



# LIFE

*on the Family*

Preserving North Carolina's Coastal Heritage Through Oral Histories

## Eastern ENVIRONMENTS 2021







A PUBLICATION OF  
BEAUFORT COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# LIFE

*on the Family*

Preserving North Carolina's Coastal Heritage Through Oral Histories

## *Eastern* ENVIRONMENTS 2021

CULTURAL STUDIES

*Humanities 120*

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# EDITOR'S WELCOME

## *Evolving Environments*

When James Casey and I decided that we wanted this edition of *Life on the Pamlico* to focus on the environment, we did not know of the immense challenges that would come during the semester. Cultural Studies, the class the students take to help build this publication, had been in session just 8 weeks when we moved online for the rest of the semester due to COVID-19. And just like that, our class changed.

You see, Cultural Studies is not the standard, lecture and take tests kind of class. In it, the students and I spend time sharing our experiences, talking through and analyzing the culturally relevant topics of the day. Some days we broach historical topics, other days, we might draw a map. James comes in and teaches an in-depth lesson on video and photography. I spend time on article writing and cultural topics. It's a fun class to teach because of the varied methods of instruction and assignment structures, and the students enjoy it, too.

A week before BCCC moved to online instruction, our class learned about natural resources and biomes. Our assignment that week was to recreate a microcosm of a local environment. Many of the students arrived to class that week with bags of small plants, rocks (many from driveways and fill because we don't live in a particularly rocky area), and all types of berries, sticks, seed pods, and other decorative items. It was our best class to date.

I drew a diagram on the board,

and then off the students went. Some scavenged BCCC's grounds for some items; others set up a "buffet" of items that their classmates should choose from. Together, they measured and planted — a true team effort.

Bringing the outside indoors isn't always a walk in the park though. A

few roly-polies made it into one jar, and a very small snake found its way into a bag of soil.

The students all took photos of the class snake for their social media while I hid in a chair on the other side of the room. No matter how small, I DO NOT like snakes. The students,





however, found our little visitor fascinating.

The snake was released outside while I hid in a chair in the corner. Did I mention I don't like snakes?

At the end of the class, the students put their names on their jars and lined them up on the windowsill in our classroom. We were all pleased with the results and were excited to see what would grow and thrive in the terrarium environment. Our plan had been to observe the changes in our little microenvironments over the course of the rest of the semester.

Unfortunately, we only had the opportunity to observe them a couple of times before it was obvious that we were going to move our class online. We opened them a few times to wipe out excess water, but then, they had to go home because we were going home.

Sadly, some students weren't able to make it to class that last day we were on campus together, so a few of us divided up their terrariums and took them home.

We crossed our fingers and hoped for good luck. You see, most first-time terrariums fail for many different reasons. Too much water, too little, not enough nutrients, not enough experience ... the list is long. If you've ever tried to grow a garden, you know that trial and error when



growing plants is a tedious process.

Also, we'd make decisions about our terrariums with the idea of observing them, knowing that we'd see many things grow and decay in our experiments. We expected some varied results.

I'm pleased to report that the student terrariums I brought home are still alive and growing, much better than my own terrarium.

Some of the terrariums are growing well, but several of the students have reported having to adjust and tweak their terrariums. Others are not so optimistic about their terrarium's progress, but that's okay. There are still lessons to be learned.

While our terrarium project did not go exactly as planned, it remains a lasting memory of a class filled with interesting topics, projects, and discussion. They are a lesson that keeps on going (albeit with a little loving care).

As metaphor for our current situation, the terrarium project reflects well the trial and error, the despair, and the regrowth of something new. Life is a cycle, and our terrariums are just a tiny glimpse into a much larger world.

Much like our lessons on the natural world, this edition of our publication records how locals interact with their local environment. The students worked hard to write and record these stories despite our movement to online learning this semester, and the result is an interesting cross-section of how people in our area work in tandem with local natural resources.

In these pages, you'll learn about the people who work in the development and conversation of natural resources. Others show their love for digging into the soil to cultivate new life. You won't find many people in the pages of this year's edition that don't like to get their hands dirty, that's for sure.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's edition of *Life on the Pamlico*, and perhaps it'll inspire you to get your hands a little dirty, too.

*Suzanne Stotesbury*

EDITOR





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# STEVE MOLER

## *Goose Creek State Park*

Kathy Vasquez

Goose Creek State Park is 1,200 acres of beautiful parkland created in 1974 due to the initiative of a small group of committed citizens. The land was originally the home of the Secotan and Pamlico Indians, members of the Tuscarora tribe,

occupying the lands from Goose Creek to Bath. The area evolved into subsistence farming and commercial fishing. In the 1930s, the land was acquired by Weyerhaeuser lumber company which developed a thriving timber business. Over time the land

has reverted to forests and wetlands, leaving evidence, such as a trackless railroad bed, of the past timber business.

In the early 1970s, Weyerhaeuser was interested in divesting of some property and was considering creating



subdivisions. Some concerned citizens got wind of this and gathered a group of folks together to save this precious resource and came up with the idea of a State park.

