

Ocracoke Still Speaks:
Reflections Past and Present



NORTH CAROLINA LANGUAGE AND LIFE PROJECT AND OCRACOKE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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Ocracoke Still Speaks Reflections Past and Present

Compiled and produced by

North Carolina Language and Life Project *and*

Ocracoke Preservation Society

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Design by Sarah Blackmon

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Photograph by Jeffrey Reaser


Reflections Past and Present

The overwhelming community and public response to *Ocracoke Speaks*, our first CD of oral recollections from Ocracoke (Childs, Cloud, and Wolfram 2001) inspired the North Carolina Language and Life Project and the Ocracoke Preservation Society to compile a second collection of reflections about Ocracoke. In all respects, this has been a cooperative effort, with DeAnna Locke, Chester Lynn, and Phillip Howard taking the lead on behalf of the Ocracoke Preservation Society, and Jeffrey Reaser, Paula Dickerson, and Walt Wolfram directing the effort for the North Carolina Language and Life Project (NCLLP) at North Carolina State University. Between 1992 and 2009, the staff of the NCLLP conducted more than 120 interviews with Ocracoke residents of all ages, all of which are preserved in their entirety at the website of the North Carolina Sociolinguistic Analysis and Archive Project (ncslaap.lib.ncsu.edu). Most of the passages on the CD were extracted and compiled from these interviews, with a couple of interviews contributed by residents. Special thanks to Phillip Howard for

his contribution of recordings. DeAnna Locke, on behalf of the Ocracoke Preservation Society, was extremely helpful from the inception of the project to the selection of photos and final editing of the transcript, and Chester Lynn was a treasured resource at all stages of the project, from his detailed recounting of historical events to his contribution of invaluable images from his personal photo archive. Special thanks to Ocracoke musician Gary Mitchell for his role in mastering the audio in preparation for production.

Paula Dickerson Boddie did the bulk of audio extraction from the original interviews, conducted some additional interviews, and did much of the transcription as well. She was assisted in this effort by a number of students at NC State; Nicolette Filson did well over half of the transcripts, and Elizabeth Daw, Kelly Abrams, Betsy Newman Miller, Charlie Farrington, and Darya Kostina assisted with transcripts. Special thanks to Tyler Kendall, the architect of the Sociolinguistic Analysis and Archive Project, for uploading the interviews on the website to ensure their long-term preservation, and to Sarah Blackmon for her creative design and formatting of the CD and the accompanying booklet.

The project was supported in part by National Science Foundation grants SBR-9319577, BCS-0542139, and ESI-06523343, the William C. Friday Endowment, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at NC State. The compilation of stories and reflections attempts not only to



capture some of the traditional ways of life and language, but also the vital ways in which the island is dynamically adapting to and transforming itself in contemporary society. The effort is dedicated to all O'cockers past and present who have made the island a unique, resilient, and vibrant community. Since the inception of our interviews, a number of O'cockers heard on these recording have passed away; we hope that their voices and reflections remain alive through these recordings.

Jeffrey Reaser, Paula Dickerson Boddie, Walt Wolfram

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

DeAnna Locke, Chester Lynn, Phillip Howard

OCRACOE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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Blanche Howard Jolliff,
photograph by
Ann Ehringhaus

The Way It Was

1. *Black Mountain Rag* AARON CASWELL

2. *Fish Three Times a Day* ROY PARSONS

I went to school bare-footed in the snow didn't have no shoes. And we ate fish three times a day. It was fried for breakfast, stewed for dinner, and baked for supper. Next day we turned it round the other way, the opposite way of cooking it.

3. *Goslings* BLANCHE HOWARD JOLLIFF

Well, when I was little, maybe I was 10–11 years old, my father came home that evening for supper and he said to my mother somebody had told him that they thought one pair of his geese that the goose was hatching. She'd been laying eggs down near Springer's Point and they told him they thought that she had started to hatch the eggs. So he said to my mother, "I think I better go down there and see to them because the predators could have killed them if they stayed, you know, unattended." So my mother, she just finished fixing supper and we ate and she had still had her apron on, so she went with her apron on and we three children went too and we walked all the way down to Springer's Point. We went out to where you come in



the village now and then we walked to the edge of the beach all the way to Springer's. And when we got there the goose had hatched and the little goslings were running around so my father caught them and put them in my mother's apron. And by that time the moon had—was way high in the sky. It was almost like daylight. So the geese, the mother and father geese, they came behind us. They followed us. The gander usually would fight, you know. They were dangerous to be around when those little ones—after they were hatched. But they followed us down, followed us on back, and my mother brought them back in her apron. And he always fixed a little pen to put them in so they could get plenty to eat, you know. And so we would go in the we children would go in the garden and pull the carrot tops and the lettuce and feed them, you know, because we like to see them eat and they were so cunning.

4. *When the Collards Grow* RUDY AUSTIN

Gets up early morning, get him a cup of coffee and sit to the kitchen table. And right where his little house is the sun, you know, rose in the east, you know, and shone right down on his garden. And of course his garden was wet from the dew from the night before, and he said "That's when the collards grow, early in the morning," he said, "I could sit there and watch the collards grow." I never forgot that. Now, he didn't have much to do, when he got up mornings sitting out watch the collards grow, huh! He didn't have... That's exactly right. I never forgot that story. And what it was, prob-

Photograph from Chester Lynn's collection

ably, them collards, you know what I'm saying, as that sun hit 'em, they were probably opening. You know what I'm saying, or opening up like that to, to... right! Yeah, yeah. And he was, he was thinking that they were actually growing, you know. And which they might've been, I don't know, I'm not that much of a, *[collard man]* of a collard man, you know, I love to eat 'em but, yeah, Chester'd know, yeah. But uh, I never forgot that story, he always told us that.

5. ***The Sound Froze Over*** CLINTON GASKILL

In 1917–18, the whole sound frozed over. My daddy was to Harbor Island, a place called Harbor Island Clubhouse. He runned out of grub. He had to walk from the Harbor Island to Core Banks [*How far is that?*] on the ice [*On the ice! Had to walk on the ice? Good gracious.*] And he told me—I hear him say it—he walked all around so many air holes he said that he was just so afraid that he was going to hit one of them. He says he made it through there because the Coast Guard to Portsmouth send him across the inlet to go home.

