

For Leroy Gillikin, manager of the Seahawk Motor Lodge, one measure of the passage of time comes when folks he first knew as boys and girls playing in the lobby "come back a few years later with kids of their own."

"Most of our business is repeat," said Gillikin who has managed the Seahawk since shortly after it was built in 1964. "I'd say 90 percent of our guests are persons who have been here before or who were told about the Seahawk by their neighbors."

THE SEAHAWK Gillikin told of one young man, who had often vacationed at the lodge with his parents and who returned years later bringing his own two small sons.

MOTOR LODGE "I sure was mean, wasn't I?" he recalled. "You sure were," Gillikin said he told him. "I hope those two youngsters are as mean as you were."

The Seahawk was built in 1964 by Harry Bateman and W. M. Blair Jr. of Wilson who still own it. It has 36 rooms plus two three-bedroom villas at either end. The villas also have a living room and full kitchen. It stays open the year round, and Gillikin said occupancy ranges from about 50 percent in March and April, nearly 100 percent during the summer months, and around 75 percent during September and October. "After that it goes way down," said Gillikin.

A 32-seat restaurant at the Seahawk is operated under lease by Ed and Betty Willard. They serve a full breakfast, and lunch consists mostly of soups and sandwiches as well as their highly regarded shrimp salads. They do not serve dinner, Gillikin said, because most of the guests prefer to dine out.

Gillikin, 52, became interested in hotel work while in the military. He took a course at Lewis Hotel Training School in Washington and worked at the Carolina Hotel and the Howard Johnson Motel at Raleigh before coming to the Seahawk.

He enjoys his work because "the people I've met have been so nice to me they become friends," said Gillikin. He told of Ronald and Emily Jordan of South Bend, Indiana who have been vacationing at the Seahawk with their two children for more than 10 years.

"I'm planning to visit the Jordans in South Bend this winter," Gillikin said. He said Jordan, an auto parts company executive, "has promised to give me a tour of Notre Dame University."

A couple of years ago Gillikin visited Robert and Jean Anne Kahlor in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Kahlor, a vice president of the Milwaukee Journal and Jean Ann and their four children have been vacationing at the Seahawk for about 10 years.