One of those folks at the very beginning was Steve Moler, 80, who, at the time, was a consultant to the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. A longtime resident of Eastern Carolina, he was intimately familiar with the area.

He said, "I knew this was environmentally sensitive land, and the last thing we (the county) needed was losing beautiful forested land to another subdivision." Moler recruited other environmentally active friends to the idea of turning the land into a state park. They convinced state and local legislators to come for a visit, one of whom was W.R. (Bill) Roberson, for whom US Hwy 264 East in Washington is named. They got into canoes at what is now Dinah's Landing, and navigated the waterways, up and down Goose Creek, Gaddy Creek, Mallard Creek,

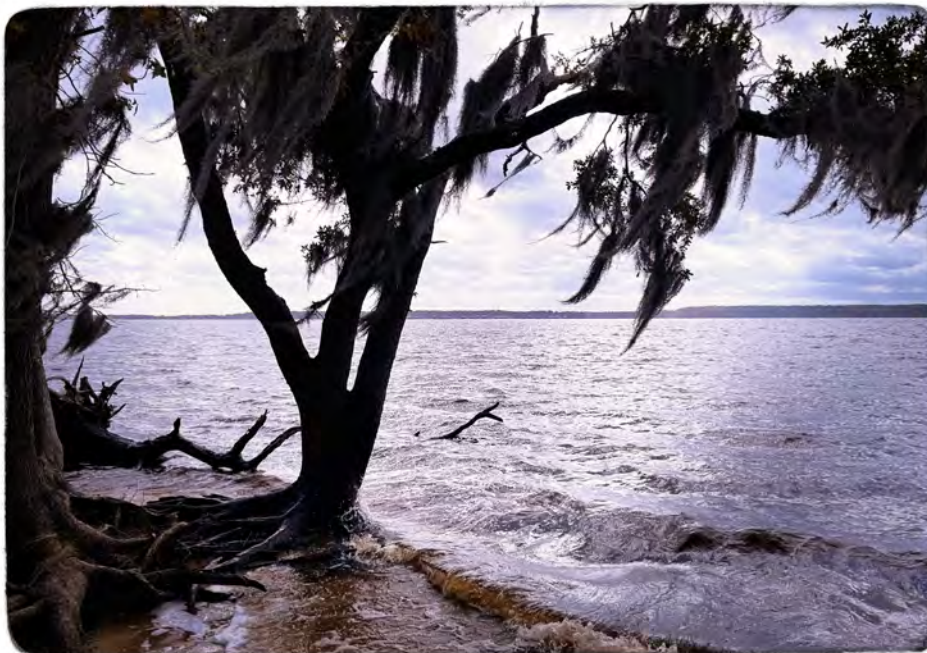
**"It's hard to describe feelings and emotions about these outdoor experiences. I've had a good life coming out here."**

and the Pamlico River. After this foray, the group decided to go to the county commissioners to ask the legislature to buy the land and create a state park. The commissioners, with Roberson's sponsorship, then went to the state legislature and were successful in getting a bill passed to create the park. They were able to get the deal made for \$1,115,000. State parks are usually named for a natural landmark or environmental feature, so it was named Goose Creek State Park. Eventually another 400 acres were acquired to round out the boundaries. The park currently covers 1,672 acres.

According to Moler, at that time there was no development, no trails, no boat landings. The park was all just wetlands. A master plan was developed for the park layout by the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources with Moler as consultant. The land was cleared by

the Corps of Engineers, and the Forest Service constructed a small visitor center along with some very rustic campgrounds, a swimming beach, and a few rudimentary trails. Since that time many trails have been cut by park rangers (who, interestingly, are sworn law enforcement officers) and volunteers. A new visitor center has been constructed, more campsites have been added, restrooms have been built, and boat landings, such as Dinah's Landing have been developed. In 1980, the park was designated as a National Natural Landmark for the National Park Service.

There are several current and future projects in the park, one of which is to reintroduce native plants and trees, including an effort underway for loblolly pine planting. Referring to how each time he comes to the park, it looks more "naked." Moler stated, "It's rugged to watch these trees coming down, but when these new trees mature in 20-30 years, the park will have a whole new natural appearance" to be enjoyed by his grandchildren and future generations. Several rustic camping cabins are being built which can be reserved for short term use, and several more rustic sites, along with small camper sites. A program "campground host" has been developed to be a support to campers, such as, educating them on the park layout, rules, helping them with their campsites, and providing information about travel and tourism opportunities in the surrounding areas. These hosts, all volunteers, are allowed to park their RV for free in return for helping to







manage the camp and its visitors, and serve as adjuncts to the park rangers.

So, that's how the park got it its start; a small group of citizens who made a difference. The park has since become an economic driver for Beaufort County, bringing in visitors

from all around the state and country.