6. ***Life of a Fisherman*** ROY PARSONS

Well,
Spots are selling for twelve cents
And flounder's twenty-four
Shrimp are selling for thirty-five
But still they ask for more

*But here and on Hatteras Island
They work for what they get
They work all day in the violent hot sun
And all they get is wet*

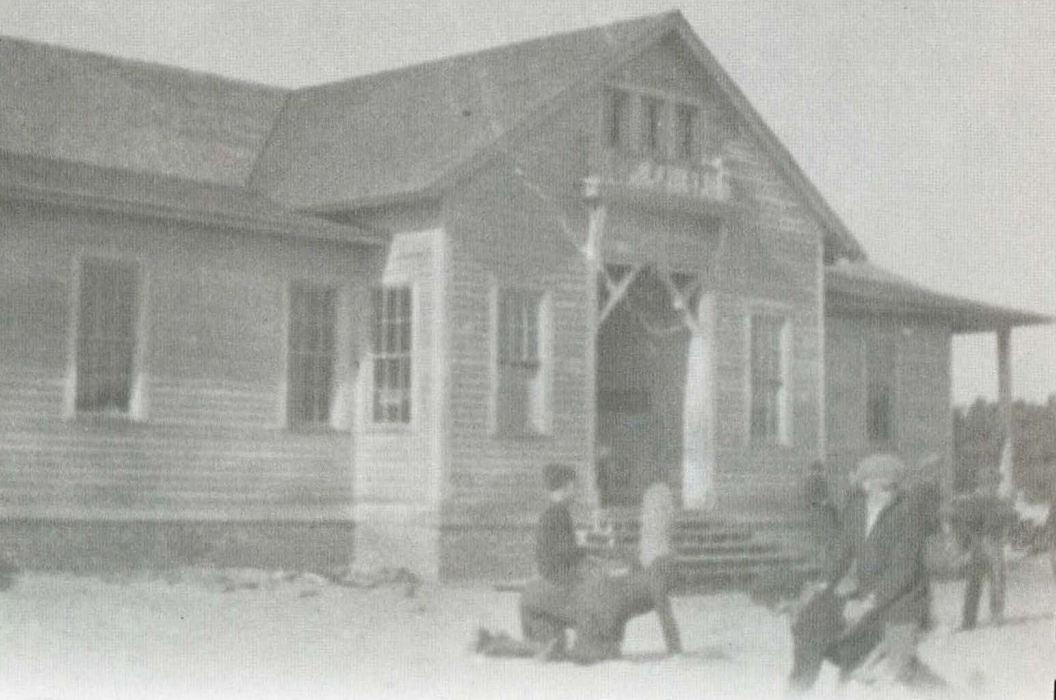
*They sheave the reef for mullets,
And drag the sound for shrimp
Pay their bills on Saturday night
And they haven't got a cent*

7. *Two Schoolhouses* BLANCHE HOWARD JOLLIFF

A long time ago, maybe ninety or a hundred years, they had two school buildings—one up in this part of the island, northern part, and one down not too far from the lighthouse. And then we had a bad hurricane and did damage to both of them, I understand. And then they must not could use them and they went to school in the lodge building. And they did that for a number of years until the schoolhouse was built out where the schoolhouse is today.

8. *Charlie Irvin* BESSY HOWARD

A young man on Ocracoke was born. Lived a girl for 21 years and set off and ordered a suit of clothes, shoes, and everything, and his mother cut his hair—he was wearing long hair. His mother cut his hair and he left next morning on the mail boat. He'd already procured him a job in Baltimore to go there to work. So his cousin was on the mail boat and didn't even know who he



was. And his cousin asked him where he was from. He said, "Ocracoke." He said, "Well you look like some of my folks." Said, "I may be for all you know." So his cousin didn't know who he was until he got a letter from his wife after he got to Norfolk telling him that Charlie Irvin - that Vera had left home and gone off dressed as a man. She'd changed to a man and changed her name to Charlie Irvin. He went to Baltimore and worked in a job there for during the First World War for a year or more and he came back. He told his mother when he left that if everybody thought it was such a disgrace to him that he'd never come back again, but if they didn't why he might come back to see her some time. So of course people didn't think it was so bad. So, he came back to visit her. And he came to our house and my husband's sister was there and my husband's mother and nobody knew him when he came in. But my husband met him to the door and talked to him, but it was Charlie Irvin. And in the mean time, while my second son was born, and he lived with me and took care of the baby and waited on me while the baby was little, and that was while he was wearing dresses, doing all the house-work and all. So it seemed odd to me for him to be there dressed as a man. So his sister said to him, said, "Charlie Irvin how did you get along while you were gone?" He said, "I never made a mistake from the time I left here until I come back except the night I was leaving Baltimore, I got on the wrong street car with my girl." Sissy, she said, "Whoopee!" Said, "I'll go home after that," said, "because he might won't go home with me." And this was—he lived 21

years as a girl and had changed to a man and went away. And that is hard for people to believe, but I knew it to be the truth.

9. ***The Last Boat Afloat*** BLANCHE HOWARD JOLLIFF

Well, my father, he had a coronary thrombosis when he's 57, so the doctor had given him a long list of things not to do: not to lift heavy objects, not to overwork himself and all those things. So he tried to do what they told him to do and so when we heard the hurricane was coming, the '44 hurricane, he ran out and secured his boat. He always had a big stake in the lake where he tied it to and then he would put out an anchor. But this particular time he put out two more anchors so that she more or less stayed in the same position. So his was the only boat in the lake that didn't go ashore. There were a lot of trawlers, a lot of trawlers here, shrimp boats and so forth, and most of those did go on the shore, too. One of them even took a store down.

10. ***Rabbit Hunting*** ESSIE O'NEAL

My husband, he'd go rabbit hunting, loved to go rabbit hunting on the beach, out on the beach, right on the end of the beach. So he said to me—well, I wanted to come with him, you know, and I went with him. And he said to me, “Did you ever fire a gun?” I said, “I never have.” He said, “Would you want to fire one?” I said, “I don't know if I would or not.” He said, “Well,” he said, “I'll let you try it if you want to,” he said, “but wait until I spot a rabbit and see if you can kill him.” So I got down out on the beach these little bushes, you know, they're hopping around the brown rabbits, you

Photograph by Jeffrey Reaser

A black and white photograph of a small, white wooden boat named 'BLANCHE'. The boat is mounted on a wooden stand and is positioned in front of a wooden fence. The boat's hull is white with the name 'BLANCHE' painted in large, black, serif capital letters. Below the name, the year '1934' and the location 'OCRACOKE, NC' are painted in smaller, black, serif capital letters. The boat has a simple, open design with a small, dark, rectangular opening in the center of the hull. The background shows a wooden fence and some trees.

BLANCHE

1934

OCRACOKE, NC



know, hopping around me so pretty. And I said, “Oh sin, that is pretty.” And I said, “You ain’t gonna kill them are you?” And he said, “No, I’m gonna let you shoot them.” He gave me that gun and there’s a double barrel. And I didn’t understand that, see? So he told me how to sight it—get a sight on that – it’s on the end of the barrel—there’s a little—he said, “Get that right

Photograph from Ocracoke Preservation Society Archives

on top of it Yeah, a little bead—"get it right on top of that rabbit sitting over there eating grass." He said, "Go ahead and pull it—pull the trigger." I said, "Nah, I don't want to." He said, "Yeah! Do it!" And I pulled both triggers at one time—both barrels went off! And I went one way and the gun went the other.

[I bet you did. Wow. That'll put a shake in your shoulder.]

