

## State celebration

# Glorious Fourth to be celebrated

Celebration of the Fourth of July in Southport dates to the immediate post-Revolutionary War period, when citizens of Smithville, as Southport was then known, would gather in the town square to offer up toasts to the new American way of life and to the men who fought to wrestle independence from the Crown.

To say celebration of the Fourth of July in Southport is a tradition is to understate the obvious. The patriotic citizens of Southport have continued to host formal celebrations of Independence Day through the years and the modern-day N. C. Fourth of July Festival is now the official state observance of this most precious of American holidays.

The 1998 N. C. Fourth of July Festival promises to uphold the fine tradition of Southport celebrations and may possibly be one of the best in its long history.

Long-time festival volunteer Bette Leggett will step in as president for 1998. And, the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce will lend its administrative talent to the event.

"This is going to be the best, the most patriotic, festival ever," said chamber executive vice-president Karen Sphar. "This festival will feature the best of the best and the most of the most. Bette Leggett's enthusiasm for Southport and for the N. C. Fourth of July Festival is contagious and has spread to the entire festival committee."

The festival of 1998 is of special significance to its organizing committee. Festival organizers this year have dedicated the 1998 festival to the memory of long-time board member and treasurer Almeta Crowe, who lost her long battle with cancer earlier this year.

Festival activities actually begin well before the Fourth of July weekend with the June 13 Patriots Ball, a tribute to those individual community contributors who are the financial backbone of the N. C. Fourth of July Festival. The event will be held dockside at Southport Marina, with live entertainment and plenty of good food. More information is available from the chamber of commerce office, 457-6964.

The festival will kick-off in earnest with a grand opening ceremony Wednesday, July 1.

On Thursday, July 2, streets will fill with visitors to downtown Southport, but much of the action will move to the Oak Island observance of Beach Day, with surfing, volleyball, horseshoe and watermelon-eating contests scheduled at the Long Beach cabana.

Southport will be the venue for a late-afternoon July 2 Naturalization Ceremony on the Garrison at Fort Johnston. Last year nearly 50 new Americans took the oath of citizenship in Southport as part of N. C. Fourth of July Festival activities.

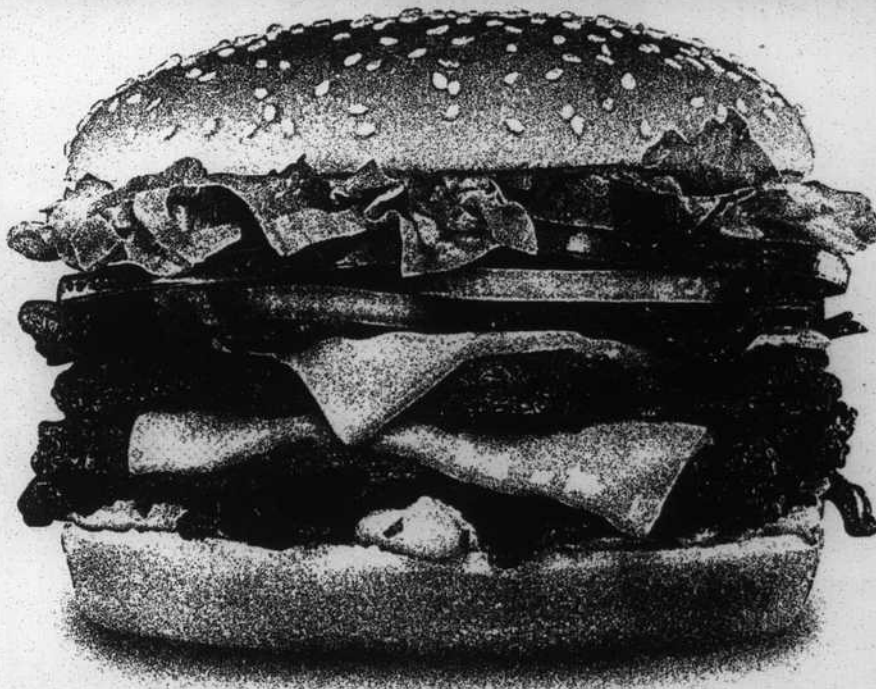
July 2 will conclude with a Middleton Park beach music concert by North Carolina's best-loved band, The Embers, who will return the evening of July 4 to play the festival's concluding concert at the foot of Southport's Howe Street over-

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Southport remembers the true meaning of Independence Day

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