

Aquarium Director's Career Path Was Charted Early

By Marion Walker

Yes, we know he's the director of our local aquarium, but Jay Barnes is a lot more than that. It was my pleasure to spend a half hour with him to learn more about this multi-talented person. In temporary quarters at Atlantic Station Shopping center, Jay is busily preparing for the scheduled May opening of the magnificent new aquarium facility.

Superbly qualified for his job, Jay graduated from N.C. State University's School of Design and holds a masters degree in advertising from Syracuse University. He has written two books on hurricanes and co-authored a third. He has participated in various productions for The Discovery Channel, The Weather Channel, The History Channel and National Public Radio. National recognition has made him a much sought after guest lecturer.

Jay grew up in the small town of Southport, N.C. His father was manager of the local menhaden fish factory while his mother spent her professional career as a school teacher and guidance counselor. Childhood was full of good times enjoying the pleasures and advantages of coastal living. A special memory and perhaps an omen of future life was his back yard museum. As a boy he and two best friends painstakingly assembled a collection of their treasures - sharks teeth, civil war bullets and other such artifacts. Admission was fifty cents and everything was properly displayed and identified. Even more exciting was when news of his museum made the local paper.

By age 14 Jay proved his good sense of business by successfully managing a surf shop in Southport. He did this for two summers, taking complete responsibility for opening, closing and handling the money. Other jobs included working at the crab processing plant and later in the kitchen of the Atlantic Beach Dunes Club. That was in 1977 when Bud Dixon, longtime mayor of Morehead City, was manager there. Dixon had been best man at the wedding of Jay's parents. And so, when Jay married his wife Robin in 1991 at the Dunes Club, Mr. Dixon was their best man as well.

Jay and Robin have two daughters. Robin is employed with the Carteret County Health Department. Daughter Heather, 21, attends Carteret Community College and Lindsey is a seventh grader at Morehead Middle School. Incidentally, Lindsey is actively seeking employment as a safe babysitter, having recently completed a course in this. Both girls enjoy athletics and Jay coaches for Lindsey's soccer and basketball teams. Two dogs round out the Barnes family unit.

When asked how he came to be director of the aquarium, Jay commented that in today's world it's quite unusual to remain for 25 years with the same employer. He has managed to do just that. He started with the PKS aquarium in August 1980 as exhibits curator, doing design display, posters, graphics, brochures etc. At that time the four-year-old aquarium was quite small, with only five employees.

Eleven years later he transferred to the Raleigh division office to become exhibits specialist, working with all three state aquariums. When Ned Smith left in 1989 Jay returned to PKS as the new director.

He never focused on or even dreamed of writing books; it just sort of happened. Even as a child hurricanes had always held his fascination. That, combined with his interest in history, resulted in his collecting a sort of "scrapbook" of information on the subject. This developed into a slide presentation. His fame spread and he was frequently asked to lecture on the subject. Encouraged by so much public interest, it was a natural progression to consider writing a book. He found a willing publisher in David Perry at the University of North Carolina Press. "North Carolina Hurricane History" was published in 1995 and is currently in the third edition. His editor suggested another book about another target state, Florida, and so his second book, "Florida's Hurricane History" was completed in the fall of 1998. It took three years to research. In the year 2000, Richard Moore, now North Carolina State Treasurer but then Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety approached him to co-author a book about Hurricane Floyd. "Faces from the Flood" was published in 2003. The presentation here was a bit different, as it dealt with oral histories of people connected with the devastation and included more photography.

Jay has also written articles for magazines. The latest one entitled "Scattered by the Storm" appears in the August issue of "Wildlife in North Carolina." It remembers the famous hurricane of August, 1899 that marked the death knell for the future of Diamond City on Shackleford Banks.

Public speaking is yet another accomplishment. Jay recently spoke in Pinehurst to those attending Best of Our State sponsored by "Our State Magazine." It's fun for him to do story telling and he loves to meet and talk with the people. Jay has to limit his speaking engagements these days as he is far too busy to be able to accommodate all of the requests.

Jay has many other interests. In fact if and when retirement rolls around there will always be plenty of things for him to do. He enjoys sports, history, art and music. The latest book he read was a dictionary of etymology. In fact he considers himself an amateur etymologist and plans someday to develop a slide show on the origin of nautical words and terms we use today. As he puts it, "I love to be creative."

Jay requested that I mention how much he has enjoyed working with the many folks from Pine Knoll Shores who have volunteered their time and talents to the aquarium in the past. He is very much looking forward to working with all who will join the volunteer group at the new aquarium.

Historic Masonic Theatre Reopens

Submitted by John Van Dyke, Director

The Serendipity Players

The Historic Masonic Theatre will reopen to the public on Friday, Sept. 16. The first event will be the Broadway Musical, "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown," presented by The Serendipity Players of New Bern. The musical will run September 16, 17, 18 and 23, 24, 25 - Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m.. The theatre is located at 516 Hancock Street in Historic Downtown New Bern.

The Masonic Theatre, which dates its beginning to 1804, was once the cultural center of New Bern. Leading architects described it as "the largest and most elaborate building ever built in New Bern up to its time, with the exception of Tryon Palace."

Through the years, the Masonic Theatre was the scene of many stage plays, talent benefits, concerts, vaudeville acts, political rallies, civic conventions, school commencements, church services, and other community gatherings. During the War Between the States, it was used as a Confederate arsenal and later as a hospital when Union forces occupied New Bern.

After having served all this time as the town's chief place for civic gatherings, it became a motion picture theater in 1917 and remained so until 1974. It was the nation's oldest continually operating theater until it closed its doors in December 1974. The

Masonic Theatre Restoration Project is in the final phase of restoring the theatre to her original beauty so that the community may once again enjoy events at the theatre.

The Masonic Theatre has selected The Serendipity Players of New Bern to be its resident theatre group. They are a new artist-led, artist-driven performance ensemble whose primary focus is to encourage creativity and imagination while providing the finest theatrical entertainment for our community. The Serendipity Players are excited to be a part of the re-opening of the Historic Masonic Theatre and they invite everyone to come and experience the magic of this remarkable place.

The first event at the Historic Masonic Theatre is the aforementioned Broadway musical, "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown". It has been called "the perfect family entertainment!" It is based on the comic strip "Peanuts" by Charles M. Schultz. The 1999 Broadway Revival won two Tony awards. Tickets for the musical event are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children at the door or advance tickets are \$12 for adults and \$8 for children. Advance Tickets and Group Rates are available by calling 252-638-9166 or for more info visit www.TheSerendipityPlayers.com

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