Hit me right in here in me shoulder. It was sore for three days! I couldn't hardly move my arm!

[Did you kill the rabbit?]

No! The rabbit went that way and the gun went that way and I went this way! He said, "Boy," he says, "you lost that rabbit." I said, "I'm glad I did!"

11. ***The Pioneer Wrecks*** BLANCHE HOWARD JOLLIFF

This schooner went ashore here on the beach and it was called "The Pioneer" and it had a general cargo, from what I understood it sailing for New Bern, and it wrecked here on our beach. And it went all to pieces, the ship did, and all the cargo went all over the beach. And there were bolts of material and alls kinds of shoes—women's, men's, and children. And a piano, and food, food, cheeses, books, most anything you could mention - general cargo. And Mr. Tommy, he was always interested, you know, in things that went on before he was old enough to know about and he always read a lot. So he went out on the beach where everybody was salvaging this and that and what he went home with was a armload of books. Of all the food and all the shoes and all the other things.

12. *Making Meal Wine* IKEY O'NEAL

[They used to make meal wine here, didn't they?]

Yeah, yeah, always make five or six gallons of that—or always make—during the summer I—always got five gallons of apple, or fig or something in, you know, I love homemade wine.

[Do you know how to make it?]

Yeah.

[How do you make it?]

Five pounds of sugar, like four yeast cakes, five dozen apples, a peck bucket of figs if you use figs. My daddy, now he use to make meal wine. *[Yeah.]*

And he could make that just as clear as—as corn liquor, just about. And strong, my lord—it is strong.

[And then what do you do when you mix it up?]

Just let it brew—just let it work, put it in the sun—you know not in the sun, but some place hot. Then, the way I do it, after it quits working the first time, I strain it off, and add another five pounds of sugar in it. And then it will start brewing again, you know, and when it stops the second time, you start drinking it.

[How much does it make?]

About five gallons, you'll probably get three and a half gallons out of it. But, out of five, you know, them water jugs, like that spring water's in.

[Yeah.]

That's what I make it in.

13. *Raising a House* RUDY AUSTIN

Well, back then there were screw jacks. What people called railroad jacks, screw jacks, so I used them. And a... so I had a general idea you know, I mean Wallace gave me some pointers where to place the jacks, and all that stuff. So what I done was started out, and you start out in one corner, and go all the way around the house back to that corner.

[You're saying you just go around the house? Not catty-cornered?]

Right. Uh-uh. You go all the way around the house, and then you start at that corner and you go back the opposite way. And then you go back the opposite way. That keeps the house from moving. You don't always jack the same way, because you jack the same way it will have a tendency to have the house slip some on you, you know. And then you pick up your middle, you know what I'm saying, as you're coming through, just pick that up, you know, and you keep it on a level. And what I done was—

[How much can you go at a time?]

I went three quarters of an inch. I went up three quarters of an inch on one-by. So what you do is you go one-by all the way around. And then the next time this is how you keep track of it that you're the right height. Then the next time you come, you start, you go up a two-by. You know, two-by-six, two-by-four – whatever it is, you slide that under there. See what I'm saying: you go all the way round. So you should have all the same lumber at the—you know what I'm saying, at every point at the same time. Then the next time the one-by goes on top of the two-by. See, and the next time you

have two two-by's. You know what I mean, just keep all that... all that one-by is—is a gauge, really just to keep you on track.

So I jacked it up after Gloria in '85. Gloria only liketa 'bout 11 inches from coming in here. It was close. And I jacked it up two blocks—two 16-inch, I mean, two 8-inch blocks which is 16-inch. And I got up, and everybody comes—you know how it is you doing something and everybody coming by—says, “aw, it's plenty high, you ain't never gotta never worry about that.” Well, in '93, Emily come along, and devastated Hatteras. It flooded Hatteras. Unbelievable. There was water in houses up to Hatteras that had never even had water in the yard in 60 or 70 years and mess like that. And I went up there to help some of the old people and stuff get the carpets out, you know, get some of the couches and furniture out and stuff where they could start drying and stuff. I come back home and jack this house up two more blocks. After seeing all that, I don't wanna take no chances. So now my floor is a little over eight feet above, you know. I'm a little over eight-foot, so I think I'm hopefully in good shape.

14. *Haunted Piano* CHESTER LYNN

For some reason, someone just said, “Chester, you need to go you need to be there to that service.” I thought, well I'm tired, and I still had my tuxedo on from the wedding. Well I changed my clothes, took the tuxedo off, took a change of clothes on the ferry, cause I knew if I got off the ferry, by the time I got to church the services would just be starting, so I did and went to the, and got, went to the church and everything went so normal like it always

like a regular real life service. At the end of the service people were gathered around the alter praying. And, one of the local girls that used to live here, she was playing the piano and they were singing praise choruses and singing, well all of a sudden something happened to her hands and in the music, and she, her hands didn't go all over the piano, they stayed in one spot but more than just piano music come from the church out of the piano. And after that happened, when that happened, everybody got quiet because it was so unreal, it was so strange, you know, and so beautiful and after that everybody got up and they looked in the pews because they'd always had tape players going, you know, to catch music and anything happened. And there were 3 or 4 in the church, and none of them was going that night. The only night we know of where there definitely weren't one going at that time for that tape, you know, cause everybody thought, if there's a tape to that, we got it. And it weren't, and that was so because it only happened that one time and it was so unusual and it was so, so wonderful, so beautiful.

15. *The Wrong Bait* ESSIE O'NEAL

You'd be there on high tide when it starts to slack—the water starts to slack—that's when they bite. Or you be there on the slack water when it starts to rise. And then they come in—the fish comes in and you catch them. So, we left, grabbed a bit of this though. We had a ten, say a ten quart bucket with the bales on them, you seen them, galvanized buckets? And we put all out bait in that and our sinkers and all in that bucket and we carried it over with us, you see, and our bait's in it. Well, in the mean time, the evening before

that, Harry, my husband—somebody down the road there had dug sweet potatoes and had give him a bunch of sweet potatoes and he had a bucket full of sweet potatoes. And he come set them on the walk. When, we come—our bucket was covered up with a tow bag, one of them tow bags, and his was too. That morning we were going early. She come over “you ready?” “Yeah I’m ready.” Let’s go, we picked up the bucket and we took off fishing, to go fishing. Well you know for what they call the Styron Hill. *[Styron Hill.]*

You know where that’s at?

[Yeah, I know where that is.]

It’s close to the Ferry.

[Right.]

