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Periodically, for the benefit of new readers, it is explained that this column's title comes from Alice In Wonderland. None of the characters discovered by fair Alice when she ventured through the mirror, startling though they were, surpassed those we have known in New Bern.

Emmie Gaskill has to be included in the lot. Far beyond her allotted span of years she kept right on working, and only a terminal malady that no human could have coped with took her out of circulation in her final days.

She threatened to be as durable as the wonderful one-horse shay, and we much prefer to remember her that way. Emmie was one of those rare individuals who can be strongly opinionated without being obnoxious. An unflattering sense of humor, punctuated by frequent quips, made her pleasant to be around.

It has been said many times that no one loves a bill collector, but Emmie collected a huge pile of bills during her prolonged life and managed to remain popular. You might hate to part with your money, but you didn't blame her for the anguish you experienced.

Retirement was a dirty word in Emmie's book, and she detested inactivity. It may well be that she kept going as long as she did on sheer momentum. Those associated with her in business can't recall she ever complained of feeling bad, and this acceptance of physical discomfort mortals usually fret over remained steadfast during her last illness.

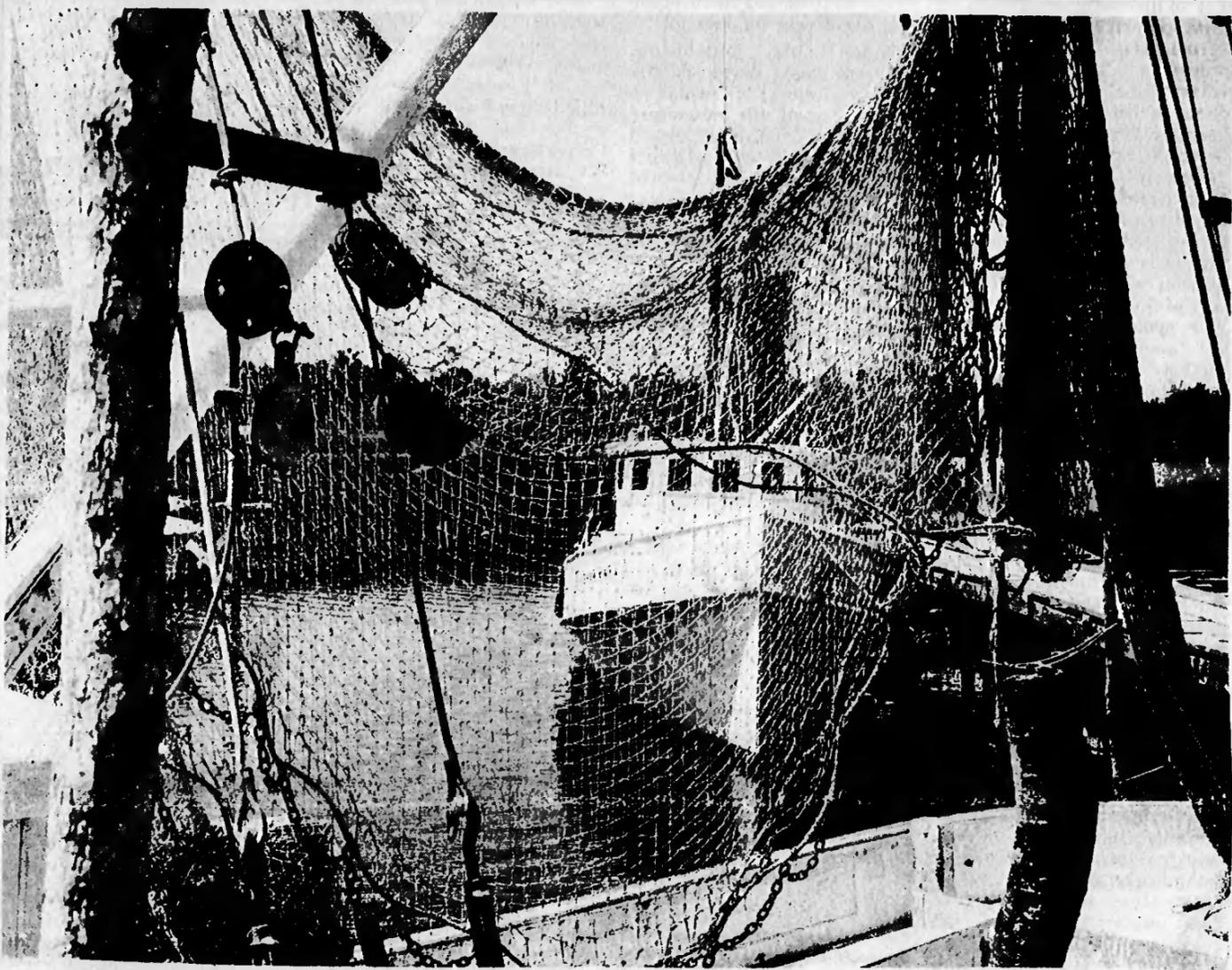
The marker on her grave will indicate she was 90 when she died, but she was 90 years young. A few months before her 89th birthday she was still working regularly, and would have punched anyone in the nose who tried to favor her because of her age.

As a florist, Emmie loved all flowers but her preference was red carnations. The management and employees of the shop that bears her name saw to it that a blanket of crimson petals covered her casket and the family provided a red-carnation pillow.

As Janie Smith, who operates the florist concern with her son, Carlton, says, "Miss Emmie sure did go away in a blaze of glory." Emmie would have appreciated the carnations, and would have laughed at the remark by someone as outspoken as she always was.

Emmie was a gal with an instant answer to everything. Once a man came in to inquire about the price of a ceramic dog in the shop's window, and was told it was seven dollars. "I can buy a live dog for that," he remarked in consternation.

"That's right," she agreed, "but you'll have to feed it." Likely as not, the man ended up buying the ceramic dog. Even if



In The Land Of Enchanting Waters.

—Photos by Billy Benners.

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