

At Yaupon Beach—

Impressive Improvements

By DRAYTON COOPER

"A family beach with good, substantial commercial development"—"A quiet place where we can feel like we're getting away from the hustle and bustle of the city".

These are two descriptions of the same place, Yaupon Beach, given by residents of the area on the same day. They may be somewhat conflicting in their scope, but they are both adequate in summing up the fast-growing resort community near Southport.

In 1954, when the late G. V. Barbee, Sr., first began promoting and developing this relatively short stretch of the North Carolina coast, there was nothing but scrubby pines, glaring sand, and a road running through headed toward another beach.

Today, nearly 10 years later, Yaupon Beach can boast of a year-round population of 200 residents, plus a well-planned, adequate shopping area, and a community of attractive homes.

Gib Barbee, son of the founder of Yaupon, is carrying on the work his father started when the family moved here in 1954. "My father saw the possibilities inherent in this part of the coast after traveling from Maine to Florida looking for a place to settle", young Barbee declared.

The elder Barbee was connected with real estate in the town of Wake Forest, N. C., when the bottom literally fell out of his market. This sudden depression in real estate in the Piedmont town was caused by the removal of the college of Wake Forest to Winston-Salem.

The family moved to Brunswick, purchased the section of the beach which is now known as Yaupon, and started to work. "This is the only work I've ever known," the younger Barbee went on. The quiet-spoken, but energetic real estate entrepreneur attended the University of North Carolina, but came back home to take over the reins of Yaupon following his father's death in



This is a scene on the strand at Yaupon Beach with the fishing pier in the background. There is a life guard on duty full time at this bathing area.

1958. "Frankly," Barbee continued, "there was nothing here in '54, absolutely nothing." It was evident even to just a casual on-looker that a lot of time, energy and money has been put into the beach since then.

"We feel we have a well-rounded community building here. It isn't anything flashy or spectacular, but we do believe that it is sound, and will continue to grow well in the next few years," Barbee continued. There was none of the usual promotional sales-talk one associates with interviewing land developers.

But what about Yaupon's

growth in the past eight years? What does this beach have to offer today? To find this out, we took a leisurely tour of the beach, and its surrounding area, and talked with several people who are now making their homes there.

Practically all of the available land on the ocean side of Yaupon has been sold. A good many of these lots already have substantial looking homes built on them. "We would much rather have a family come in, spend a few days looking around, and find just what they want in the line of a lot. This way they're satisfied with what they've purchased, and usually are ready to start on a house," Barbee told me.

Consequently, there is no high-pressure sales promotion going on at Yaupon. Of course, there is land to be bought, plenty of it, but the visitor isn't bombarded with billboards and gimmicks.

At the present, the company is opening up new lots on the in-

land waterway side of the island. There well over 300 lots in this area of the development. New streets are being cut through the trees now, and eventually a canal will be dredged so that small boats can be launched.

Some building has already started on these lots, but most of the progress of Yaupon can be seen on the ocean side. Driving down to the water's edge, one notices first of all the two large motels. These buildings have an unhindered view of the sea, and there is nothing to block the cool breeze the perpetually blows in from the water.

There are three motels in Yaupon, one on the highway, and the other two on the beach. Of the three, the largest is the Yaupon Motel, owned by Gib Barbee. The three motels have a combined total of over 75 units.

"This is just right for conventions," Barbee pointed out, "and we're already beginning to do some business of this type here."

Within the past few months a medical convention has been held at Yaupon, and a group from the Pilot Life Insurance Company is scheduled in a few weeks.

One of the motels, the Ocean Front, is the proud possessor of Brunswick county's only coastal motel swimming pool. The pool, installed in Clarence Murphy's motel, is already a big drawing card for persons who prefer to do their swimming in the quiet, fresh waters rather than in the surf.

Across the way from the motels is the amusement area. Here the younger members of families visiting the beach can spend their idle hours. There are bumper cars, a universal attraction for young and old alike, along with a narrow-gauge railroad, a fishing pier, and a small, but popular, pavilion.

