

Fort Macon Ramparts

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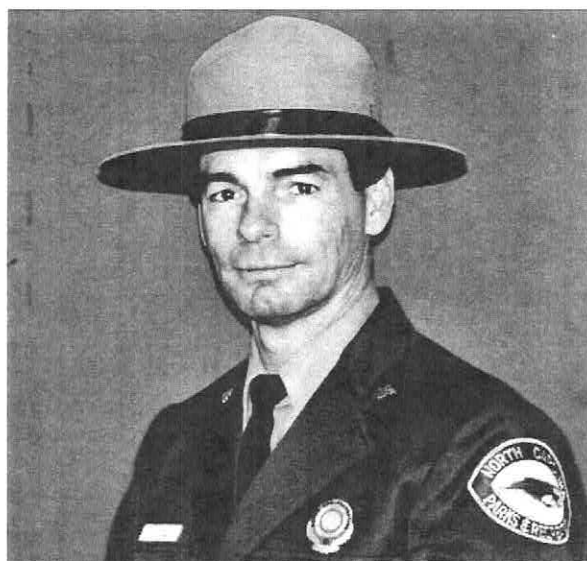
Hail to the Chief

Fort Macon State Park Superintendent, Jody Merritt, retired from state parks on September 1, 2009. For the Friends of Fort Macon, it has been a pleasure and inspiration to work under Jody's leadership. He will be sorely missed.

Jody was born on August 11, 1951 in Clinton, NC where he lived until he began college at North Carolina State University in 1969. Jody began working with state parks as a park attendant while he was still in college. After graduating with degrees in Natural Resource Management and Conservation, he became a park ranger at Raven Rock State Park. From there he went to Eno River State Park near Durham. After leaving Eno River, he went to Morrow Mountain State Park at Albemarle, where he remained for more than five years. In 1980 he went back to Eno River as the Park Superintendent before coming to Fort Macon in 1981.

Jody has two daughters, Carrie and Heather, who grew up at Fort Macon. Carrie is a graduate of UNC and now lives in New Bern with her husband, John. In July 2008 Carrie and John became the proud parents of a little boy, Grayden. Jody is enjoying time spent with his first grandchild. Jody's youngest daughter, Heather, is a graduate of UNC Wilmington. Heather lives in Wilmington where she teaches school.

Jody has served as Park Superintendent at Fort Macon State Park for the past 28 years. During his tenure at Fort Macon, Jody has become well known and respected among his peers for the high standards he instituted in operations and administration. This was no small task considering that Fort Macon State Park has been the most visited of all North Carolina State Parks for many years with an annual visitation of well over a million visitors.



Jody Merritt

THE DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL INDICATES THE MONTH AND YEAR

THAT YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRED OR WILL EXPIRE

In addition to setting high standards for day-to-day park operations, Jody has personally overseen the growth and expansion of park facilities. The largest projects include a major facilities expansion during 1988-90, the renovation of Fort Macon during 1998-2003, and now the Coastal Education Center which will open in 2009. The Fort Macon renovation was a \$12 million project, the largest of its kind undertaken by NC State Parks. The Coastal Education Center is the first LEED-certified "green" building to be constructed by NC State Parks and will cost more than \$8 million.

During the construction of the Coastal Education Center, Jody carefully reviewed every detail of the drawings and specifications, avoiding numerous problems prior to construction. He spent long hours of personal time late at night pouring over blueprints, memos and documents pertaining to these projects. By becoming personally involved in these projects he was instrumental in keeping contractors on track, eliminating problems and ensuring efficiency saving the State a significant amount of money.

In addition to his work for the NC State Parks, Jody has been active in community affairs. He has served on the board of the North Carolina Seafood Festival, and including time as board chairman. Of course, Jody is also an ex-officio member of the board of the Friends of Fort Macon.

The Friends of Fort Macon wish Jody well in his retirement. Hail to the Chief.

Superintendent's Update



As most of you know, Jody Merritt, Park Superintendent at Fort Macon for 28 years, retired on August 31st. On the same date, Barry Smith, Fort Maintenance Mechanic for 23 years, also retired. They are both sorely missed. I, Randy Newman, will be serving as Interim Superintendent until a replacement for Jody is named.