We drove the car all the way down on through that sand through them two hills there. All the way as close as we could drive it and got out then we had to walk a long ways because we couldn’t get it in the soft sand you know. And we had to walk a long ways. And we kept walking and getting more out. We had a chair and the sand spike and the rod and reel and, you know, all that stuff? And you take a lunch or a sandwich or something with you? So we have to take turns resting that bucket. She said to me, Helena said to me, “Essie,” she said, “will you tell me what you got in this bucket?” I said, “The bait.” She said, “Well the bait ain’t liable to be that heavy.” I said, “Well, I got some sinkers in there. I put some sinkers.” You know the sinkers? Course you lose a rig you got to have a sinker. Well, we

take turns. She'd set it down and I'd carry it a while. Then I'd put it down and she'd take it and carry it a while. Taking turns, you know? Changing arms. We walked a long ways to get down to the water edge. We got there just tired and wore out. Put our chair—we have a chair too, carried a chair with us to sit in—put our chair down and just sit down and rest. And getting ready to start fishing. She looked at me, and I never have forgot that look, she looked at me and said, “Essie,” I said, “What?” She said, “When did bluefish ever bite sweet potatoes?” I thought she was losing her mind. I said, “What?” She said, “You ever hear tell of a bluefish eating sweet potatoes?” I said, “No.” She said, “Well look in this bucket. There's a bucket of sweet potatoes.” We didn't have no bait. The bait was sitting on the porch. We picked up that bucket that Harry had set there with the sweet potatoes in it. That's why it was so heavy! And carried it all the way!

16. **North Carolina on My Mind** ROY PARSONS

*Pitching pinecones in the river
Catching bumblebees in jars
Watch the tall grass on the Blue Ridge
See the night sky and the stars*

*Oh, I'm Carolina lonely
Thinkin' bout her all the time
Oh, I love you North Carolina
North Carolina's on my mind*

*Pine trees, green earth and roads
Walk through red clay with bare feet
From your mountain to your ocean
You'll be made by gospel hands*

*Roy Parson,
photograph by
Aycock Brown*





Change

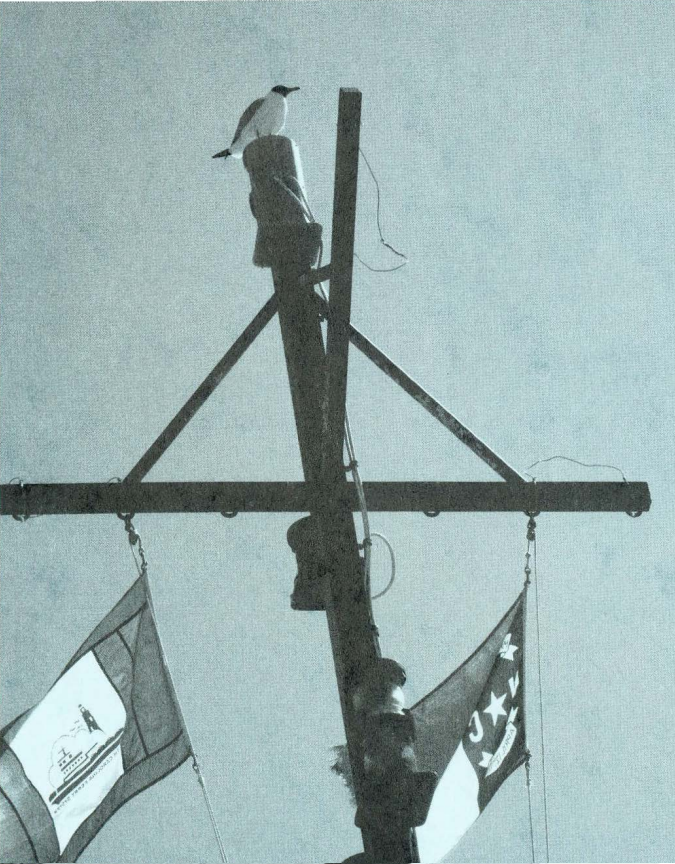
17. *Fishing for a Living* JAMES BARRIE GASKILL

Yeah, you'd like to live in Ocracoke before. It might not be a great living, it depends on where you're at and what you want to do. It take these ones you know, they had them trawlers, if you wanted to move up and go off you could go up New Jersey scalloping or Florida or, you know, go around, they uh, they probably make better make do by staying right here at home we use to have good crabbing, good flounder fishing.

18. *Bo and Hope* CANDY GASKILL

Ah, our poor English teacher, y'all are probably too young to remember I'm sure, but one day—all of us like to watch *Days of Our Lives*, and well Bo and Hope was getting married and we begged and we pleaded and we begged and we pleaded and he brought a TV in our English class and let us watch Bo and Hope get married that day. That's why I was gonna say, y'all probably don't even remember that. But bless his heart, we had him wrapped around our little finger and he pretty much let us do anything, but yeah he did, he let us watch Bo and Hope get married. Brought the TV in there for us, and

Photograph from the Ocracoke Preservation Society Archives



Photograph by Jeffrey Reaser

the boys were like, “God, you know, again?” We’re like, “you’re getting out of class, watch it, pretend you’re watching it, you know? Do something, you’re getting out of class.” Yeah, that was like twelve or thirteen of us, sitting around the TV watching Bo and Hope get married.

19. ***Mommucked to Death*** CHESTER LYNN

When Sam or me or somebody else would be talking to each other and we’d say, “All right, say, listen you. You ain’t mommucking me no more. You mommucked me to death today!” And the teacher would try to interrupt us or try to afterwards when she’d hear us she’d say, “Listen that’s bad English, and you should not say that.” You know, and she would try to correct us in certain things we usually do when we get talking. And a lot of local people, when they get excited, they talk fast, you know. It’s just a common thing with us. And she would fuss at us and argue with us, you know, with different lines, you know, different things we’d say. And she would fuss at us and argue about us and say, “Listen you shouldn’t do that. You shouldn’t say that.” You know. And it made everybody feel sort of bad because it was what you were taught. It was the way your parents or your grandparents talked, you know? And nobody wanted to feel ignorant or wanted to feel embarrassed but it’s the way your ancestors had been taught. And so that’s the good part now with the Brogue is that people understand, that, you know, it was the family’s descent and the family’s legacy that went on. It wasn’t that it was that bad English, it was just a different English.

20. ***Ten Miles Further*** JAMES BARRIE GASKILL

Let me tell you a little something about Core Sound, down there—about

down the Sound there. Now this is the truth, now. A guy from Smyrna told me, originally from Atlantic, a friend of mine was laughing at him hard, and he said there was a guy from Georgia, one time. Now this is a truthful story. A guy from Georgia, one time, went in the Coast Guard. And after he got out of Cape May, New Jersey, back there then, you know, them old roads getting down this way, you know, that's pretty tough on busses there in the fifties and forties. So he caught a bus – they stationed him in Core Banks. Core Banks is was on—it's washed away now, or gone anyway. I don't know if it washed or if tore it down—it's across from Atlantic. So he had to catch a bus –oh that's where they stationed him at—he had to catch a bus to Beaufort. Didn't know where the hell he was going, you know, he was out of Georgia—and when he got to Beaufort, the Coast Guard picked him up there in a truck and carried him to Harkers Island. And when they carried him to Harkers Island, they carried him over to Cape Lookout and had a Coast Guard truck to take him on down, you know, drive on down Core Banks. And, so, they didn't have room for him inside so he had to ride on the back of the truck and they riding on them camelbacks, we call them, on the beach—they liketa beat him to death. So they got there to his duty station, to the station there, and checked in, and then that night—then the next morning the boat used to leave the station and go over to Atlantic—and it was just right straight across—and pick up the mail—and this guy from Georgia, so they sent him with him, you know, someone 'round him, to go over there. He was still, you know, where he was confused, you know, where

