

# Time and Tide

## 55 years ago

It was April 14, 1943, and our "Not Exactly News" editor had advised the public that there would be two frosts in the month of April. In support of his statement a local citizen had explained, "There was thunder in February." The WB&S had added another round-trip to Wilmington to its daily bus schedule; a group of Army and Navy personnel had paid a visit to Orton Gardens; and the Bolivia graduation exercises had been consolidated into the commencement ceremony.

On the political front, Southport mayor John Erickson apparently was going to succeed himself in office, being unopposed in the election. The season's first strawberries had appeared on Tabor City markets; Miss Lou Cox and master Ralph Mollycheck had both celebrated their sixth birthdays; and according to "Our Helpmate," soybeans are both heathful and delicious.

## 45 years ago

It was April 16, 1953, and there were apparent prospects of Southport getting a fish cannery. The citizens of Southport, U.S.A., had given a bench to the citizens of Southport, England, to be erected in the city park in commemoration of the Coronation. Kirby Sullivan had returned from active duty with the Army in Korea and was soon to resume the practice of law in Southport; the U. S. Coast Guard was issuing port security cards; and the Bolivia Lions Club was sponsoring an all-night gospel sing.

There was a meeting scheduled on the upcoming Monday to establish a Ground Observer Post in Southport; our "Not Exactly News" editor had noted that Ben McDonald was broadcasting from Clinton; and he had also given Dinah Shore a plug for her movie upcoming at the Amuzu Theater.

## 35 years ago

A pretty photograph of Orton Mansion was on the front page of the *Pilot* for April 10, 1963. The *Raleigh Times* had given editorial endorsement to the bill to provide a visitors center at Brunswick Town and Fort Fisher; a municipal election was being advertised for Southport on May 7; and candidates were beginning to line up for the primary election, which was scheduled for the following month.

## 25 years ago

In the *Pilot* for April 11, 1973, there was a front-page story about prospects that the Robert Ruark classic, *The Old Man and the Boy*, might be made into a movie. A scout from a Hollywood movie studio had been in Southport to see if local surroundings would be suitable for filming. A front-page photo was a close-up of an azalea blossom, a commodity which was big in the news that week.

Party fishermen had spectacular success on the previous Saturday catching bluefish on the Cape Fear shoals; we had a picture page captioned "Orton in the Spring" featuring the plantation gardens in full bloom; and the two tennis courts on the Garrison had been lighted and were available for night play.

## 20 years ago

A group of South Carolina fishermen had held an informal tournament in the waters off Southport during the previous weekend and had brought in hundreds of pounds of big bluefish. That story was reported in the *Pilot* for April 12, 1978. When the visiting fishermen had cleaned and packed all of the fish they could use, Pappy Stubbs had taken a truckload into a residential area of town and had given more fish away. Twelve boats participated, with catches ranging from 91 down to 19 fish, with an average weight of ten to 12 pounds. The lead in "Waterfront" that week was "The day the world turned to big bluefish."

## 15 years ago

The Southport Lions Club was planning the first annual Prince O'Brien Benefit Golf Tournament, to be played at Oak Island Golf Club. That was an interesting item on the sports page of the *Pilot* for April 13, 1983. The State Bureau of Investigation was advertising a toll-free number for reporting suspicious activity which possibly might be linked to drug trafficking.

The editor praised Doshier Memorial Hospital volunteers in a local observance of National Volunteer Week; the Winn-Dixie store at Live Oak Village Shopping Center had been named the top store in the eastern North Carolina district and we had a photo of the entire staff; and our sports section reflected the fact that spring activities were in high gear at Brunswick County schools.

## 10 years ago

The weather for Easter weekend had been so warm there had been sunbathers on the beaches of Oak Island and we had a picture to prove it on the front page of the *Pilot* for April 6, 1988. At Bald Head Island the relighting of the beacon on Old Baldy had been a highlight of the holiday weekend.

The City of Southport had requested Rep. David Redwine to introduce legislation to create a no-wake district along the waterfront and the Intracoastal Waterway adjoining the Southport yacht basin and Southport Marina; Leila Pigott had been installed as president of the Southport Garden Club, and we had a photo of all the new officers; the South Brunswick baseball team had reached the finals of the Seashell tournament in Wilmington.

