



WALTER SMITH is on hand every afternoon to greet visitors to Sunset Beach Fishing Pier.

Sunset Beach

This island was purchased in 1955 by Mannon Gore, whose family still owns considerable property in Sunset Beach. In 1961, he constructed the pontoon bridge that still serves the community, the only one of its kind on the eastern seaboard. The Town Council recently voted to replace it with a high-rise bridge, but construction is delayed until at least 1991. A water system was installed in 1980. The town has a population of 191 and 1,076 housing units.

Sunset Beach Information

Town Hall 579-6297
 Town Administrator Linda Fluegel
 Mayor, Mason Barber 579-6625
 Building Inspector Larry Crim
 Council Members:
 Kathy Hill, Mayor pro tem
 Minnie Hunt
 Mary Griffith
 Al Odom
 Ed Gore
 Police Chief, William Hill 579-2151
 Fire Chief, Carson Todd 842-9449
 Nearest Volunteer Rescue Squads:
 Calabash Squad 579-7474
 Shallotte Squad 754-6666

Sunset Beach Regulations

The town of Sunset Beach prohibits, within the city limits:

- Fireworks;
- Discharge of firearms;
- Public drunkenness;
- Charcoal fires in rental units without written permission of the owners;
- Excessive noise;

While visiting Sunset Beach, please DO:

- Obey posted speed limits, 30 miles per hour;
- Keep dogs on a leash or fenced;
- Clean up litter you have dropped on beach or streets.

Sunset Pier, Haven For Kings

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Rumor has it a certain kind of royalty hangs out around a certain structure in Sunset Beach. Adoring subjects throng to that spot for a glimpse, more likely some physical contact and finally a taste of their king.

It's King Mackerel, of course, who's high on the fisherman's list and seems attracted to the southernmost North Carolina pier. Some say it's because of the extraordinary length of the pier, 1050 feet; others credit a mud-bottom trough at its extremity.

At any rate, Walter Smith, pier owner, said 16 of the famous fish had been caught this year by early June. "Our record was a 53-pounder, caught here three years ago," he said.

Smith, former commissary manager at Fort Bragg, migrated from Fayetteville eight years ago and now lives at Holden Beach. After working at the Sunset pier for five years, he bought it.

"I just like people," he explained, "and I'm a fisherman, well, when I have time."

His business doesn't allow for

much leisure. The pier is open from 3 a.m. till nearly midnight, April through November, equipping the angler with rods and reels, tackle and bait.

It also has a little grill to ward off hunger while the fish are biting or while waiting for their arrival. More serious diversions include an arcade with computer games. The pier "lounge" is a gathering place where old pros can swap fishing stories.

Smith's busy season got underway in mid-June, he said, and will continue until school starts in August. Already license plates from all over the United States are showing up in his parking lot.

The Skidmore and Fulmer families from Ohio and West Virginia were among them. Traveling together, they said it's an annual affair for them. "The fishing is different here than back home, where our rigging is smaller and so are the fish," Mrs. Skidmore said.

North Carolinian Ken Underwood traveled from Kannapolis to fish for kings. Retired on disability following a heart attack, he recommended this sport as relaxing.

These visitors and local en-

thusiasts will catch Spanish mackerel, too, during the summer, Smith said, and trout, flounder and whiting. Their fee for a day of such pleasure is \$3.

"Fishing is really better in the fall, when the water's cooler," he noted. "We get lots of spots and croaker and whiting then."

The pier is most crowded around 3 a.m. and at high tide, and there are frequently children casting into the sea along with Dad. "They do well,

too," Smith said. "One boy last year got a big one on his first try."

Like many others along the coast, Sunset's pier is not the original one, but a replacement after Hurricane Hazel in 1954. It's the lone structure of its kind between Tubbs and Mad inlets.

There are 35 piers along the North Carolina coast, where fishing is particularly attractive. Located in the middle of the Atlantic coast, the Carolinas border two migratory

basins that provide our fishermen more kinds of fish and a longer season than anywhere else.

In addition, the coastline is cleaner than elsewhere, at least to date, with a minimum of industrial development to sully the waters.

That's why Walter Smith works long hard hours and why Nebraskans, Ohioans and even South Carolinians line up on his pier in the wee hours of morning, hoping to meet a King.

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