he'd been sent. Didn't have no damn idea, you know, back there then where the hell he was at hardly. You know, where he was at or another station. So he sent him over there and when he got to the Atlantic and he picked up a postage stamp and they said he put one sentence on it and sent it to his momma in Georgia. Said, "They have sent me to the end of the world." So the next day—the next day, you know, they go on back over to the station, you know, do their patrol, so the next day they decided the Coast Guard, you know, break these new guys in to go to Cedar Island and check for life preservers and stuff. And they went over there and he said he couldn't understand a damn word they were saying. So they come back and picked up the mail in Atlantic and picked it up and he got another postcard. Said, "Dear momma, yesterday I lied to you. Today they sent me ten miles further."

21. ***Blackouts***

ESSIE O'NEAL

But during the war, World War II, that was in '42 now. They had all kind of practice on this island. They had guns. They even had a cannon gun down there. And they used smoke screens. They used blackouts. And we had those green shades and they were wore so much, you know, the dark green shades you pull down. You could see the light through the cracks. We had a blackout. Some kind of siren or something would go off, a horn or something, means you put your lights out. And we have to put the lights out and there'd be babies in there a-crying couldn't find our bottle, milk, or nothing. We sat down in that chair and hold that baby until it stop crying because it's afraid of the dark. And you could see the fire from them bullets

through that—they're practicing—through them green shades. You could see that fire through them green shades, right. And you could hear them—those bombs off here in the ocean. Them had blow up one of them ships. And the way the lights would jar, like that, sometimes if they were close. We'd go up that stairs, look out the window, over the ocean way and see them burning out there on the ocean—the ships. And it was scary.

22. *Lost in Translation* ROGER GARRISH

So when they got married it was like day and night, but he was to my mother's one summer when they come and I was in school then, you know. And during the middle of the night my sister woke us all up laughing just as hard as she could laugh. And the next morning, we said, "What in the world did you, you know, what were the pair of you laughing at last night?" You know, "You woke the whole house up." My brother-in-law... and my momma that night when she had cooked for everybody and she was wore out and she said "The crowd of ya has mommucked me to death. I'm going to bed." Well, my brother-in-law's an educated fool. And so anyway, he had never heard the word "mommucked." So he found a dictionary in the house and could not find the word. It drove him crazy. Because he thought that it was something offensive that, you know, and momma was upset about. And so during the middle of the night he woke my sister up and said, "Sheila, what in the world did your momma mean being 'mommucked'? Is she mad at us or something?" And my sister laughed. That's when she woke up the whole house 'cause we just knowing him, you know. And then after she



explained to him, you know, what it was—and it is in the dictionary—and, you know, he was like, “Okay, all right, I get it. Well now you all got me for a play thing,” you know. And so we never let him live it down but it was right comical he said.

Photograph from Chester Lynn’s collection

23. *Fishing in Decline* JAMES BARRIE

Fishing's nowheres near like it was ten, twenty years ago. There's a lot more regulations on it too. Now, we were rock fishing then year round, uh not year round but you know wintertime then they cut it out. Now they started back, this year. Beside, now, they've got a new size limit on flounders coming out. It used to be, uh eighteen. Yeah, thirteen inch, now it's going to be fourteen starting this coming year sometime. Years ago you just you know you sell them drum, they didn't have a limit on drum, red drum, channel bass for the last several years. Used to catch all them you wanted. Now it's in fact, I think it might be the fish of North Carolina. It's a big sport fish too.

24. *Rebuilding* ROY PARSONS

Disaster people had to come from Rocky Mount here and build me another addition on the house there, the water was this deep and they put all these rugs down. Disaster!

[Did you have water?]

Yeah.

[In the house here last year?]

It was this deep.

[Is that right?]

I was sitting in here and my wife was on the bed talking to somebody—her sister I think and the first think you know, I heard her when she hollered. She says, "My God, my feet is wet!" I run in there as hard as I could go, run into the door facing and holler and ask her what was the matter, and she

said “My feet is in water.” I couldn’t believe what she was saying. I went around beside of the bed and the water was coming from under the side of the house in the house, on the back. Come out of the sound.

[Yeah.]

Pamlico.

[Yeah.]

And, we finally got—we had to go over to the church, the new church over here.

[Yeah, yeah, yeah, it’s a beautiful church.]

We stayed over there a month, upstairs.

25. **Getting to Ocracoke** DALE MUTRO

Not necessarily questions, but I remember one time when the ferry people were talking about how to fill it, you know, how it backs up in the summer-time and loads and loads of people. And they noticed this one car getting in and out of line and it’d come up to the front and it’d turn around and get in the back. And finally he decided he was going to drive on one of the ferries. And they asked him, “Sir, what in the world were you doing?” He says, “Well, I saw these other ferries come in and I didn’t want to go any of those places.” And he saw the Ocracoke ferry you know ‘cause there’s one called Ocracoke and Chicamacomico and all those other place names on the Outer Banks. Like, some of the ferries are named after people but most of them, you know. He said he doesn’t want to go to any of those other places, he wanted to go to Ocracoke. So he saw the Ocracoke ferry come in and he decided he was going to drive on.

26. ***Before I Met You*** JULE GARRISH

*I thought I had seen pretty girls in my time
But that was before I met you
I never saw one that I wanted for mine
But that was before I met you
I thought I was swinging the world by the tail
And I thought that I'd never be blue
I thought I'd been kissed and I thought I'd been loved
But that was before I met you*

27. ***Losing Our Heritage*** BUBBIE BOOS

We're losing our heritage basically, I mean we're just, we're going from a fishing community to more like a tourism community. And anytime something like that, you look at Hilton Head, South Carolina, and all that place, you know, anytime you got something like that, you basically lose your way of life. And you don't realize it, but you slowly adapt to a new way of life. And it ain't nothing negative, but it ain't nothing positive. I mean, it's important to people here that can afford to stay here now. I mean if they, they got to have something related to the public to stay here anymore. Uh, commercial fishing's dying out but that's not nothing to do with the influx of people.

28. ***Losing Our Brogue*** RODNEY MASON

And it's, the Brogue is leaving because there's so much interchange and there's not as much, um, I don't know how I'd put this, localtivity, as far as the togetherness of the locals. They're more coming in from everywhere so

they're hearing so much more different stuff as far as the language.

[*So you think the Brogue is going to leave?*]

Oh yeah, it's definitely, you know, it's getting to be extinct just like the local people. We're getting to be endangered.

