

Already it is nearing the end of July! Summertime, of course, brings many people to Ocracoke for swimming, fishing, boating and just plain relaxing.

In addition to the regular appeal of a summer vacation on Ocracoke, July 4 has become a favorite time for many folks to come to the island to celebrate our nation's independence. This year our community again hosted a number of special events guaranteed to be remembered.

The day began with a flag raising ceremony at the Ocracoke school. Immediately afterwards the focus shifted to the "life guard" beach for our annual sand sculpture contest. As usual many outstanding artists joined the fun to create some spectacular entries. If you've never visited during this summer holiday you can only imagine the variety of unusual, but short-lived, creations.

Here are a couple of my favorites.

Reclining Beach Beauty



Sand Dragon



By mid-morning our attentions were turned to the heavens for the sky-diving demonstration by "The Herd." Then Ocracoke's favorite pirate, Blackbeard, came to life with a one-man show performed by Ben Cherry.

Throughout the day Jimmy's Garage hosted a classic car show and the National Park Service kept the Ocracoke Lighthouse open for public viewing.

In the mid-1950's, before tourism mushroomed on the island, local folks celebrated Independence Day with a funky, down-home parade that wound through the village on the narrow concrete road that the Navy had paved a decade earlier.

That tradition is kept alive with our present-day parade that boasts several dozen home-made floats and numerous off-beat costumes. The streets were lined with spectators, and businesses closed just to watch the parade.

Local fishermen protest Anheuser-Busch's policies to undermine commercial fishing:



Blackbeard is assisted by the USCG:



Patriotic bike riders abound:



Island themes predominate:



The day's festivities ended with a memorable fireworks display launched from the "ditch," the entrance to Silver Lake. Visible from anyplace you could see the sunset, it lit up the night sky with an impressive light show for the better part of an hour.

If you plan to visit the island next year during the July 4th holidays be sure to make reservations!

The rest of this month has been mostly hot and dry, a perfect time for a cooling dip in the ocean. But please remember to be careful when swimming in the ocean. Sadly, several people have drowned already on the Outer Banks this year. The National Park Service provides helpful information about rip currents that is available at the visitor's center and at the lifeguard beach. Please take a few moments to read it.

Until next time, all of the staff at Village Craftsmen send you our wishes for a wonderful summer and we hope to see you soon on the island.

Philip