When asked about what he sees as the future of the park, Moler felt that there were no downsides (except he jokingly believes they have a higher percentage of ticks and mosquitos than any of the other state parks). Since it's under state control, there will always be preservation, and since the plan is to keep it fairly rustic, he doesn't think it will be overrun and become a crowded situation.

When asked to describe what the park means to him, he says he's proud to have been a part of the park's legacy. He says, "It's hard to describe feelings and emotions about these outdoor experiences. I've had a good life coming out here. There's always something different to see, especially wildlife, and enough things going on to make me want to keep coming back."

When the park was built, his children were small, they went there often to picnic, but he took a job out of the country for eight years. Upon returning, he couldn't believe how the park had developed, especially with waterfowl conservation. He says he loves to go there and watch the water birds. They go there often as a family, And, according to his daughter, they take great pride in what he has helped to build.

*Goose Creek Park is located on Camp Leach Road outside of Washington, NC. Up-to-date information about park hours and events can be found on the North Carolina State Parks website.*

## Goose Creek State Park



# BILLY ASKEW

## *Growing an Education*

Marissa Woolard

On the days where it is full of high temperatures and constant sunshine, some would dread going outdoors but others are indulging in the heat since it is a great time to plant various things and garden. Flowers bloom, plants grow, crops are harvested, all of these things have one thing in common – they all are a part of nature. For Billy Askew, anything that involves agriculture and the outdoors he is on board for. Billy Askew has been the lead instructor for Agriculture Business at Beaufort County Community College (BCCC) for six years, but he has been teaching agriculture since 1997, the year he started his teaching career at Northside High School in Pinetown. Askew has been a lifelong resident of the area. He also preaches at a church in Hyde County, has been married for 27 years, and has two children.

Askew became an agricultural teacher as he put it, “a little later on in life” when he was 27 years old. His first degree was in Biology in Science Education, which is what he was initially drawn to, but he then decided he did not like this as a teaching field.

“You have to teach every student that comes through, and they had to be there because it’s required by the curriculum, and of course, agriculture is an elective,” he said, explaining why





he didn't particularly like the biology field of study. When discussing how he became an agricultural teacher, Askew recalled the moment that would change his career field.

"My agriculture teacher that I had in high school retired, and he called me and asked me would I take his role over, which I did. And, it's one of the best decisions I've ever made." His upbringing also had a role in his decision to become an agriculture teacher. "I was raised on a farm, and we always had a garden. We've always been involved in that world, that realm. I just enjoy being outside, getting my hands dirty. I enjoy watching things grow, so it's just been a natural fit for me," he said. With all of these aspects combined, he knew that teaching this particular subject was what he wanted to pursue.

Becoming a teacher has its rewards, like seeing students succeed or graduate, but when asked if he can recall a time when he knew he was doing good for the environment because of his job, he didn't bring up a time in the classroom or planting a seed of some kind or even about the environment at all. He recalled a time when he got a thank you card from a student. He got this card from a student that left for college and had received their first paycheck.

"They said thank you for the impact you've made on my life. That was an 'aha' moment, that moment of 'hey what I'm doing makes a difference,'" he said. While he thought this was going to be a big moment for him in terms of him thinking he's making a difference, another big moment was right around the corner.

He has made a difference through the Agricultural Program at BCCC "Agriculture is the state's number one industry," which was why the

**"I just enjoy being outside, getting my hands dirty. I enjoy watching things grow, so it's just been a natural fit for me,"**

program was needed he explained. Agriculture is an essential aspect in the local economy, which is why the program was created by the community college six years ago. It understood that this specific part of education wasn't supplying a lot of workers for it. With generations of some families being in this industry, the agricultural community is getting older, and there is a high demand for new workers. As the technology advances and grows, field workers are needed, growers or sellers as well, and the technology needs to be understood by these workers for further growth of the industry.

The environment provides individuals with so many resources that sometimes can be looked over or taken for granted. This is why Askew thinks it's important for people to learn about agriculture and the environment around them. He explains that when he was in high school that agriculture was having a "pretty tough time" in the mid-1980s with factors such as the commodity prices diminishing and having difficult weather patterns. With all of these terrible aspects in play, he talked to his agricultural teacher about the future of agriculture. He told Askew something that has stayed with him, which was, "Billy Ray, as long as people eat, agriculture's going to be needed." Askew believes that agriculture is important because of a simple reason, without it everyone would starve, people would not have clothes to wear, and other aspects of life that would be greatly impacted. He went on to say, "I think one of the problems our society has is that people

are too far removed from the farm, from agriculture, and they don't understand how it absolutely impacts them every day." As a result, Askew worries how uninformed about agriculture people seem to be. He wants to try and contribute to the learning of this by his teaching of his course. In terms of his teaching affecting the area of Washington, Askew hopes through the students that come through his class and classes like it, that "we can plant those seeds" and encourage a better understanding of the topic.

"Hopefully when I leave the school, and ultimately leave this world, people will have a little more knowledge and a better understanding because I was here," he said. "The best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time, as the old saying goes. Every student that we can impact, every person that we can show that there are alternatives, that there are things that we can do to make a difference, then we will make a difference." Likewise, students are presented with various ways to see how agriculture affects the world, their community, and themselves with many different approaches.