29. *Where's the Lighthouse?* DALE MUTRO

I mean, they'll be standing beside the lighthouse and ask you where the lighthouse is at. Now that's a common one, you know. Although, I remember Chester—y'all interviewed Chester earlier—I remember a story he told me about—he was working at the Island Inn. Actually, I think he ran the restaurant. And somebody stopped him and said, "Where's the lighthouse at?" And he said, "Well, you know, it's just down the street here. You know, go down about so far and you'll see Albert Styron's store and it's just past that on the right." White picket fence, that kind of thing. "Well, I been down there." Well, he said, "It's easy to miss. It sits back off the road, you know. It's back there." "Well, I been down there and I didn't see any lighthouse." And Chester looked at her and said, "Lady," he said, "that lighthouse has been down there about 175 years and I haven't seen them come up the road with it yet."

30. *Paying with Clams* REX O'NEAL

And I'm not a thief, never stole in my life, but, maybe I'll borrow a beer, from a cooler from a tourist cooler. We use to go swimming there, they had these boats, you know these trout fishermen come down there all the time and then you couldn't buy beer or anything on the island. And it was a treat

to us, a six pack would be like a, you know, we were [laughter]. So we would go dive overboard in the summertime when they come they'd tie their boats up like at the Harbor Side or the—then it used to be Benjamin Early's dock or the Whittler's Club dock. And we'd dive over like, on the other side of the harbor, swim all the way across, slither right up that there thing's rig, you know like—and we've even left money on the boat and everything else, you know, we weren't never borned, I mean never raised to steal, I mean that would be like a—my daddy would blister my butt so bad—you know. That would probably be the only thing we have or would ever take, you know. We even left, we would even leave clams on the boat and stuff like that you know, in the place of the beer because, you know, so we wouldn't feel bad about the—we're not, by far not thieves, you know what I'm saying. Well, that was just like us.

31. **Yodeling** ROY PARSONS

*If you want to yodel, listen to me.
Open up your great big mouth and "yodelelayeehe"
I yodel on the mountain
I yodel on the hill
Yodeled on the radio
It's how I paid my bills*

(yodeling)

Photograph from the Ocracoke Preservation Society Archives





Ocracoke Today

32. *High Tide* REX O'NEAL

And it's high tide on the sound side. Last night the water fire, tonight the moon shine—no fish. What you suppose the matter, Uncle Woods?

33. *High Tide* CHANTE MASON

High tide on the sound side, night the water fire, no fish in the moonlight shine—what do you say, captain?

34. *Pound Nets* JAMES BARRIE GASKILL

Well a pound net is square like this...well best thing to do is go down there to the museum, they got a model down there. How do they use them? Anyway, it's, you know, just like this rug here and it's square, the pound net is, and it has a bottom in it, and you know it comes up the side, it's like a fence, you know, except it's got a bottom in it, like a dog pound or something. I guess that's where they got the name from. Cow pound, horse pound, or what. And uh, it's square then it has a tunnel, and then it has what they call a lead that sticks way out anywhere from, you know, two-hundred or, you know,

Photograph by Joyce Reynolds, from the Ocracoke Preservation Society Archives



Photograph by Jeffrey Reaser

three- or four-hundred or however long you want it, and the fish just come up against this straight lead and follow on in 'till it gets to the tunnel and the tunnel extends out five, six feet over in the, or further in the middle of the net. And you have that pulled up, and when the fish come in, then, you know you got that on the gradual incline like that, see, comes up when the fish get in, they automatically want to go back to the bottom, you know, stranglers you know, and so they come up and then they go down and then they, the principle of the thing is them not being able of them to get out of the tunnel and they're swimming around and then many of them don't come up high in the water they stay at the bottom and go under it, you know, the part sticking up like they come under my arm and go back around the net and they, you know, keep following the four sides around, but the tunnel sticking out way in here and they go back under here, so supposedly, a lot of them you don't lose them.

35. **Snow on Ocracoke** BUBBIE BOOS

[Do you remember any snow storms here?]

Yeah. It snowed a couple years back a little bit. Had a nice big blizzard in '83, '86, something there like that. I remember stepping out of my father's and mother's house and going up to my chest in a snowdrift. But it usually—we've had about three major snows that I can remember. Remember the sound freezing over, the creek freezing over.

[That's got to be cold.]

Mhm. Very cold.

[When was that?]

That was that bad blizzard we had back in 80 something.

[That'd be something to see.]

Yeah, it was. But, you know, we were back out functioning the next day. I mean, we ain't don't know nothing about snow, hardly, but yet we respond and make it through better than people that deal with it their whole life. You see it on the news every day. They're freaking and panicking. You can't buy a loaf of bread or gallon of milk in any store. I mean, hello, at the worst you going to stayed snowed in a couple of days at the most. I mean, especially in places that's prepared for it. There's people out plowing.

36. **Water Spouts** DALE MUTRO

Hit like sort of a populated area over there but no tornados on the land and they hit cities and things like that. I mean your waterspout's over water, so naturally you're not going to have, you know.

[Yeah. Have you ever been out on the water then?]

I've not but I mean I've been on this house over here next door that's raised up that little thingy on the top up there and I watched them out on the sound. And I remember one time, I was working at Texaco gas station and—in the summertime, and I was standing there to the door and I looked and I said my God is this a—I mean you see the classic tornado type thing, you know where you'd see it coming out of the sky, curving, kinda thing. And it was a waterspout, it was like, back of the—back of the island up here and it was going toward the southwest, and it doesn't—and you know, it doesn't

have to be like with a thunderstorm either, it's like you can have certain atmospheric conditions where it's just, you know, conducive to, you know, waterspout development, I mean you can have halfway sunny days and, we went down here to the base dock—what we call the base dock, down here by the ferry dock, and we watched them out over the sound, one day, just, you know, popping out of the sky.

37. *Flushing the Sound* RODNEY MASON

And then they'll go five or six years with hurricanes and they'll sort of like wash everything out. Sort of flushes them really. Actually, the hurricanes sort of helps us out—opens the inlets and flushes everything just like, you know, gets rid of all the chemicals in the sound that's coming from all the farmlands—everything they spray on everything. All the paper plants, everything. Seem like they build the big steel mills onto the rivers, if you all are familiar with that, but, see, we're sort of like the cesspool. Everything has to run down here and go out the inlet, so it goes from Beaufort, Cedar Island, Ocracoke, and then Hatteras and then all the way up to Oregon Inlet. Then there's no more inlets from Oregon Inlet all the way up to Virginia so there's a long span there. So everything's washing off the roads, washing in the culverts, coming down the rivers and then it has to come this way. So when you get a hurricane you get all the rainwater, all the backwash, and everything that—all the chemicals that comes from the farmland

38. *Swimming Bear* RODNEY MASON AND BEACH O'NEAL

I don't even believe there's deer here. I told him, "I'm going to have to see

one of them with my own eyes before I actually believe it.” I’ve seen the bear, well there was a story of a bear here. As far as the deer here...Vince saw him! Vince saw him.