This year has been a very active year at Fort Macon. Thanks perhaps to our flagging economy, local tourism has been strong. Park attendance this year is up approximately 25%. The Coastal Education Center is progressing on schedule and the Park is hoping to take possession of the building the first week of October. We hope to have the grand opening by the end of October. Also, the Park is hoping to have additional staff for the Center hired by the end of the summer of 2010. This facility was made possible in part through efforts of the Friends of Fort Macon. I would like to thank everyone for their support of this project.

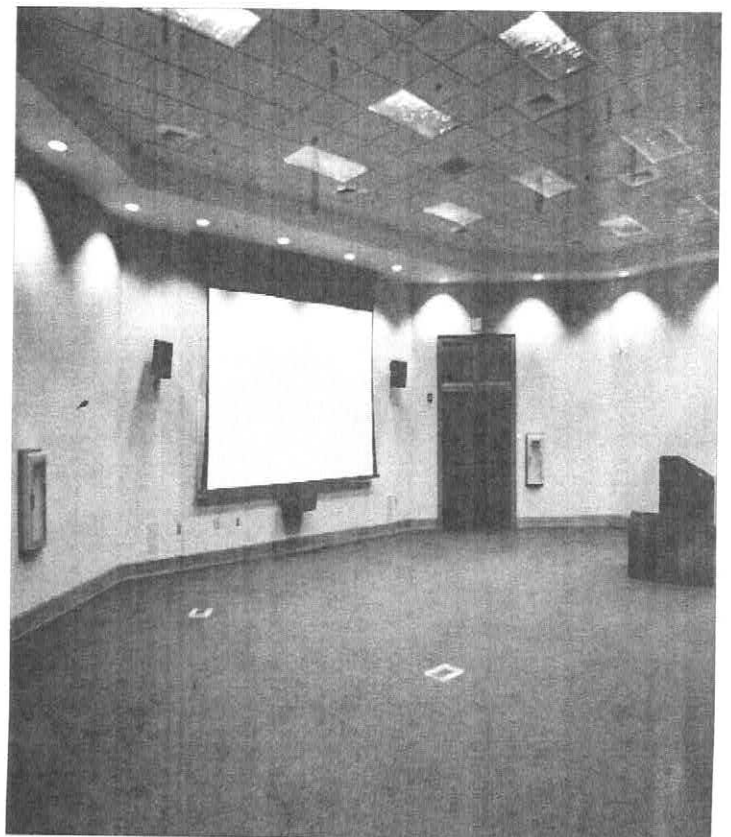
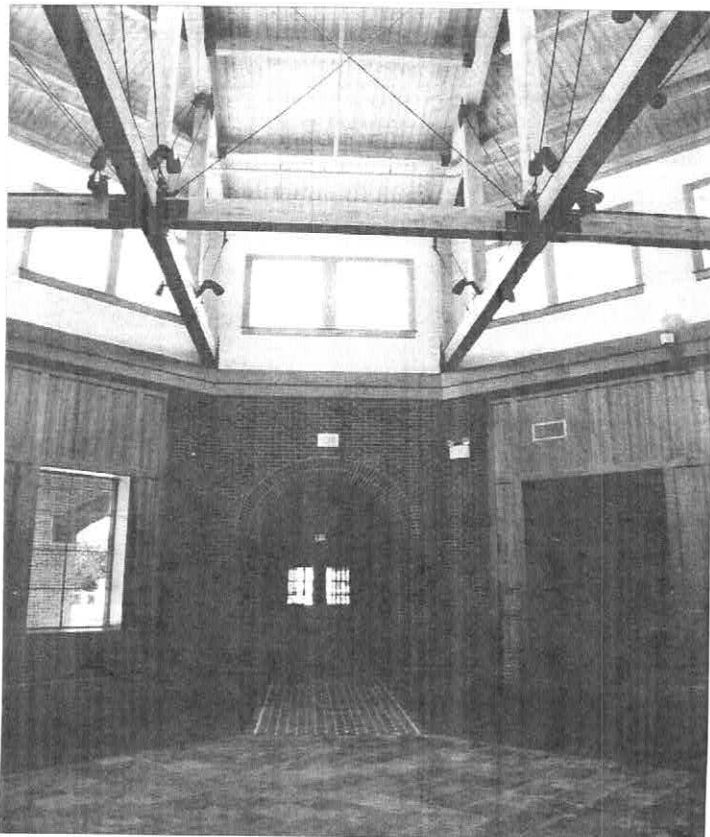
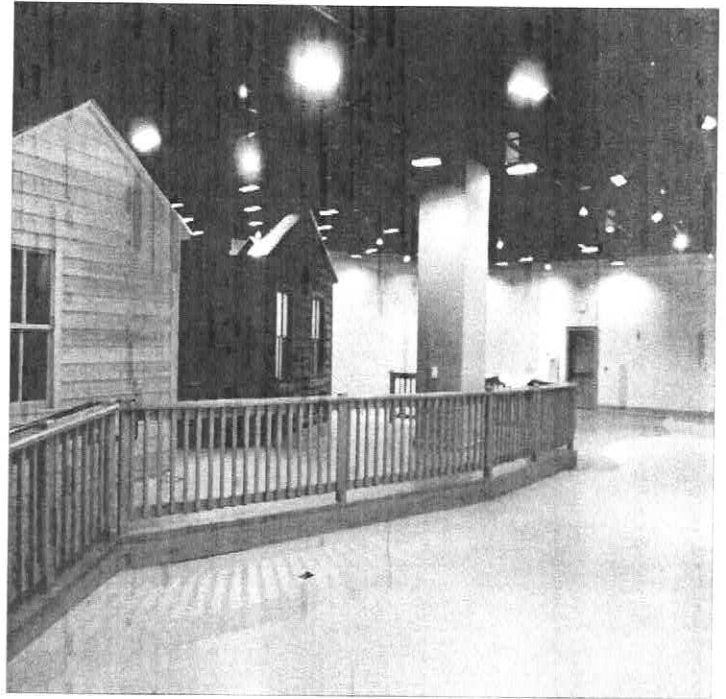
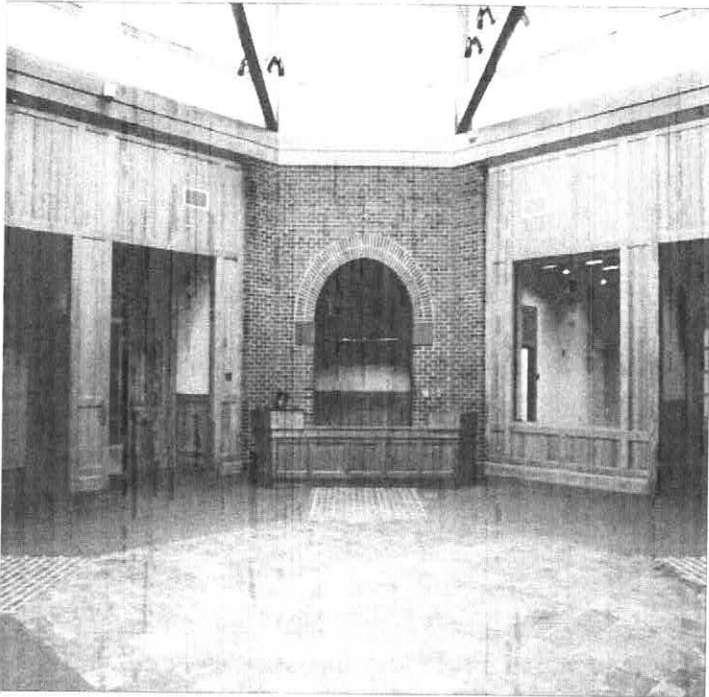
Randy