Added since last season is an asphalt parking lot for the amusement area. "This is really one of the biggest improvements we've made," Barbee stated.

While the young real estate executive stopped to talk over a business problem with an employee of the snack bar in the pier, we strolled out over the blue waters of the Atlantic. Several men were there fishing. One of them, a native of Lexington, N. C., told me that he started coming to Yaupon several years ago on the advice of a friend.

"It's a place where all of us can have a good time," another fisherman chimed in. "It's small enough that we don't have to worry about the kids getting lost, but large enough that there's something to do," he added.

The beach was not overly crowded on this early June afternoon, but a good number of sun-lovers were stretched out on the sand starting on the summer tan. One girl, in her late teens, and already a well-done shade, splashed into the surf, adjusting her swimming cap as she went.

Barbee joined us about that time, and seemed to take a personal interest in the fishing luck the patrons of the pier were having. Almost everyone seemed to know him.

"By the way, we're the only beach in the county that has a full-time certified life guard on duty all summer long," he mentioned as we walked back toward the car.

Leaving the pier, and driving back toward the highway, we passed several new homes that would be a credit to any community. "This is the type home we like to see built here," Barbee said. "We averaged slightly over one new house getting under construction per week this past

spring, and most of them were of this type." He pointed to a newly finished house of average size, but very neat and liveable-looking.

Near Yaupon itself is the site of the new Oak Island Golf and Beach Club. Here, on land purchased from the original Barbee tract, a group of men are opening a highly restricted real estate development centered around an 18-hole championship golf course. Construction was started this week on the club house at the course.

"This will be a tremendous boost for our beach," Barbee continued. "We hope to begin playing on the course by the first of July."

As we returned to his office, Barbee answered a question about the philosophy behind his development. "I'll be quite truthful with you," he began. "When you speak of philosophy, you're speaking of motivation, and the prime motivation in any real estate development is to make money. But we believe that a certain responsibility goes along with this, too."

"We have a responsibility to the person who buys property here and builds a home on it to provide him with a good community in which to live," he continued. "We'd like to see a well-rounded development here where people can come who are both semi-retired, as well as ambitious and young."

"You can say that this is the goal we're shooting for: to have a community where people can come as a family group to vacation, or to live. We don't want a beach that is populated by a bunch of 'rough-necks', but one where the whole family can have a good time without worrying." It was refreshing to hear him state this as the purpose of his

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Sheldon Nelson, a 17 year old visitor from Greensboro hooked a large fish Saturday afternoon on the fishing pier at Yaupon Beach. After a two and one half hour battle, the fish snapped his line and got away. Ideas on the species of the fish ranged from a stinger-ray to a tarpon. Sheldon was using a spinning reel and monofilament line. We are sorry he had nothing to show for his battle but all of the hundred spectators who witnessed the fight realized he had really done a good job handling the fish.

They do at Morehead City," one of the much-traveled girls declared. "Up there they freeze them when they have a big supply and they sell them to folks who want to go crabbing." For a moment we had a feeling that she was pulling our leg, but she insisted that this does happen. So if it happens at Morehead, maybe it is worth considering at Southport, Long Beach, Holden Beach, Shallotte Point and other favorite fishing places along the coast of Brunswick.

We often think that crabbing is a much neglected sport in and around Brunswick, and when we have an eager bunch of upstate visitors who not only want to have some fun, but who are interested in crabs to eat, we know that this is a form of entertainment that should be encouraged.

Like Friday afternoon when a party of teenagers from Raleigh visited the Southport city dock to try their luck at crabbing. They were using meat scraps obtained from a local butcher shop, but all the time they were complaining that fish heads would be better. We explained that you only have fish heads when you have fish, and that the local supply for a couple of days had been cut short by a northeast wind.

"Then they ought to do like

Someone asked the Rev. Drayton Cooper this week what is the probable mortality rate on the palmetto trees planted on the Presbyterian church grounds several weeks ago. "We'll surely save one, and maybe the other," he predicted. "Both of them would

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