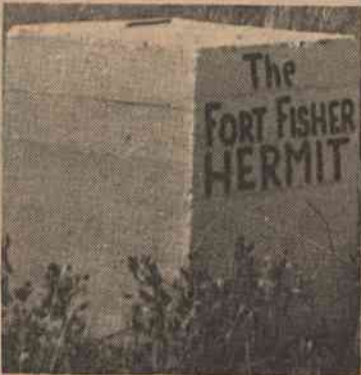
Living at Fort Fisher practically alone for over seven years, Robert Harrell has met and conquered most of the obstacles that have faced him in his attempt to write a book.

Born and raised in Shelby, North Carolina, he encountered many problems in his early life, one of which was his education. "I have tried every since I was fourteen years of age to get an education by working my way through several schools," Robert says of his schooling.

EDUCATION

He attended Garner-Webb Junior College and taught typing to finance his education there. At one time, he was taught psychology by an instructor of Albert Einstein. After attending other schools in Washington and New York, he settled down in Shelby, working in print shops and eventually opening a small jewelry shop.

Upon deciding to write his book on psychology, he sold his shop and came to Fort Fisher. After being thwarted in his attempt to buy a lot and build a house, he moved into a small pillbox on government-owned land, five miles south of Carolina Beach. And, despite almost unbelievable odds, Robert Harrell has been there ever since.



He has lived through seven hurricanes and during one, Donna, water was up to his shoulders in his camp with 100 miles per hour wind whipping through. The nearest human was 20 miles away, in Wilmington. Two fires have wiped him out. One was set by pranksters and the other spread from his own campfire. He has had three nervous breakdowns and suffers from a weak heart and bad hearing.

LIVING QUARTERS

The 70-year-old man lives in a concrete pillbox, measuring 24 feet by 16 feet by nine feet, constructed by the government during World War II for basic maneuvers. An old car stands embedded in the sand nearby and his camp as he calls it, is littered with trash left by tourists, who visit him

at an overwhelming rate. Last year, over 17,000 people came to see him and he talked to every one of them about anything they wished. Ava Gardner has been to see him twice and Governor Sanford has promised a visit.

Lying directly in front of his camp is a sound, beyond which lies the ocean, and about a half mile behind him is the Cape Fear River. It is from this sound that he obtains most of his diet, primarily consisting of oysters, clams, mussels, and fish. He prides himself in his roasted oysters and on occasion serves them to his guests. To fatten the oysters up, he feeds them corn meal.

Robert hopes to get at least part of his book published soon so that he can repair a wrecked boat and fix up his camp. His only income is the change that tourists leave him and this is used to buy essential supplies. He goes to Carolina Beach once a week to get mail, groceries, and water.

HEALTH TROUBLES

For six years, he obtained his water from a four-foot well dug about 30 feet from his pillbox. Last year, health officials condemned the well and ever since have been trying to run the Fort Fisher Hermit out of the county. They have had him in court on several occasions, but have found no grounds to evict him yet.

Robert has been in court on one other occasion. This was to testify against two men who kidnapped him and tried to kill him. Their car became bogged down on the sandy road leading to his camp and he escaped. The two are now serving prison terms.

Thus, Robert Harrell carries on in his struggle to publish his book. He plans to remain at Fort Fisher until his entire book is published, and the five-foot, three-inch marvel of a man will.

If you happen to be in that vicinity in the future, drop in to see him, not as a tourist attraction, but as a tribute to all men. He'll be glad to see you.



Robert Harrell appears from his pillbox home at Fort Fisher with his register, which he insists all his visitors sign.

(Staff Photo)

New Courses Offered At Senior High In Russian, Spanish III, And Math

To further enrich its curriculum, Rocky Mount Senior High School is offering three new courses, Russian I, Spanish III, and Math 12X.

The Russian I course uses the audio-lingual approach, which places greatest stress on the understanding and speaking of the language. The class first has to learn an entirely new alphabet and sound system. Later the class will visit the language laboratory twice a week to work with tapes featuring a native voice.

Spanish III has as its objectives advanced conversation and composition, advanced litera-

ture, and the theater. This course also includes the study of everyday life of Spanish speaking people throughout the world.

The Math 12X class is made possible by the integration of plane and solid geometry into one year course, which gives some students an added semester of mathematics. In the past, solid geometry and trigonometry were a one year course. Now trigonometry may be taken during the first semester and during the second semester fundamentals of analytic geometry and the calculus may be taken.

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