Jody was awarded North Carolina's highest recognition, membership in The Order of the Long Lead Pine. He is shown here receiving a NC Certificate of Retirement from Lewis Ledford, Director, NC State Department of Parks and Recreation.

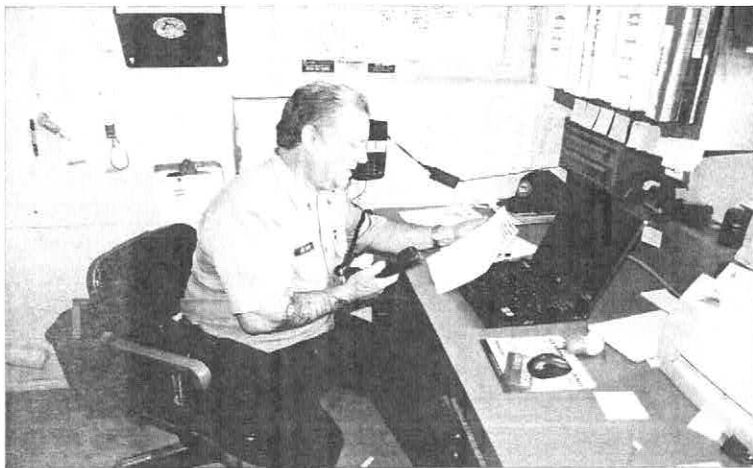
Coastal Education Center Update

As you receive this issue of *The Ramparts*, the new Coastal Education Center will be complete and the park will take possession of the building. Many visitors have seen the building under construction and know that it is a very special structure. Soon everyone will be able to experience the beautifully designed interior and enjoy the amenities that it will provide to park visitors. The opening of the building is tentatively scheduled to take place at the end of October.