The program that Askew is involved in helps people see the differences that can be made, especially the students that take his course. Students study a lot of different aspects of agriculture such as agriscience, plant science, soil science, and many other topics of this study. “They’re going to come out of here well-rounded, understanding a lot of the verbiage and terminology of agriculture, but they also get that business side through business management or accounting,” he said. These things will help students know how to look at reports and other things of that nature and truly understand what’s happening with it in the agriculture field of work. Students that leave the program can go into the workforce, back to their home farm or start their own. They also have the opportunity to go onto the University of Mount Olive or North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and get their four year degree. These schools provide various agricultural-based degrees, programs and other avenues that will help students succeed in this line of work.

These future farmers could

help the area of Washington grow and keep up the agriculture side of the community. Askew wants to see the environment around Washington flourish with the help of agriculture. He talks about the future of agriculture and how it is connected to the environment getting better because people are becoming more aware as to what is going on in the environment around them. This can be seen with the “Farm to Fork” movement gaining momentum, and people learning more about their local farmers. Niche farms are surfacing, and individuals are looking into specialty crops which the majority of revolve around food, which Askew thinks “is awesome.”



“What I want to see is more growers. We’ve got to move away from having just a few very large growers, and get back to a society that has more smaller growers if it’s going to be sustainable,” he explains. Like Askew said, smaller growers or farmers are needed if individuals want to see the environment become more respected and long-lasting in its resources.

With all of the different things the Agricultural Program does for the students, it also has a plant sale every spring, which the agronomy and plant science classes are mostly involved in. They grow mainly tomatoes and peppers in the greenhouse that is on the BCCC campus, but they also have some flowers and potted plants that people can buy. The group starts off with an email to the faculty and staff on campus, which has been proven successful due to the selling of a big portion of the plants.

Along with the plant sale, if students or future students want to learn more about the Agricultural Program at BCCC, the best way to do so is to go on the community college’s website and read various things about what the program entails and the details about it.

*Editor’s Note:*

*Prior to the 2021 publication of Life on the Pamlico, Abbie Barfield has taken over the role of Lead Instructor for the BCCC Agribusiness program. For more information, visit the BCCC website or call 252-940-6304.*



# CONNELL PURVIS

## *A Lifetime of Resource Conservation*

Ashley Woolard

*H*ave you ever been out fishing on the river on a nice summer day and seen a white boat with a green stripe with a circular logo in the middle? Have the people on board ever stopped you and asked for your fishing license or your catch? Are

you like me and wondered why are they doing this or who are they? Well, those people are a part of the North Carolina Marine Fisheries.

According to the North Carolina Marine Fisheries official webpage, "The Division of Marine Fisheries is dedicated to ensuring sustainable marine and estuarine fisheries and

habitats for the benefit and health of the people of North Carolina." The wonderful people who work with this department have dedicated their lives to protecting and conserving the limited natural resources that we have in North Carolina and the Eastern United States.

Connell Purvis of Washington is





one of those people. Purvis graduated from North Carolina State University in 1964 with two degrees in Marine Biology and Wildlife Management. Following graduation, he accepted a position with the Marine Fisheries as a Field Biologist. Shortly after accepting the position, he was drafted into the United States Army and served in the Vietnam War where he fought for our country in the mud and jungle. After the war, he returned to the United States and returned to his position at the Marine Fisheries.

“I grew up hunting, fishing and being outdoors and it was a dream to be able to do that all day long and still get a check at the end of the month. I couldn’t have found a better job,” said Purvis. In his 10 years as a field biologist, Purvis completed the first ever shrimp tagging operation in the country, started the first ever oyster rehabilitation program in the state of North Carolina and did the first ever freshwater intrusion research study in the state.

His shrimp tagging operation was highly successful at determining an appropriate shrimping season as his collected data tracked the three species of North Carolina shrimp growth, migration and mortality rates. He tracked the shrimp by injecting a fluorescent dye into the shrimp

that was absorbed into the gills, and when they were caught by fishermen, they were to place them in a special preserving compound for Purvis to pick up. Over the course of his study, he injected over 50,000 shrimp and collected approximately 10,000 of those shrimp. Purvis’s data not only allowed officials to determine an appropriate shrimping season, but also to get the maximum sustainable yield of shrimp. “The maximum sustainable yield means the maximum amount of an aquatic species that can be harvested without damaging or hurting the total population,” explained Purvis.

