



THE BENNETTS gather for a family portrait during their 25th annual reunion last week. Pictured are (front row, from left) Jason Bennett, David Bennett, Tiffany Batten, Daniel Batten, Jordan Rigdon, Jeremy Rigdon, Benjamin Benditz, Nathan Benditz, Stephen Bennett, Patricia Breed, Jessica Rigdon; second row, Jerry Rigdon, LaVon Rigdon, Marie Batten, Audrey Thompson, Curtie Bennett, Winifred Benditz, Kelly Richardson, Theresa Lee, Frances Bennett, Deetra Thompson, Glenda Colbe; third row, Patricia Mosley, A.J. Maxwell, Joslyn Maxwell, Bonnie Miller, Jimmie Bennett, Mildred Miller, Jason Bennett, Brian Needham, Wanda Edwards, James Thompson, Janellen Bennett, Sammie Miller; back row, Rocky Mosley, Eddie Bennett, Russel Bennett, Bill Breed, Edsel Bennett, Ginger Bennett, Brenda Bennett, Rudolph Bennett, Marvin Miller, Barbara Bennett, Frank Benditz, Johnnie Benditz, Linda Juda and Pat Benditz.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Bennett Family Gathers For 25th Reunion At Holden Beach

BY DOUG RUTTER

Lots of families hold annual reunions at the beach. Large banners hanging from the front porches of beach cottages announcing reunions aren't uncommon during summer in the South Brunswick Islands.

But few families, if any, can boast the reunion record of the Bennetts, who have been getting together at Holden Beach every year since 1966.

Curtie Bennett, a 91-year-old resident of Ash, is the matriarch of the family, which features two sets of five generations and 79 people overall.

Mrs. Bennett, who was married to the late James Marvin Bennett, has nine children, 22 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. Another great-great-grandchild is due in September.

The Bennetts began the family reunion on their 50th wedding anniversary, choosing Holden Beach because it was a family-oriented community and located close to Ash.

Approximately 30 people attended the first reunion, and it has grown bigger every year.

Sixty-five people filling eight rental houses on Ocean Boulevard East came this year from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The nine Bennett children, listed from oldest to youngest with their hometown, are Mildred Miller, Wilmington; Audrey Thompson, Greensboro; Winifred Benditz, Greensboro; Rudolph Bennett, Newnam, Ga.; Edsel Bennett, Jacksonville; Joslyn Maxwell, Jacksonville, Fla.; Jimmy Bennett, Orlando, Fla.; Ken Bennett, Ash; and Carol Bland, Elizabethtown.

So what do five dozen kinfolk who haven't seen each other since the last reunion do during their week at the beach?

"We sit around and do a lot of talking and do a lot of eating," explained Mrs. Maxwell, the sixth child in the Bennett chain.

Even though it's a family reunion, Mrs. Maxwell said the five generations like to spend time with their own age group. "We separate parents from the children and let them do their own thing," she said.

As a group, however, the Bennetts hold a family sing every year and show slides from previous reunions. They added a moonlight boat cruise to the agenda this year.

"We used to have a fish fry but the family got too large for that," Mrs. Maxwell said. In recent years, the entire crowd has gone out to a seafood restaurant one night during the week.

Since family members are spread up and down the East Coast, the summer reunion is the only time most of them can get together to relive memories and share a few laughs.

"This is our week together to visit," Mrs. Maxwell said. "The week just flies by."

To commemorate the 25th reunion, each family member received a bright blue T-shirt promoting the annual affair that started in 1966.

On the backs of the shirts were the words "We Are Family" and a screened print of a tree showing the last names of the family members.

"It'll be a good souvenir when we outgrow them," said Mrs. Benditz, the third oldest Bennett child.

Family members agreed that many things have changed at Holden Beach since the first reunion.

Houses rented for \$50 a week back then, and there were no conveniences like air conditioners or automatic dishwashers.

The water supply wasn't as good as it is now. Only one person could take a shower or get a drink at a time when the island depended on wells.

The Bennett children said they used to play croquet and volleyball at the reunions, but the younger generation likes miniature golf and waterslides.

Mrs. Curtie Bennett said her favorite part of the annual reunion is sitting around talking and seeing the young children. "I just think it's great that we all can be together. That's the reason I come."

She said she never dreamed the reunion would still be going strong after 25 years. "Every time we'd come here, we'd just fix it for another year."

Charity Ball Set Sept. 27 At Sea Trail Clubhouse

The third annual Charity Ball will be presented by the Prescription for Excellence Foundation Friday, Sept. 27, at the Jones/Byrd Clubhouse and Convention Center at Sea Trail Plantation.

Spokesman Dr. Lee Langston said music for dancing will be provided by the Dick Goodwin Big Band, which has performed at major social events in the Carolinas, Georgia and Virginia.

The Foundation provides the Brunswick County Public Schools with a motivational program for adolescents called *Pathways to Excellence*. The program teaches personal accountability, improved self-image and goal orientation as the pathway to greater success and happiness. The goal of the program is to foster the full development of each student's God-given talents.

Also, in 1990 the Foundation presented the Brunswick Community College Foundation \$5,000 to endow the W.A. Stanley Scholarship. Proceeds of the endowment will fund an annual scholarship to BCC.

In 1989 the Foundation established the Helping Hand Award, which it has presented annually to a community service organization for outstanding service.

In past years the charity ball has been held in the spring. This year's event was postponed because of the Middle East War.

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