



Through  
THE  
Looking  
Glass

# The NEW BERN MIRROR

PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
IN THE HEART OF  
EASTERN NORTH  
CAROLINA  
Regional Library  
400 Johnson St.  
New Bern NC 28560

VOLUME 16

NEW BERN, N. C. 28560, FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1973

NUMBER 8

We'll have to admit that writing in rather complimentary fashion about one's own kin folks is probably in bad taste. And, when the subject you're writing about happens to be the uncle you were named for, it could be doubly so.

Running that risk because it's a story worth the telling, we're thinking today of Captain Joe Gaskill. He was a familiar figure here for many years before moving to North Wilkesboro with his daughter, Mrs. Will Carron, to spend his last days amid a wealth of mellow memories.

Captain Joe hailed from Portsmouth, that little island along North Carolina's outer banks where the ravages of hurricane-swept seas have all but obliterated a community of hardy, ocean-loving people.

Once hundreds called it home, and dreamed of it fondly after they left. Today it's shores have dwindled from the lashings of a raging surf, and only a mere handful of souls cling stubbornly to its unprotected stretch of sand.

They were brave and adventurous souls, those Portsmouth Islanders of old. They asked no quarter from nature's violence, though long association with the sea taught them to respect it.

They knew what it was to see a passing vessel fight a losing fight against the elements, and come to rest in broken pieces at their very doorsteps. They saw men die with courageous dignity, and accepted their grief with deep inner faith when their own loved ones went down to the sea in ships and never returned.

Captain Joe was part an parcel of their breed. At 17 he was skipper of a sailing vessel. Among his ports of call were the islands in the West Indies. It was hazardous business, but he loved it. So did all the others of sturdy English stock who shared the storms and churning foam with him.

It took not only fortitude but a keen sense of humor to brave the tempest as a way of life. You had to learn how to shrug off adversity, and laugh at misfortune.

We're not just indulging in family pride when we say that Captain Joe Gaskill was a man of remarkable wit. Up until his death at the age of 85, he could top any wisecrack you tossed in his direction, and he could make your favorite pun seem ridiculously flimsy with an impromptu pun of his own.

Above all, he was a gentle and kindly man—the typical old salt with a pipe in his mouth and a twinkle in his eye. Probably the meanest thing he ever did was unintentional. The victim was an unsuspecting pig.

In his younger days, Joe was a member of the crew on a sailing vessel that had to exist solely on beans. That's all the cook served—beans and more beans. Having to eat them for weeks on end got to be monotonous.

One day Joe and other men on board decided to dump a huge batch of soda in the bean pot, to

(Continued on page 8)



**MADE IT POSSIBLE**—Most of us must be content with building castles in the air, but the late Maude Moore Latham, a native of New Bern, did something more tangible. She provided millions of dollars for magnificent restoration of Tryon Palace, and her daughter and son in law, the John

Kellenbergers, who like Mrs. Latham were residents of Greensboro, have since given additional support. Ironically, thousands of local citizens have never visited the restoration, although many outsiders travel great distances to see it.