[We seen him]

That’s what I’m saying.

[You saw the bear?]

We saw the bear, yeah we went out in the boat because like they called in radio:

Well they have pictures of him swimming up from Swan Quarter didn’t they? Up at Lehigh....

They spotted him out there....y’all won’t believe it.

He swam from Swan Quarter, didn’t he?

[Yeah because they have lots of bears out there]

That’s still a good little swim for a bear, you know?

And he swam and he come across the reef out they’re like, “y’all won’t believe this, there’s a bear swimming out here in the middle of the sound.”

We all jumped out in the boat and there were cameras and stuff and take pictures and watch him, swam across Lehigh across Howard’s Reef, got up there in shallow, got to running, got back on the other side of the reef and swam right behind Oyster’ Creek, come up on land, took off, never stopped, ran right through the woods.

[Nobody’s ever seen him?]

So he either got somewhere and died or turned around and swam back.

[That's about 20 miles?]

I don't think after getting in that water for 20 miles, I don't think you would turn around and go the same way though.

39. *Camping*

BUBBIE BOOS

My granny and granddaddy started and owned it and I knew I was going to become married and everything with little financial future. And property around here was expensive then—less than now but I still couldn't afford nothing back then. Granny says, "Well, to keep you from moving from the island, I'll give you a lot and let you run the campground." I said, "No problem." So I built me a house and been running the campground ever since.

[Who camps there?]

We get people from all over the world. A lot of people in the eastern North Carolina come and Virginia quite frequently. People from up North, down South, out West. So, I mean, they just come from all over.

40. *More Special* CANDY GASKILL

Wherever they were from they had a accent and stuff and everything. And I guess I think that's happened with a lot of people and stuff and everything that they seen the interviews, and you know, with the kids and stuff going to school and stuff and everything and I guess they realize that yes they do have a accent but it's a little bit more special than other people's accents. And I think that, you know, they really, I guess maybe you know, appreciate it more, and appreciate you know, the island more, and maybe, you know, where they come from, and their family, you know grandparents and stuff

and everything a little bit more. I mean I know that I have, I mean I've always loved Ocracoke and I always loved my family and stuff and everything, but it just seems that it's another little special piece that goes you know to the puzzle and stuff and everything, to have the dialect and to have the accent and stuff and everything you know that makes Ocracoke, another little special, more special place than what it already is.

41. *A Part of Us* ROGER GARRISH

They think, well, not that you're poking fun at it, but, you know what I'm saying, they just feel that way about it and you ain't gonna change their mind no matter what you do. But I mean, you know, it was very few and far between. Of course some of them passed away now, but anyway—

[They're self-conscious about it you think?]

Yeah I guess so, you know. I guess they kind of feel like that people may think that we're ignorant, you know, just because, you know, the way we talk and stuff. But to me, I mean, it's just a part of, you know, life—

[Do you think that's changing with the younger kids?]

Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I do.

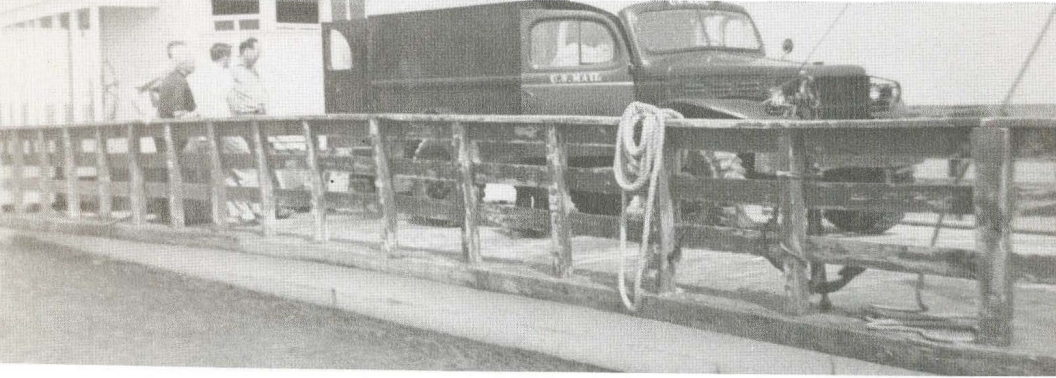
42. *Stay-cations* BUBBIE BOOS

I'm happy here. I could sell it and have money in my pocket and be miserable the rest of my life. I want to stay here.

[Have you lived your whole life on the island for the most part?]

Mhm.

[What's the longest you've been away?]



Couple weeks.

[How often do you leave?]

Here lately I've been averaging about twice a year. But I told somebody the other day if they put a Walmart and a Home Depot here I'd never leave. But I don't want Walmart or nothing you know, but that's the only reason I leave is to get supplies or something. My wife leaves quite frequently. Her parents live in West Jefferson so she goes out there to spend the week – two weeks at a time. Takes the kids. But I'd rather stay right here. I take a week off in Fourth of July and everybody says, "Where're you going?" Say, "I'm going to Teeterville. Stay there at the campground and relax." "That ain't no vacation!" I say, "If you only knew." Beats going somewhere where it's nuts or something. I'd rather stay right here and enjoy it.

Photograph from the Ocracoke Preservation Society Archives

43. ***A Dying Breed*** DALE MUTRO

Ocracokers are a dying breed, but you know, it's fading away gradually.

44. ***In Your Blood*** CANDY GASKILL

I mean, what I was getting ready to say is, it's one of those places that you either love it or you hate it. And the people that love it, it does, it gets in your blood and it's just like, it stays there. it's like your blood. It's like the salt gets in your veins and you just—you can't get it out. It doesn't make no difference where you go.

45. ***Preserve it*** DALE MUTRO

I like Ocracoke, it's my home and I want to preserve our, you know, I think, preserve what we can, you know, for future generations and for other people, too, I guess.

46. ***A Special Place*** CANDY GASKILL

It's a special place and it's the people and it's also the island and stuff and everything that, you know, make it so special.

47. ***Governor Edward Hyde*** JULE GARRISH

Uh, this is your captain speaking. This is the motor vessel, Governor Edward Hyde. This vessel is one-hundred and sixty-one foot long with a speed of fourteen point five knots. This vessel'll carry three-hundred passengers and thirty automobiles. Thank you very much.

