



1: In the "Sailing Capital"

It was only a weekend get-away to a place friends had told us about, but it turned out to be three days in one of the most charming towns: Oriental, North Carolina, in Pamlico County.

Oriental's population is less than 900 folks, but there are more than 2,700 boats, so the town calls itself "The Sailing Capital of North Carolina."

We enjoyed staying at The Captain's Quarters Bed and Breakfast, where a lovable pit bull liked to sleep with his head on your foot while you relaxed with a cold drink on the veranda. We had lunch on the porch of the Toucan Grill and laughed with the locals as the transient boaters tried to dock their boats. We had coffee and sweet rolls at The Bean each morning, and a visit to the only market in town. Then at sunset, drinks at the Tiki Bar.

If you go, be careful of the dragon that guards the lagoon by The Bean.

Tom and Becky Morrell, Hertford, Albemarle EMC



Thanks to everyone who sent photos and stories of your North Carolina

vacations. You can see more on our Web site. Next month we'll publish pictures of the best homes your pets ever had. [Deadline was March 15.] For more themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 19.



2: Paddling the New River

On our summer vacation, my family and I went to West Jefferson for a kayak trip down the New River. The New River is the oldest river in the United States. It is different from any other river because New River flows from south to north. The mountain views are breathtaking, water crystal clear and the sky that day was a Carolina blue.

On the way down the river, we could see baby trout swimming below the surface of the water. Our favorite site was this old historic grist mill.

We have discovered that we do not need to go outside of North Carolina for vacation trips. We have one of the most beautiful states in America and plan to explore a new site each summer.

Michael Taylor, Gastonia, Rutherford EMC

3: In the Land of Oz

We were totally surprised when our 3-year-old daughter, Abby, loved the movie "The Wizard of Oz." She would watch it over and over and now recites quotes from the movie.

On Oct. 6, 2007, my mother-in-law and father-in-law took my family to Beech Mountain in the North Carolina mountains to visit the "Land of Oz." We visited Auntie Em, Uncle Henry, Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion, the famous Wicked Witch, and Dorothy with the Wizard. We had the best time and hope to return to follow the yellow brick road again soon. This is a picture of our Abby with Dorothy and The Gang on the Yellow Brick Road.

*Curt and Kristi Chambers
Rougemont, Piedmont EMC*



4: Carolina Beach sunrise

In the summer of 2006 my wife and I stayed in an oceanfront inn on Carolina Beach. The rising sun would greet the shrimp boats each morning as the fishermen trolled the coast searching for an early morning catch. We visited the North Carolina Aquarium on this trip. It was interesting to see how the aquarium had been completely updated from how it was when I visited as a child.

Eric McPherson, Asheboro, Randolph EMC

5: Fishing for dolphin on Topsail

This is a picture taken on our vacation to Topsail Island. After seeing some dolphins in the surf, Gracie, our 2-year-old, decided she was going to try and catch one. She fished very patiently for several days in a row. Although she never caught a dolphin, she and her sister enjoyed chasing the seagulls and crabs, the waves and the beauty of nature.

Lori Hall, Connelley Springs, Rutherford EMC





6: The classic family vacation

It was 5 a.m. on a Saturday in November 1958. Our parents, Edgar Lee and Ruby Thornton, set off to take their 10 children on a vacation to the Virginia mountains.

Daddy was a pipe foreman with a construction company, and he and his crew from Wayne County were laying a pipeline in the Lynchburg, Va., area. He loved his work and wanted his family to see this project.

After a quick stop at the Rex School of Nursing in Raleigh to pick up our oldest sister, Dora Lee, our fully-loaded 1957 yellow Chevy headed north. The older children all claimed bragging rights for seeing the biggest hill or best leaf color.

When we saw Daddy's project, I felt awed by the vast red clay hill with miles of huge pipeline. As we traveled on, the little ones got crabby. Faye recalls that Mama rejected several roadside picnic areas as "too dangerous." Sure enough, "knee baby" Keith toppled over an incline, and I pulled him to safety.