Purvis also performed a freshwater water intrusion study where he studied the effects of freshwater on aquatic life. “The biggest threat to aquatic life is freshwater itself. Many of our aquatic life such as oysters thrive in salt water,” Purvis explained. “I remember when I was in college at North Carolina State University and would duck hunt in the swamp that Crab Tree Valley Mall was built on. When they poured the concrete over the swamp, it pushed the freshwater east. With more and more concrete being poured, more and more freshwater is flowing our way.” The majority of aquatic life, such as oysters, require a certain parts per thousand of salinity to survive. “Back in the 1930’s or so oyster boats would dock right here in Washington and harvest oysters locally. Washington, Bath, and Rose Bay were all home to many oyster beds. Now you can’t find an oyster until you reach the sound”, according to Purvis. Oysters require at

least 8 parts per thousand of salt water to live. Currently, the Pamlico River is approximately 6 parts per thousand causing the oyster beds to move further east towards saltier water.

Following his time as a field biologist, Purvis became the director of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. The Marine Fisheries at the time was a fairly new state agency, and Purvis was the third ever director serving in this position from 1978-1982. The main location for the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries is located in Morehead City, North Carolina. Purvis served out of this main location as both a field biologist and director. The director’s office is still located in Morehead City. Purvis explained his job description of director as “providing the collected data to the commission in Raleigh so they could implement regulations.” As director, Purvis was in charge of a large employee base of approximately 50 biologists and 50 law enforcement officers. However, Purvis was comfortable studying aquatic life, not leading people.

“I’ve always believed in leading by example, so when I was director



**“My goal of life and life’s purpose is to manage the resources that God gave us. I wasn’t meant to manage people.”**

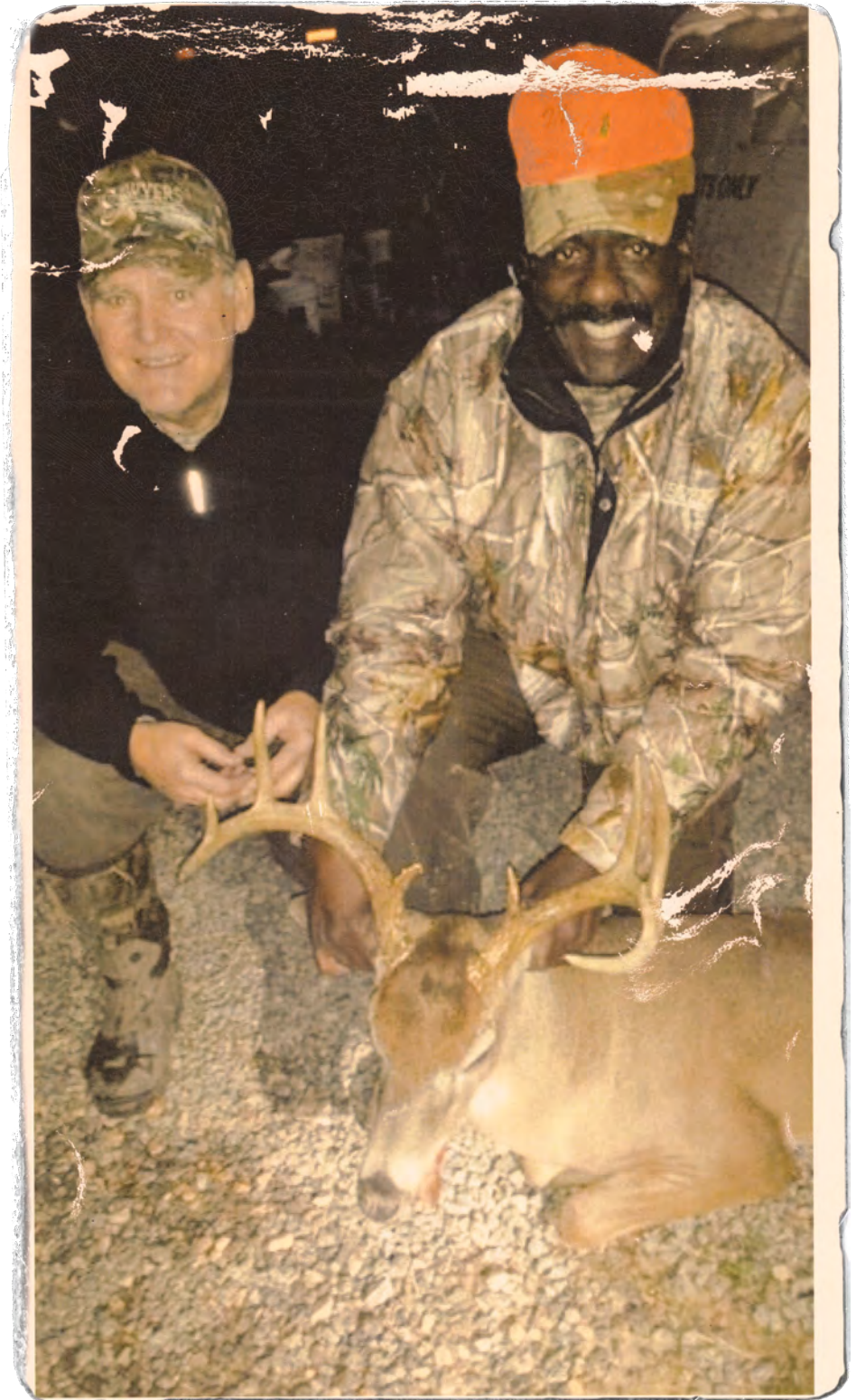


I felt like I needed to know how to lead and have the right credentials, so I took night classes at Beaufort County Community College and got a Criminal Justice degree,” said Purvis. “I was bound by oath to manage North Carolina’s maximum sustainable yields for all citizens of this state. However, the difficulty was the conflict between the user groups of the resources: the commercial fishermen and the recreational users.” Purvis further explained that both groups wanted the most access to the aquatic life. Each group wanted stricter restrictions on the other group so that they’re fishing was better. “My goal of life and life’s purpose is to manage the resources that God gave us. I wasn’t meant to manage people,” Purvis said.