Barry Smith Retires from Fort Macon State Park

Visitors to Fort Macon State Park over the past two decades have likely encountered the work of a special member of the park staff in many cases without realizing it. The behind-the-scenes work of this man has directly or indirectly kept the park running for years and provided visitors with a positive recreational and educational experience. That man is the park's chief of maintenance, Kenneth Barry Smith. For 23 years Barry has been the park's go-to man to make things happen. With a lifetime wealth of skills and experience to draw



Barry Smith at his desk at the Fort.

upon, he could build or repair almost anything in the park. But all things must eventually come to an end. After his lengthy career with NC State Parks, the time had come for Barry to say goodbye. He retired on August 31.

Although he was born in Greensboro, N.C., Barry was on the move for much of his life. In 1965 he married and honeymooned in North Carolina. It was on his honeymoon that Barry and new wife Pat first visited—you guessed it—Fort Macon!

Early in his career Barry trained at General Electric/Honeywell and Bell Labs to be a field technician on the budding industrial computer systems that were beginning to appear. He also had an automobile painting shop where his specialty was painting hot rods.

He later worked with the New Jersey Water Company at Palmyra. He decided to move south again in 1983 to Morehead City, where he had family. He ran a cabinet shop until told by the minister of the First Baptist Church that Fort Macon State Park had a new job opening for a maintenance mechanic. Barry applied and got the job.

Prior to joining the Fort Macon staff, almost everything he did in some way prepared him for challenges he would face at the Park. As a child he loved to take things apart to see how they worked. He enjoyed

taking shop classes in high school, particularly woodworking and carpentry. At age sixteen he worked in a welding and pipe fitting shop. While attending college in Kansas he ran a picture frame shop. In industrial jobs, he frequently was able to adapt or modify machinery to make it run faster and more efficiently. From a love of automobiles, motorcycles, car shows and drag racing came the ability to repair, rebuild and restore almost any piece of machinery from automobiles to lawn mowers. From the many years with the water company came a knowledge of plumbing and repairing water systems.

Most of Barry's vast knowledge was self-taught. He was imbued with a natural curiosity to learn how things worked and the self-discipline to master the skills necessary to keep them working. Each new skill learned was seen as a challenge. Taking the sum of all these skills, he is someone who can say in all sincerity: "I can fix almost anything."

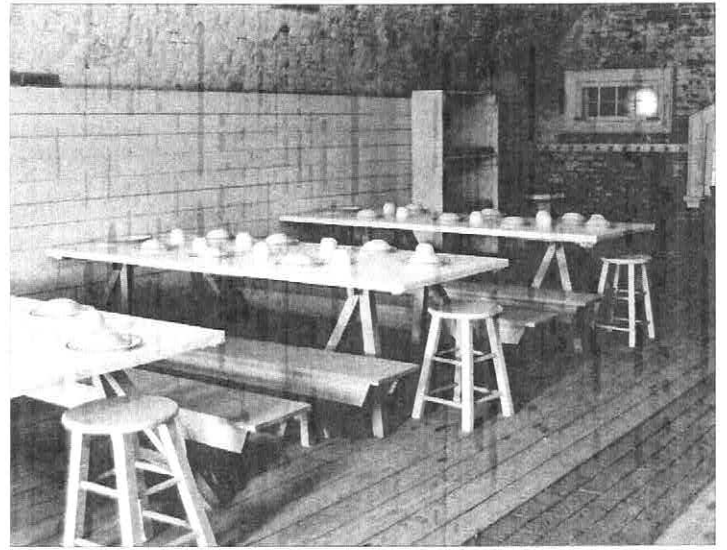
For more than two decades, Barry has used his many skills to keep Fort Macon State Park running. He was able to repair and maintain a fleet of park vehicles. He could take apart and rebuild the lawn mowers, weed eaters and maintenance equipment that kept the fort grounds, parking lots and roadsides trim and manicured. He made plumbing, electrical or carpentry repairs and modifications that kept park facilities up and running in service to park visitors. He was able to remodel and make additions to park buildings. He built cabinets, tables, chairs, donation boxes and bookcases for park facilities. He built a number of the park's exhibits,