Dolly recalls driving by the Natural Bridge. Ann said we were chewing gum and someone complained, "Mama, she is smackin' in my ear!" Billie loved the fried chicken and wiener picnic (in the photo). Mary Ellen liked the Pepsi because we usually got only tea. Kenneth retreated to the back window to "get away from the six sisters." Daddy let Dora Lee drive on the way home and he rested and hugged Mama as she nursed baby Gene.

Betty T. Williams, Mount Olive, Tri-County EMC

7: The Inn at Biltmore

It was our 25th anniversary, and because we financially could not afford a party, our two sons who are in the military here in North Carolina chipped in to send us on a honeymoon package to the Biltmore in Asheville. It was incredible.

The first day we had some time before 3 p.m. check in, so we found some local antique shops. We drove to the Inn at the Biltmore where we were staying. We were surprised by roses and champagne on our table. The service and food were impeccable. Next door is the winery. We read books by the fireplace in the inn. We rode horses for three hours in the mountains. Our guide took a cooler with a picnic lunch.

We had a dinner reservation at the Inn. I had a black skirt on, so the waiter switched my white napkin to a black one so I wouldn't get white lint on my skirt.

We will never forget this gift from our sons.

Rite Caperna, Carthage, Randolph EMC

8: Haven's tree

In July 2007 my husband and I took our 6-year-old granddaughter, Haven, to Cherokee. We visited the Mountain Farm Museum at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It is a historic farm with buildings that form an open-air museum, which show life in the early 1900s. Haven found this old tree by the stream with an excellent hiding place. "Grandma, look!" she said. "We can go through this tree!" And we did.

*Joyce Lassiter, Hobbsville
Roanoke Electric*

9: Bubbles in Burnsville

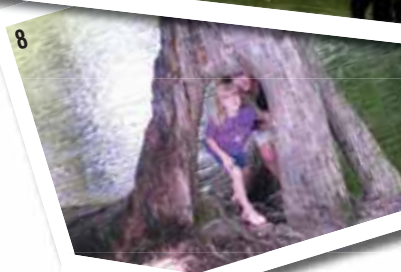
We were on vacation in Burnsville, and my husband was sitting on the deck one evening blowing bubbles for our daughter, who was 5. She is now 22 and says this was one of her favorite vacations, because she had fun with her dad and the bubbles.

Joy Boone, Hickory

10: Baby's first waves

In October 2007 we took our son, John Douglas, to the beach. Since it was around 90 degrees we let him put his feet in the ocean for the first time. He loved watching the waves go back and forth and kicking his feet in the water. At four months old, he was a little anxious, but he was being held by his dad.

*Jamie Carroll
Cherryville
Rutherford EMC*





11: Honeymoon in the mountains

My husband Ben and I love the mountains, so there was no question where we would go on our honeymoon. We were married on June 23, 2006, and we left the next morning for Banner Elk. We stayed on Sugar Mountain in a great cottage.

One day we drove on the Blue Ridge Parkway and took many wonderful pictures. There was one particular spot that took our breath away. We just happened to find this stone ledge that overlooked some of the mountains along the parkway. The mountains reminded us of God's power and splendor.

Ben and I also visited the Biltmore Estate in Asheville. It was so hot that day I didn't think I could keep going as we walked around the huge estate.

We had a terrific honeymoon and cannot wait to visit again soon—next time when the leaves are changing.

Carrie L. Blanchard Purser, Gates, Roanoke Electric

12: Hatteras Island seal

In all our years of vacationing at the Outer Banks, we were surprised and delighted one time to see this little creature just relaxing on the beach. We were at Hatteras Village on the morning of January 19, 2008, and a little baby seal appeared, and just seemed like it was right at home. We never knew seals traveled this far south.

The seal had no problem posing for us and just stayed put, opened and closed its eyes, as if to say, "Glad to see you too!"

Lyles Riemann, Lancaster, S.C.



13: On the Outer Banks with Deedee

It was June 2002 when my girlfriend Deedee came down from Raleigh so we could visit the Outer Banks. Our first stop was at the Dune Burger to get something to eat, then to Jennette's pier across the road (see the photo). Someone fishing here pulled up a skate, and I thought she was going to jump overboard saying, "That's one ugly fish!"

Later we went for lunch at the Dunes Restaurant, where we both ate until our stomachs were hurting. That didn't stop us from the Jurassic Park mini-golf.