“I had a wonderful career with the Marine Fisheries, but the biggest disappointment of my career was getting Oregon Inlet jettied,” said Purvis. Purvis further explained that, “jettied means putting a structure where the natural inlet is to keep the current from pushing the sand into the mouth of the inlet and eventually closing it”. Currently, the state has a dredge at Oregon Inlet continuously removing the sand from the mouth of the inlet, but as Purvis explained, “even my mother knows you cannot dig a hole in a bowl of Jell-O.”

Purvis left the Marine Fisheries in 1982 after a very successful career. For all his hard work, Purvis was awarded the highest award that the director’s office can receive, the Governor’s Award. Governor Jim Hunt personally gave Purvis the award.

After leaving the Marine Fisheries, Purvis started his own very successful seafood company. He owned and operated this company



with other members of his family. Due to the market change, Purvis had to close the company in 1998. For several years following he did consulting work and managed marine areas such as Rose Bay, Mattamuskeet and Engelhard. He also made his first

of eight trips to Swaziland, Africa in 2000, where he did missionary work with a local Baptist church. In 2002, he and his son, Todd Purvis, started another company together: Inner Banks Land and Timber Company. His son Todd has experience with



timber management, so Todd's role was to manage the landscaping and timber management side of the business, while Connell Purvis handled the wildlife management side. In 2015, the Purvis's sold out to 3G Wildlife and Land Management, LLC. However, the new owners asked Purvis to stay with the company as he knew the area and the customer base. "When we sold out to 3G we kept 85% of the customer base that I had when I owned the company," Purvis said. "We were so blessed to be so successful."

It's obvious Purvis enjoys his work. "Wildlife management and conservation can be a controversial topic, but hunting is a crucial part of management, and in my opinion there is no reason to go out of state to hunt trophy deer when with the proper management we can grow them here," Purvis said. "There are three basic steps to managing wildlife. Provide food, water and cover." He recommended that the best time to leave corn and mineral blocks out for deer is the months of December



through mid-March. This is when the available resources are lacking, and the deer need additional nutrients the most.

"You manage a herd by controlling the maximum carrying capacity of the property yet maintaining healthy herds, as well as giving deer birthdays," explained Purvis. "There have been more trophy deer shot in the last 10 years in this area than in history because of good

management." According to Purvis, the best deer to harvest are four-and-a-half years old and above. This gives the deer the most opportunity to grow. He explained that you can tell how old a deer is by their jawbone, teeth wear, and certain physical appearances such as swayed back and dropped belly. However, Purvis believes that "the trophy is in the eye of the shooter. If you think it's a trophy, shoot it, but after that, you can only go bigger."

Over the course of Purvis's lifetime, he has left an astronomical environmental footprint. His numerous research projects while in college and with the Marine Fisheries, as well as his local endeavors to manage wildlife herds, have had impacts that can still be seen and felt today across North Carolina from the Atlantic Ocean to the Appalachian Mountains. He said numerous times that he "feels as though I was put on this planet to manage the God given resources." As such, Purvis plans to continue to stay active in outdoor activities and environmental projects for years to come.





# PATTIE CARMACK

## *Growing a Hobby*

Tremez Norman

Pattie Carmack, my Aunt Pat, has “the green thumb of the family”. Her thumbs are not actually green, but she is a gardener that plants her own vegetables and some flowers. Aunt Pat is a hard-working woman. Even though she is 70 and retired, she is always on the move. She lives in Plymouth, North Carolina with her husband Brady Carmack, and she has two children that are 41 and 50 years of age.

Gardening is Aunt Pat’s passion. She said, “I watched my mother grow tomatoes, and that’s when I was inspired to take an interest with the outside life and gardening.” She said that her mother was also a gardener but “nothing serious”, just a few vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers, “but that’s what got me motivated to garden was watching my mother grow all types of stuff.”

She was in her early 20s when she started her own garden. She didn’t specialize in just one thing. “I planted and grew almost everything from vegetables to flowers like tomatoes, okra, collards, and flowers like tulips, mums, dogwoods, and azaleas.”