restored rooms and displays. He was even called upon to build things for other parks. He could do almost any plumbing, welding, or construction the park needed. He designed the aluminum lifeguard stands used by the park lifeguards. He welcomed the challenge of unusual things such as repairing parts from a 140-year old Civil War musket; creating a replica gunpowder magazine door in the fort, complete with a functioning bronze lock; building a complete set of wood doors and panels for the fort restored rooms from scratch using copies of original drawings from the fort; or repairing the gun carriages of the fort's Civil War cannons.

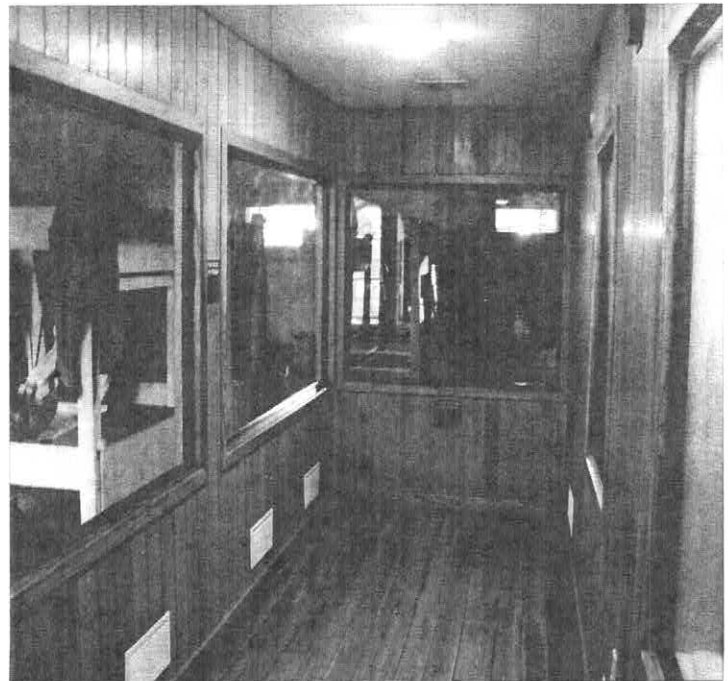
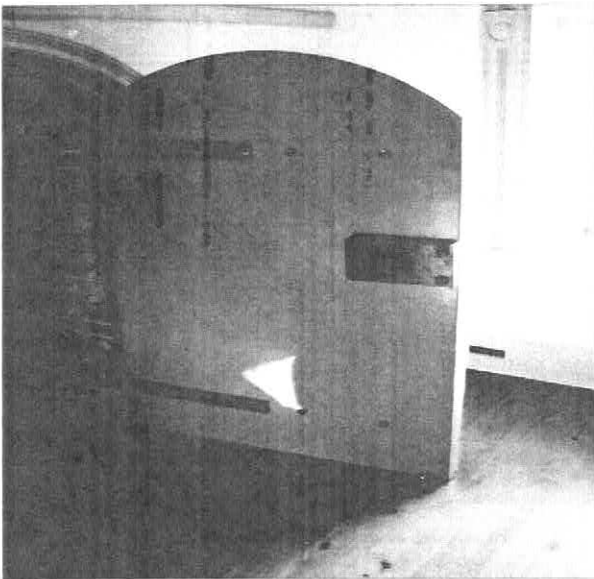
The endless diversity of working at Fort Macon has provided numerous challenges for Barry for more than two decades. However, when long-time Park Superintendent Jody Merritt announced his retirement earlier this year, Barry felt it was time for him to do likewise and move on to enjoy a new phase of his life. Barry and Jody retired together on August 31st.

For the future, Barry intends to enjoy life at a slower pace. He enjoys the company of his friends, the thrill of riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle, the hands-on work of repairing cars and motorcycles in his shop, the challenge of haggling at a swap-meet, and

the satisfaction of restoring old firearms and knives. Although his co-workers at the park wish him well and miss him, they have many, many reminders all around them by which to remember him and his work.