## 5 years ago

It was April 7, 1993 -- Easter week -- and among the upcoming community activities was the fourth annual Robert Ruark Foundation Chili Cookoff on Saturday. An egg hunt for those youngsters who'd missed the parks and recreation hunt the preceding weekend was one of the featured events. A new elementary school for the Leland area was being considered by the board of education in its budget planning; the possibility of Yaupon Beach sewer serving Long Beach development was being discussed; and state Rep. Dewey Hill was talking about establishing a lock-and-dam system for the Waccamaw River.

Citizens were being assured that forest foliage, burned brown by salt from the early March storm, would recover nicely; four bulldozers were working daily to help restore dunes battered in Long Beach by that storm; and the Bald Head lighthouse, closed for repairs, was soon to be reopened for visitors, and we had a photo that week showing what they would see.

## Long Beach

Continued from page 1

at 5215 East Beach onto rails for transport to another location. It too has lost the battle to erosion. It represents an additional loss of a once-valuable property in a town that, despite record construction levels, is fighting to keep its tax base even from year to year.

Chocks sit out in front of a home two lots west of 5215 East Beach. It will be the next to go.

Long Beach is losing its front row of homes to erosion at a record pace this year.

Few see the losses as clearly as Long Beach Parks and Recreation director Tina Pritchard, who has monitored property loss along East Beach Drive in her dual capacity as a town employee and as the "Turtle Lady," coordinator of Oak Island's Turtle Watch program. Long Beach currently is seeking federal funding for design and construction of a Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration project which will bring desperately needed new sand to the most critically eroded area of the town's beachfront between 58th and 19th streets along East Beach.

It will be up to Congress to decide if much-needed aid comes to this stretch of beachfront.

"It's just amazing to me as you go down this street just how far we've moved the sand fences back," Pritchard said, casting a gaze down East Beach. "We've been trying to create a dune with trucked-in sand. But people stop me and ask, 'Aren't you the turtle lady? Where are they going to nest?'"

Pritchard said turtles probably will nest, but will deposit eggs in unprotected areas, creating yet another dilemma for Turtle Watch volunteers this year.

"Where are we going to relocate the nests?" Pritchard asks. "There is nowhere to go."

In the last six years, as erosion has taken dunes, 19 turtles have been turned back as they attempted to cross East Beach Drive. In search of dunes in which to deposit their eggs, the turtles keep moving inland, sometimes winding up in traffic. Two loggerheads have been killed by vehicles in that period.

And, if the toll of erosion is devastating to the turtle population, it is just as crushing to private property owners and to those seeking public access along East Beach.

To date, 36 beachfront homes between 19th and 58th streets have been moved off East Beach. Five more have been condemned, including one that was sold -- cheaply -- to the Town of Long Beach for additional public access.

Seven public beach access facilities have been removed in the same project area between 50th and 19th streets. Accessways at 49th Street, 52nd Street, 55th Street and 58th Street have been virtually eliminated, but are now classified as "walk-on" accessways.

"We've removed the steps," Pritchard said. "With erosion the way it is, we can't hold the steps anymore."

Holding the Long Beach cabana in place has been a fight this year that

Long Beach crews have waged valiantly. In fact, the home immediately east of the cabana has been condemned, undermined by erosion.

The town this year purchased heavy equipment which allows daily sand-pushing in critically eroded areas of East Beach, though that effort will have to be abandoned when loggerhead turtle nesting season begins in two weeks.

Oceanfront homeowners on East Beach have been desperate to find solutions to their rapidly disappearing property. Coastal regulations in North Carolina allow these critically threatened property owners permits to place sandbags for two years to stem erosion. But, Pritchard said, a sandbag contractor recently could not complete a job on East Beach.

"The sandbag company said there was not enough sand out there to fill the bags," Pritchard said.

The Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration Project is under design now by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, although the \$3.5-million federal funding share for actual construction remains uncertain. The changing beachfront has made it difficult, however, to even design the project.

"Because of the changing dynamic of the beachfront, the project has been hard to design. The beachface keeps changing," Pritchard said. "Plus we want the project to protect the habitat for at least five years. If it had just been a nourishment project, it would have been easier to design."

As envisioned by corps engineers, the project calls for construction of a 100-foot berm the length of the project area, terminating in an eight-foot dune.

That's a lot of sand to put between existing property lines and the ocean.

While the Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration project may bring new sand to this critically eroded area of East Beach, the rest of the Oak Island beachfront remains under siege. West Beach -- west of Middleton Street -- used to be considered safe from erosion. But, this year a beach platform built as part of a handicapped access project at 57th Place West was lost to erosion.

"We found most of it down at the Point," Pritchard said.

Meanwhile, the once-proud oceanfront cottages continue to leave East Beach on rails.

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