Aunt Pat said the process to start a garden is easy. “I buy plants from

Walmart and Food Lion and dig up a spot to grow them in.” To do that, she said, “We’ll need some gloves, hoe fork, a hoe, and also some lime, which is optional if the soil is not rich where you live.” She goes on to explain,

“basically all you need is to get the soil or lime whatever your using for your support, then put the plant or seed in the ground watering the soil.” Starting a garden is time consuming, however, so she suggests picking a time where





**“Spending time in the garden is not only peaceful—it also allows me to relieve pent up stress.”**

you will be able to spend most of your day in the garden.

For Aunt Pat, the garden is a source of solace and calm. “Spending time in the garden is not only peaceful it also allows me to relieve pent up stress,” she said.

She also said that growing your own vegetables is cheaper because you can go and pick your own for basically no money. You still must pay for the stuff to get it started, but other than

that, you basically are tending and growing your own food.

Of course, those with profit in mind will find the process more expensive. But, that’s not Aunt Pat’s style. “I don’t personally sell my vegetables or flowers because when I garden, it’s nothing more than a hobby that takes up my time.” She does it because she enjoys it. The only annoying thing she said she faced was the bugs, bees and gnats.

Aunt Pat grows a garden to relieve stress, and she loves to look back at her work when it’s done and go see how all that effort that she put into maintaining her garden blossoms. She said, “I feel like everyone should try out making their own garden because it’s something to do when it’s boring at home.” Like her, she hopes others will find a great sense of accomplishment in growing their own plants.



# MEGAN BATCHELOR

## *Raising Worms*

McKayla Waters

*M*egan Batchelor has worms. Red wigglers, to be more specific, and lots of them. When she isn't busy with one of her three part-time jobs or classes at Beaufort County Community College, you might find

her elbow deep in a tote bin full of dirt, tending to her compost worms. Born in Dublin, Georgia in November 2000, Batchelor was raised by farmers. Her mother's side of the family grows tobacco, sweet potatoes, and other

crops while her father owns quite a bit of land. The quaint old farmhouse in which she lives in Blounts Creek, North Carolina is evidence of this. Wide open stretches of land can be viewed from the family's front yard.





**“You’re the first person who’s ever asked about them. I’m excited to show them off.”**

Across from the house sits a tobacco barn and a shed where sweet potatoes are stored after being harvested.

“I grew up knowing I come from a family of farmers. But I don’t know that my family’s work inspired me as much as doing personal research,” Batchelor remarks. “I learned about food waste my sophomore year of high school, and it really affected me because I didn’t realize how big of an issue food waste in general was...I think over a third of food in the US goes in landfills. When the food sits there and rots, it creates greenhouse gases which doesn’t help with the whole global warming issue.” A food sustainability index published by the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition Foundation ranks the United States third to last out of twenty-five countries in terms of in food waste. This is a tragedy to be sure, but one way to combat this nationwide problem has always been right beneath our feet.

Composting is one way to help reduce food waste. Batchelor explains

that there are many kinds of ways to compost. “A lot of people will compost their yard scraps and put them in a big pile and kind of turn over the pile and let them decompose on their own. The way I compost is -- I use worms,” she says. Her method of choice is called “vermicomposting” or “vermiculture.” The worms eat food scraps, break them down, and return the nutrients to the soil. It’s nature’s own way of recycling. Recognizing the uncommonness of her somewhat niche hobby, she relishes the opportunity to spread the word. “You’re the first person who’s ever asked about them. I’m excited to show them off,” she beams.

It was May of 2019 when Batchelor fired up her operation. Horrified by the amount of food that goes to waste every year, she decided it was time to start making an effort to reduce her carbon footprint. Vermicomposting is a simple, effective way to cut down on your environmental impact because it reduces the amount of food waste

going into landfills. It also creates nutrient-rich soil that can be used to grow new food. All you need to get started is some trash and some worms. Red wigglers are the most common type of earthworm in these parts, so she got her hands on some and built a little home for them. If you are interested in starting a little ecosystem of your very own, start taking notes!

When I first arrived at the Batchelor residence, I was surprised to see that the whole of the project exists in a small, navy blue plastic bin. According to Batchelor, starting your own compost bin is quite easy and only requires a few easily accessible materials. “You want to get a tote bin that’s dark-colored, so the worms can have a dark environment. It shouldn’t be clear,” she explains. Holes were drilled in the sides at the top and bottom for aeration. “Worms won’t escape through the holes in the bottom,” she adds. “If they’re happy, they’re not going to leave.” Next, she explains to lay down some newspapers and shredded cardboard to the dirt in the bin. All that’s left is to add your waste for the worms to break down, and you’re all set. The bedding should be cool, dark, and damp, and not firmly packed. If your bin is assembled correctly, it should smell like damp soil. “It should smell earthy,” Batchelor says. “If you smell something (else), then something’s wrong.” Some shredded paper, cardboard, sawdust, coconut fibers, or sand are also common additions, she adds.