Tables, benches and cupboard in the restored kitchen are among the many items on display made by Barry

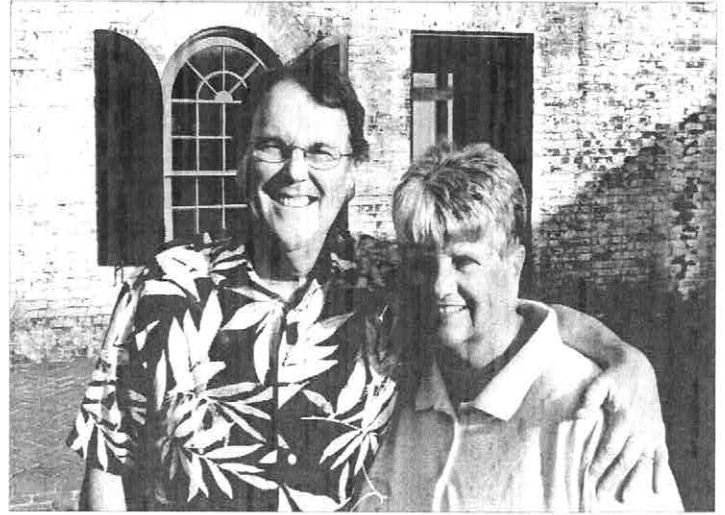


The magazine door and functioning lock (left) and the woodwork interior of the Enlisted Mens Quarters (right) also made by Barry Smith.

The 2009 Summer Concert Series Great Success Despite the Weather

The 2009 Friends of Ft. Macon Summer Concert Series was a great success this year despite having to dodge the weather more than usual. Two shows had to be cancelled and a third was run inside the casemates. At all the other shows the weatherman cooperated and we had between 650 and 750 people in attendance. In addition to the local regulars and Crystal Coast vacationers, we are attracting folks from little Washington and New Bern. The shows are a winning combination of great free entertainment and a chance to enjoy the beautiful views and atmosphere at Ft. Macon. There is no better way to spend a Friday evening in Eastern North Carolina.

The Friends again thank Randall Parker for his generous assistance in sponsoring the shows.



Tom Kelly and Maryann Molnar organize and host the Summer Concert Series.

Beaufort Celebrates 300 years



Bill Meserve 2009

Photograph courtesy of Bill Meserve

On Saturday, September 12th, the Friends were proud to participate in the parade held in Beaufort as part of Beaufort's 300th Anniversary celebration. The Carteret Grays provided a musical treat and members of the Friends Tour Guides enjoyed the ride.

Friends' Board of Directors Elections for 2010

The By-laws of the Friends of Ft. Macon provide that Officers and Directors of the organization be nominated and elected by the Board of Directors toward the end of each year for the following year. Persons interested in serving on the Board, or nominating an individual for a Board position, should contact the Board Secretary, Gwyn Towles at 728-7468. Information such as special qualifications and desire for serving in any particular role would be required.

There are eleven members of the Board—four officers and seven standing committee members. There is also an ex-officio group consisting of the immediate past President of the Friends, the President of the Carteret County Historical Society, the Superintendent of Fort Macon State Park, and one honorary member.

The eleven elected positions are as follows:

2009 Officers

President: Grayden Paul, Jr.
Vice-President: Tom Kelly
Secretary: Gwyn Towles
Treasurer: Paul Molnar

Standing Committees

Administrative Services
Finance
Membership
Programs
Publications
Publicity
Tour Guides

There are also numerous support functions and task assignments (such as distribution of brochures and bulk mailing, Website, special exhibits, summer concerts, *Ramparts*, and the ice cream social, to name a few). Those interested in getting more involved with the Friends' activities should contact Gwyn, and further information will be provided.

As is evident from this list of positions and tasks, the Friends play a very strong role in assisting with numerous activities in support of the Fort. With the opening of the new Education Center, our role, and the need for volunteers, will expand greatly.

Future Meetings & Speakers

The Friends meet at the Golden Corral in Morehead City on the 1st Wednesday of each month. Brief business meetings are followed by wonderful speakers. Be sure to put these meetings on your 2010 calendars.

January 6	Rodney Kemp, local historial and noted "fish house liar," The History Place
February 3	Jay Barnes, Director, North Carolina Aquarium, Pine Knoll Shores
March 3	Charles Carlton, Proferssor Emeritus, North Carolina State University
April 7	Richard Olsen, Curator, Aurora Fossil Museum
May	Annual Ice Cream Social



The Friends congratulate Jody Merritt for receiving this well deserved award.