

# A Salter Pather's Story

By Dan Law

The community just down the shore from us doesn't look much like it once did. It now closely resembles many other commercialized tourist beach towns all over the south and east coast. It's hard to find many reminders of the rich down east heritage that once existed there. But you can still find a few folks who speak with the traditional accent that once flourished abundantly in this region. Those who love reading about the history and customs that once dominated this part of the coast can find several books in places like The History Place in Morehead City, the bookstore at Fort Macon or Bogue Banks Library, but the majority of these books were written from secondhand information.

For those who want to read a book written by a man who experienced that life firsthand, a retired commercial fisherman who was born and raised in Salter Path, you're in luck. Romaine Willis is a descendant of original English settlers, whalers and fishermen who once scraped out a simple, honest living in Diamond City on Shackleford Banks and later relocated to our island. When you read Willis's books, you can hear, feel and taste the full flavor of the rich accent and heritage of the original Salter Path settlers. It's easy to get lost in his stories and for the moment feel what it was truly like living in a past time now gone forever. Now for just a few months a year during the winter when all the tourists have gone home does Salter Path slow down enough that you can almost feel the laid-back peace of days gone by.

Romaine Willis, now 73, loves to sit back, relax and tell stories of how wonderful this little community used to be. He is a faithful Christian man, built of strong moral character, and his Christian faith is evident in his stories. He has written two books containing stories his friends and family have listened to for many years. He says, "I started this adventure because my wife asked me to write down some of the childhood memories for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She wanted them to know their family heritage."

The first book, *Remembering "Back Yonder"* is a collection of short stories set in the small fishing village of Salter Path from the 1930s until the late 1950s. He recalls a childhood filled with laughter, hard times and always love. I found myself laughing often and thinking just how many things about his life and those times reminded me of when I was a small boy growing up in southeast Mississippi. Many of the games they used to play were similar to ones my little brother and I played in the late '50s and through the '60s. This book is full of wisdom and teachings that were once necessary to survive in a time when families had to grow and catch everything they needed to feed their families and to flourish in an isolated region of the world.

Romaine Willis's second book, *Traditions Gone... But Not Forgotten*, is filled with stories and pictures from people who remember fishing on the beach and a way of life that is gone forever. It was a life of hard work and always, always laughter as is evident in the pictures he included. He writes: "It's sad to know that after my generation is gone no one will even remember these times, and that's why I have tried so hard to get it written down, so it will not be left out when people think of Salter Path. It's not just a tourist attraction but a community that lived in the most interesting and wonderful times of life that is now gone but not forgotten."

You will find many fishing stories in this book that will help you understand the history and present logic of how weather and seasons affect the many different kinds of fishing that we can enjoy on Bogue Banks. In this book, I found subtle knowledge that can help this old country boy become a better fisherman and a better, more compassionate person.

Romaine and his sweet wife, Dolly, now live in Sneads Ferry, still maintaining a simple Christian life. He can no longer fish commercially. That hard, back-breaking work has taken its toll on his body, but to sit and talk with him, watching him, you would never guess he was in his 70's or that his back keeps him from the work he so dearly loves. These are the kinds of people who built this great country and made her great.

Willis's books can be purchased either online with PayPal or credit or debit card at [www.rememberingbackyonder.com](http://www.rememberingbackyonder.com) or purchased at the convenience store and gas station in the center of Salter Path.

## @The Aquarium

The Aquarium is blooming with family fun this spring. In addition to thousands of animals and dozens of exhibits, enjoy dive presentations, animal feedings and creature features, all free with admission or membership any day you come. For example, the aquarium's three river otters are featured in free programs four mornings each week.

April 17-23 brings Party for the Planet, a week of fun focused on conservation in the spirit of Earth Day. To sweeten the message, bakers compete in the Cakes for Conservation cake-decorating contest. The aquarium joins other conservation organizations at Fort Macon State Park on April 23 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the Crystal Coast Earth Day Festival.

Also on April 23, imagination and education combine for a magical new program for children ages 4-12, Forest Fairies to Sea Serpents. To enhance your visit this year, a new lineup of activities includes fishing instruction, paddling excursions, behind-the-scenes tours and other indoor and outdoor adventures. These programs and Forest Fairies to Sea Serpents require advance registration and fees. Online registration for the aquarium's popular summer camps for children in grades 2 - 7 begins April 1. See the Pine Knoll Shores section of [www.ncaquariums.com](http://www.ncaquariums.com) or call 247-4003 for more information on these activities and programs.

The aquarium is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$8 for ages 13-61, \$7 for ages 62 and over, \$6 for children 3-12; no charge for children 2 and under and North Carolina Aquarium Society members.

## April 2011 Sudoku Puzzle

Difficulty level: medium

		1		2			6	3
	2			1				
			5					
	8	5	2					1
6	9						5	
		3					9	
7								
3					5	1		
	1		8	4				7