(Singing)

On my way to Swan Quarter
On the Governor Edward Hyde
I'm heading for jury duty
Enjoying a wonderful ride

My hometown behind me
I won't be gone very long
Take me back to Ocracoke
That's where I belong

After came out of the Silver Lake
And headed for Pamlico Sound
Fishermen in the channel
And the crab pots all around

Seagulls they were trailing
And the pelicans dive in a flash
Mulletts in the fishermen's nets
Were plugged in every mesh

Captains and their crews
They are very fine men
Never gotten on board the Hyde
If they hadn't a-been

As I pulled into Swan Quarter
You could hear the people say
She's the finest vessel
That's ever come our way

I want to ride this ferry boat
The Governor Edward Hyde
We want to get some yaupon tea
And some mullet fried

Want to get our toes
In that old beach sand
And then we'll be so happy
In that island land

Want to go over
Over to the beach

Want to hunt for treasure
That belonged to Edward Teach
Edward Teach, a pirate
They called him “Old Blackbeard”
Edward Hyde, the governor
There was no one that he feared

On my way from Swan Quarter
On the Governor Edward Hyde
I’ve been to jury duty
Enjoying a wonderful ride

My hometown is coming up
Won’t be very long
Take me back to Ocracoke
That’s where I belong

(End singing)

Now this is your captain speaking. Hope you all had a very pleasant voyage. Thank you very much.

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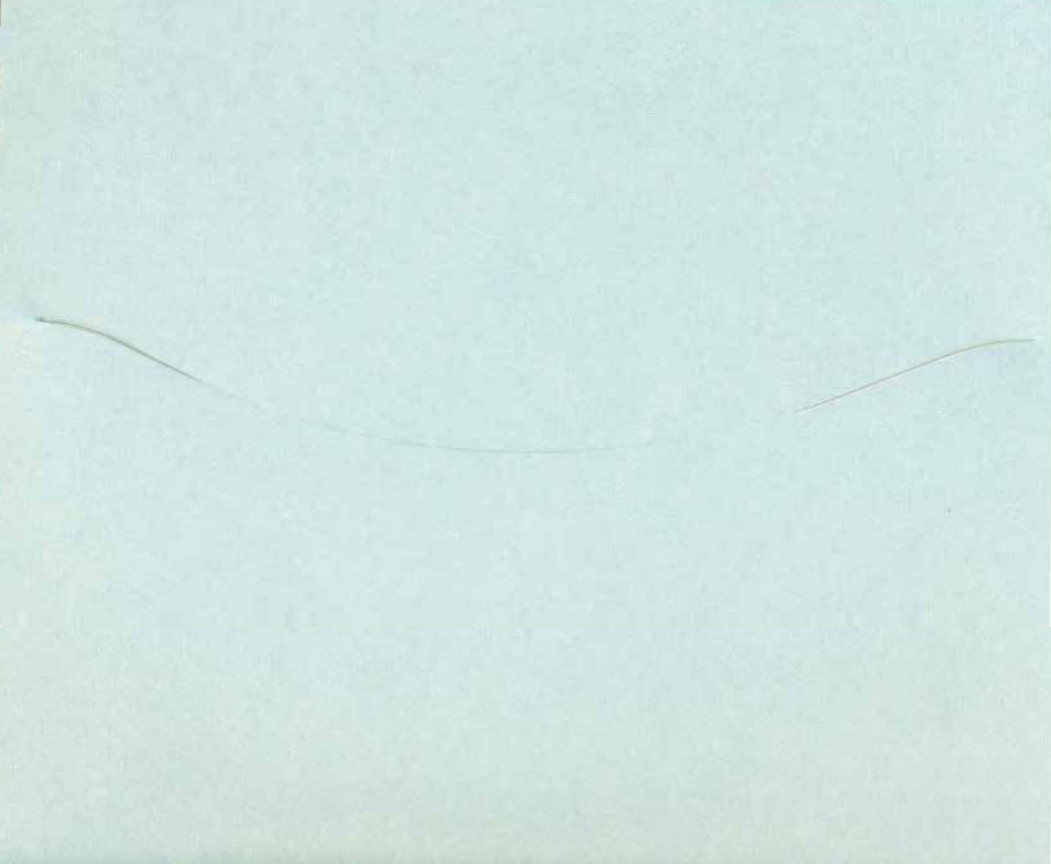
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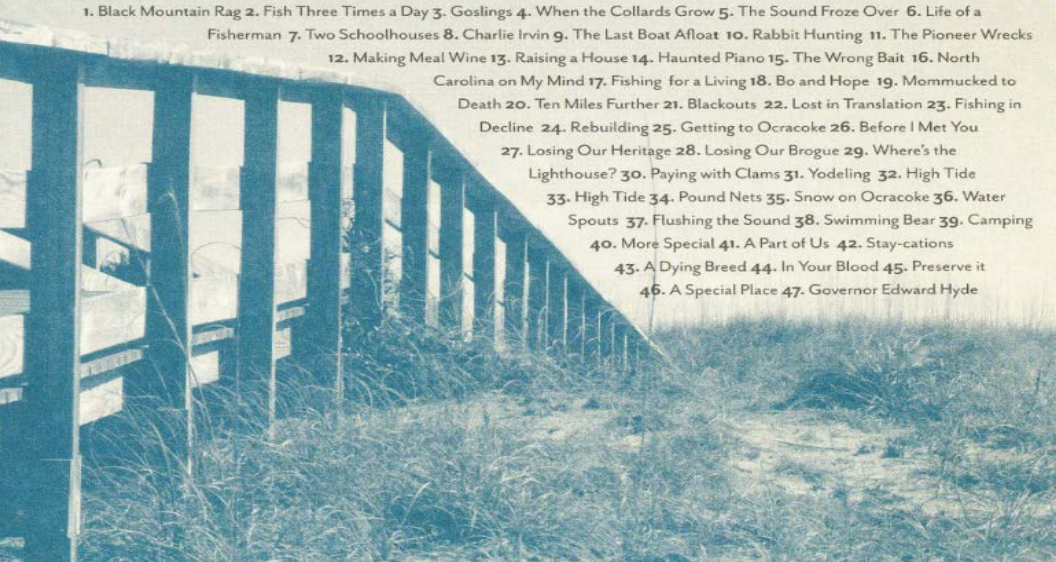
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1. Black Mountain Rag 2. Fish Three Times a Day 3. Goslings 4. When the Collards Grow 5. The Sound Froze Over 6. Life of a Fisherman 7. Two Schoolhouses 8. Charlie Irvin 9. The Last Boat Afloat 10. Rabbit Hunting 11. The Pioneer Wrecks 12. Making Meal Wine 13. Raising a House 14. Haunted Piano 15. The Wrong Bait 16. North Carolina on My Mind 17. Fishing for a Living 18. Bo and Hope 19. Mommucked to Death 20. Ten Miles Further 21. Blackouts 22. Lost in Translation 23. Fishing in Decline 24. Rebuilding 25. Getting to Ocracoke 26. Before I Met You 27. Losing Our Heritage 28. Losing Our Brogue 29. Where's the Lighthouse? 30. Paying with Clams 31. Yodeling 32. High Tide 33. High Tide 34. Pound Nets 35. Snow on Ocracoke 36. Water Spouts 37. Flushing the Sound 38. Swimming Bear 39. Camping 40. More Special 41. A Part of Us 42. Stay-cations 43. A Dying Breed 44. In Your Blood 45. Preserve it 46. A Special Place 47. Governor Edward Hyde