

Whether you are a first-time visitor to this site or becoming a regular, welcome to our Ocracoke Island Newsletter.

Many of you have asked how the summer, 1999 hurricanes affected us on the island. Fortunately there was actually very little damage. Hurricane Dennis brought howling winds and high tides, however. I walked out to the school road during the height of the storm (I was looking for floating lumber to use to prop up a tree that was leaning precariously in the 85 mph wind). What a sight! The tide was rushing down the road towards highway 12. In short order the water was thigh-deep. Before long debris was floating all over. Several of the local fishermen launched their skiffs. It was quite a surprise to see Jesse Spencer cruising up the road in his boat!

Just a few people had tide in their homes, but trees suffered the most damage. On Howard Street, unfortunately, we lost both of the large elms on the western end of the street as well as several other cedars and at least one live oak. We were all relieved to see the ancient live oak in the parsonage yard still standing, and the east end of the street (near the Village Craftsmen) sustained the least damage to trees. When you visit again, however, be prepared for much more openness as you walk down Howard Street from the end near the Post Office.

Perhaps the biggest impact from the hurricanes was economic. Businesses were closed or virtually without customers for about four weeks during the busy early Fall. On the other hand, we had the beach all to ourselves, the water was warm and we found lots of scotch bonnets and other seashells.

Most of you know about the traditional Ocracoke dialect. Although my dad was born and raised on the island, he moved away when he was a teenager and I did not grow up hearing the brogue, except when we visited my grandparents in the summer every year. Visitors often ask about the dialect and are sometimes disappointed because they do not hear or recognize it when they are here. The reality is that many of the clerks, waiters and shopkeepers are originally from off the island. The dialect does survive however. I will be including some unique Ocracoke words and terms in this and coming newsletters. Keep your ears open next time you visit and you may be treated to a taste of genuine Ocracoke culture. Two suggestions, though:

Don't try to imitate the accent. You will fail and you will be perceived as silly by locals. Don't ask O-cockers (see below) to "talk" for you. It tends to annoy them!

**O-cock, O-cockers:** These terms are still used by local residents to refer to the island and the natives. Early maps show a gradual evolution of the name of the island from Wococon (a

native American term) through, Wococock, Ococock, Ocracock to Ocracoke. In the mid-1800's Ocracock was still a common spelling.

**Hoi Toide:** One of the most common vowel sounds on the Outer Banks is "oi" for "i." Listen carefully down by the trawlers or wherever local fishermen gather and you will often here this distinctive linguistic variation.

**Buck:** Equivalent to "pal" or "friend," this is one of the most common terms on Ocracoke. To my knowlege it is not used anywhere else, even on the other islands of the outer banks. I am told that the word "bach" is still used in Wales with essentially the same meaning. Buck is used as a way for men to address each other. Puck is the equivalent term used when men or women address women or children.

Nights on the island have been crystal clear. When we walk on the beach after dark the Milky Way seems to jump out of the sky. I can even count all seven of the major stars in the Seven Sisters constellation.

Days are beginning to warm up and the dolphins are plentiful. Looking north along the shore at mid-afternoon the sunlight behaves like an alchemist and turns the ocean into quicksilver.

Check back with us later for more news from the island. If you would like to be added to our e-mail list click [here](#) and type "add" in the subject area. We will let you know when we make additions to our newsletter.

Our best to you all,

Philip and the rest of the Village Craftsmen staff