You can simply throw in any yard scraps you may have or food waste products such as banana peels, coffee grounds, and other undesirables. “You need to put crushed up eggshells in there because they don’t have teeth, so they need something to grit on. And also, it helps regulate the pH,”





Batchelor advises. Her worms are all about watermelon and avocado. Additionally, Batchelor adds that you should try to avoid feeding the worms any especially acidic or spicy foods, as this will upset the Ph balance of your miniature biome. Worms dig neutral dirt. Also, avoid feeding your worms any fatty foods, meats, or dairy products. Batchelor recommends freezing the food before feeding and then covering the worms with something like newspaper to keep out fruit flies.

The dirt, scraps, and resulting worm excrement are called castings, which is a polite term for poop. These castings can be used or sold as fertilizer for gardens. "My friend started a little garden growing cucumbers and zucchini and such, so I'm planning on using my castings for that," Batchelor

says. According to [communitycrops.org](http://communitycrops.org), earthworms in nature can digest and excrete up to 15 tons per acre of soil each year. This process makes the soil more porous, allowing for water to move more easily through the earth. In addition, this allows for greater drainage following heavy rains, reducing erosion.

Additionally, because worms like to burrow, the castings are also well aerated allowing for greater oxidation of plants as they grow, an effect that farmers often use heavy machinery to achieve. The process allows for subsoil to be combined with nutrient-heavy topsoil to help plants grow big and strong. Nitrogen is another vital ingredient for any healthy garden, and just so happens to be contained within the sticky slime that worms produce.

This summer will mark a tearful

departure between Batchelor and her worms as she heads off to military boot camp, leaving her annelid friends in the care of her mother. Through sharing her knowledge of vermiculture, she hopes to encourage others to employ their own conservation efforts as she has done. She has this to say to anyone who is interested in starting up their own project: "Just go for it. It's super easy, manageable, doesn't take too much time, and the feeling you get from it, the rewards, they make up for whatever you put into it."



# LARRY BOYD

## *Pride in Farming*

Nickolas Keech

Driving through the countryside, have you ever wondered what farm life is like in Eastern North Carolina? One local farmer can reveal a little about that life. Larry Boyd is the owner of Foxfire Farms in Pinetown, NC. Boyd says that when he graduated from high school, he did not want to take his education further

because he wanted to start farming right away. What led him to this decision was the fact in high school he worked on a farm picking tobacco and cotton. “Ever since then, I knew I wanted to be a farmer,” he said.

Like many farms in Eastern North Carolina, in years past, his best cash crop was tobacco. “Tobacco

had been very good to me,” he noted. However, he recently had to take tobacco out of the mix due to the change of attitude in American people and multiple health risks of tobacco. Today, the main crops his business harvests are corn, soybeans, small grains which consists of wheat and oats, and occasionally bail straw.





Boyd also manages some timberland which is maintained and harvested on a rotational basis. When the trees get big enough, he clear cuts it and reseeds the ground so that new trees will grow.

Farming is not easy, and Boyd mentioned that the company has faced many challenges. One of the main challenges is the unpredictable and sometimes volatile effects of weather in Eastern North Carolina -- whether it's flooding, drought, tornados, or hurricanes. However, technology and methods for farming have been the most long-term changes.

Farming has changed a lot since Boyd started in 1976. One change is when he started, the company was a full till operation. "We would till the land three or four times almost as perfect as you could get it, and then proceed to plant the crops and that was the accepted practice," he explained. However, in the mid-1980s, most companies started "no tilling" with small crops such as grain. No tilling is when a farmer does not till the land and just plants the crops into the ground. That led to no tilling all of the

corn fields because the practice of no tilling had been proven by companies to reduce weed growth. Despite this change, Boyd does still till fields for certain crops because some crops grow better if the soil has been tilled.

Another notable change is some of the rules and regulations to farming have been modified and updated. As a farmer, he must strictly follow those rules and regulations. One of those rules is planting buffers around blue line ditches. Blue line ditches are ditches that used for water management and soil runoff which runs into the estuary systems. He must follow regulations like this and adapt to the changes as they are enacted.

Boyd also notes that the seed technology has changed drastically. Due to weeds, farmers could only really do mechanical weed control such as cultivating, but now that seed technology has improved companies can do both mechanical and chemical weed control. Boyd says his company only uses the safest chemical for the environment when treating field with chemicals. This impacts not only the

plants being grown, but also the local fauna. "The environment has changed a lot over the years. Many of the game animals have gotten much bigger and increased in numbers due to more crops being around," Boyd explained.

Despite the challenges, Boyd's love for farming has become a family tradition. One of his daughters obtained a degree in plant science from NC State University, and today, she works on the farm helping her father care for their animals. His other daughter is currently studying food science at Oklahoma State University. His brother and nephew also help out on the farm. It's a small operation, with just a few employees who aren't family.

Boyd has hope that his farm will carry on through his family generation to generation. They have accumulated a lot of land over the years and are well-known in the community. They take pride in the company and industry and respects his affiliated buyers. "I believe that if you do those two things that you will have a very successful farm," Boyd said.

**"The environment has changed a lot over the years. Many of the game animals have gotten much bigger and increased in numbers due to more crops being around," Boyd explained.**









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