Deedee (on the right) passed away in 2007, and my heart was burdened. But I can say that was one of the best trips I ever had and I have the pictures to remember it.

Belinda Faye Boyce, Edenton, Albemarle EMC

14: Sand alligator on Kure Beach

In the summer of 2000 our family took a weeklong vacation to Kure Beach. We stayed in one of the nostalgic, oceanfront beach cottages. A welcoming plaque greeted us with the words: "May your time be filled with relaxing sunsets, cool drinks and sand between your toes."

We spent sunrise mornings fishing for pan-sized flounder in front of our cottage. Golden fried flounder was a given for our lunch along with fresh shrimp that we peeled at our table and tossed the shells onto laid-out newspapers.

The younger cousins rode the waves and built sandcastles. Our older cousins, Daniel and Marc, decided to break the traditional sandcastle mold. After the other cousins came back from their beach walk to Kure Beach's fishing pier, a gigantic "sand alligator" greeted them in the sand. Our youngest cousins, Anna and Laurel (pictured), squealed with delight at their encounter with the sand alligator.

After visits to Kure Beach's Aquarium and Fort Fisher, all of the younger cousins agreed that Daniel and Marc's sand alligator was one of the highlights of their vacation at Kure Beach.

Ann Doby Mercer, Hamlet, Pee Dee EMC



15: The classic mountains trip

It was the summer of 1960 when our family of four headed for the North Carolina mountains on a two-day vacation, picking up Aunt Liz and Mama Owen along the way. We drove toward Boone then south to Tweetsie Railroad, Mystery Hill, Blowing Rock, Grandfather Mountain and the original swinging bridge, which lived up to its name back then and really rocked!

We followed the Blue Ridge Parkway, with its scenic overlooks and picnic tables, and took side trips to Linville Falls, Linville Caverns and Mt. Mitchell. Along the way, we waded in cold mountain streams, visited gristmills and ponds, stopped by roadside apple stands and souvenir shops.

Late that first day we pulled into Lake Junaluska only to be greeted by “No Vacancy” signs. Long past bedtime, Daddy found lodging in a hut nestled in the hills. The next day we visited Maggie Valley, Cherokee, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Clingman’s Dome, Chimney Rock Park, Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure.

Last stop: Ellenboro and a visit to Mama Owen’s homeplace. Vacation was over and it was time for the long drive home, dog-tired but filled with memories to last a lifetime.

LaJeanne Owen Pierce, Siler City, Randolph EMC

16: Vistas conquer all fears

In July 1998, our family of five children, two of whom are now full-time North Carolina residents, and six grandchildren were vacationing near Cape Hatteras. All of us dearly wished to visit this famous lighthouse. However, there were several limiting considerations: our oldest son, Sean, is both blind and a double amputee. He was still adjusting to two new prostheses. All were concerned about him being physically able to make the climb. He so badly wanted to.

Determined, Sean set his heart. Tony, our youngest son, a graduate of Duke, Yale and UNC, loves lighthouses, but has had a lifelong, gut-gripping fear of high places. Frozen at the thought, he was loathe to accompany us. Approaching the lighthouse door, palms sweating and seeing his eldest brother begin the ascent, Tony shouted, “If he can do it, I can!”

Together, words of encouragement echoing off the solid stone cylinder, we spiraled to the top. Greeted with a spectacularly clear, unending view of ocean, sky and island, Sean had mastered the climb and Tony had delightfully overcome his acrophobia. Broad smiles attested to the joy all experienced with these unmatched vistas. 📍

Judy Armento, Cape Carteret, Carteret-Craven Electric

send us your best **EARN \$50**

Here are the themes in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we’ll send you \$50. You don’t have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

June 2008

Wedding Stories

Your favorite wedding story and photo.

Deadline: April 15

July 2008

My Favorite Car

Stories and photos of the best car you ever had.

Deadline: May 15

August 2008

If Students Ran the School

For students: How would you run your school?

Deadline: June 15

September 2008

My Favorite Photo

Our annual photo gallery of N.C. people and places.

Deadline: July 15

October 2008

Celebrity Presidents

What celebrity—human or cartoon—would make the best President, & why?

Deadline: August 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
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