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Hundreds of New Bernians have purchased copies of Charlie Whedbee's book, "Legends Of The Outer Banks." It is a fascinating volume, of particular interest to those of us who live in the coast country.

Whedbee is no stranger here. A member of New Bern's Scottish Rite Consistory, the Greenville native has participated in degree work at Spring and Fall Reunions for a great many years.

It was through Masonry that this editor and Charlie became friends a long time ago. For what it may be worth, we can testify that the warm personality he projects on WNCT's morning show is the way the man really is off camera.

As the book's publisher, John F. Blair, says, it is more than a collection of coastal legends. It is an affectionate portrait of the people who daily pull a living out of the treacherous waters of the Atlantic... a tribute to the hardiness and courage that has made the Banker a rare breed... a breed whose true stories are indeed stranger than fiction.

Whedbee's volume is, to use a trite expression, truly a labor of love. As far back as he can remember, he has been a frequent visitor to the Dare coast, and he, his wife and their dog, Chief Manteo of Roanoke, are familiar summer residents at Nags Head.

Charlie makes no claim that all of the stories in his book are factual. Some he knows to be true, some he believes to be true because they were told and retold to him by upright and honest people, and the rest he admits are impossible of verification or of refutation.

Among the tales that rate a chapter are The Pirate Lights of Pamlico Sound, The Ghost Deer of Roanoke, The Devil's Hoofprints, A Door For St. Andrews, The Witch of Nag's Head Woods, Swanquarter Incident, and The Riddle of Shallotte Inlet.

It is hardly surprising that "Legends Of The Outer Banks" holds appeal for us, since our maternal ancestors were the Gaskills on Portsmouth Island. One of Whedbee's stories deals with Jim Baum Gaskill, son of Bill and Annie Gaskill, who lived at Ocracoke.

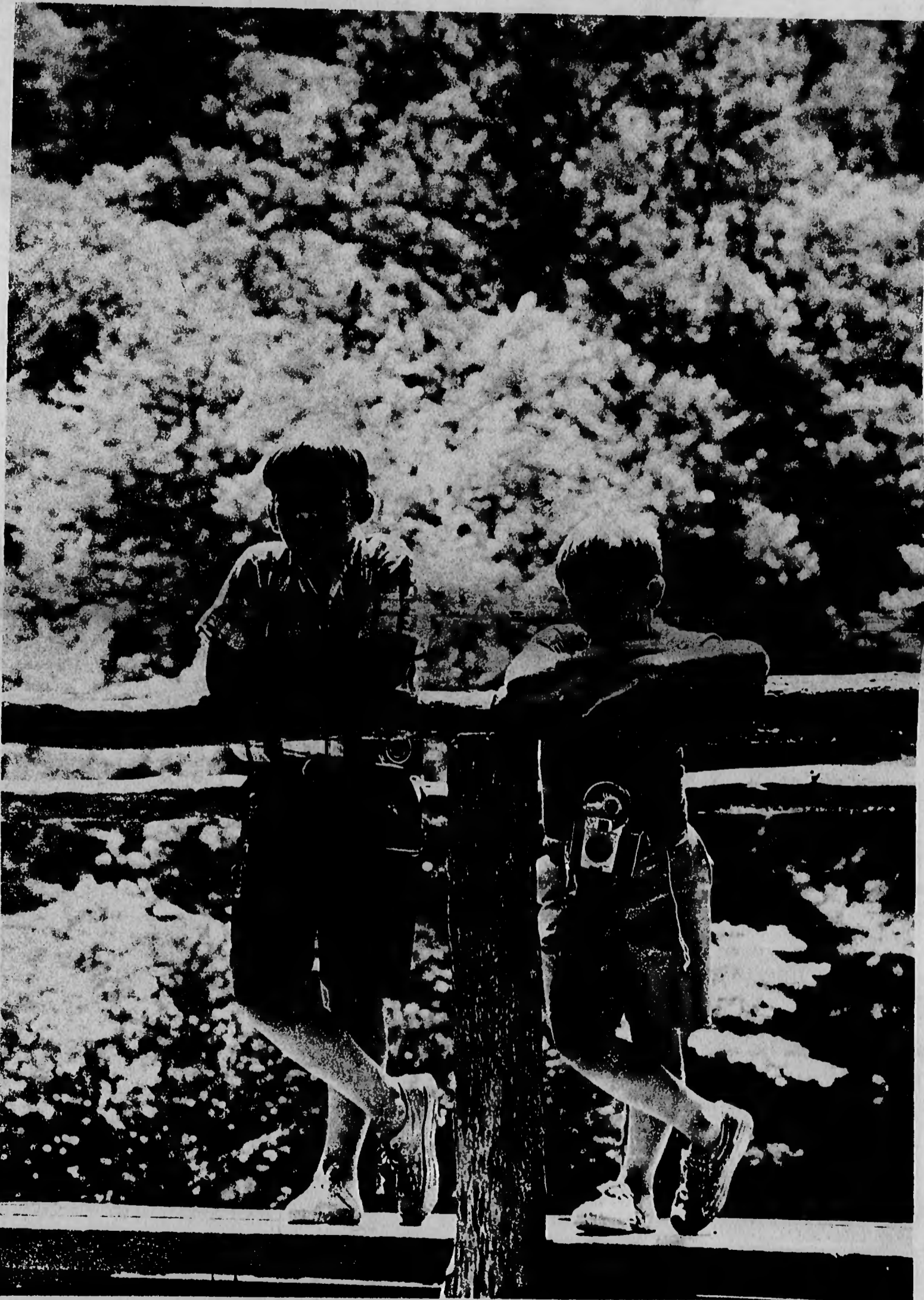
However, the most interesting chapter for us is the one about John and Amy Harris, and the miraculous way he was saved from death during a vicious hurricane that swept the North Carolina coast in September 1933.

It happened to be the first of many big blows we would cover as a newsman during the next third of a century, and well do we remember that 22 Tar Heels lost their lives before wind and tide subsided.

But for a remarkable incident, which we won't spoil by revealing it before you read Charlie's book, John Harris would have been the storm's 23rd victim. It's a foregone conclusion that this narrative, as much as any other in the volume, will linger in your memory.

As Whedbee says, "Many of the inhabitants of these storm-swept shore lines are living legends in themselves. Others have gone on to their

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LAND OF THE SKY—Gary Natella, 12, and Perry Natella, 8, of New Bern were a long way from home when this picture was taken. Touring Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the two young sons of Chick and Barbara Natella pause for a moment to survey the magnificent foliage around them. Naturally a Natella always has his camera handy, but for the time being they are content to feast their eyes on the

spectacular scenery stretching before them. You'll probably notice, as we did, that the brothers as they relax have their feet placed in exactly the same position. It must be a family characteristic. You've missed something wonderful if you've never seen the mountains of North Carolina in Autumn. Plan a weekend trip in the first half of October, while Dame Nature is wielding her paint brush lavishly in the hill country.