

July Greetings from Ocracoke!

Ocracoke Island, as many of you know, is not simply a tourist resort. It is a thriving community with a history and a soul.

Recently, two events helped underscore how Ocracokers come together for our island, and our neighbors — [The Sigma Willis Memorial Scholarship Fund Pig Pickin'](#) and the [Ocracoke Adopt a Pony Program](#).

On June 28, 2003, Van O'Neal, Frankie Garrish, and Steve Mangus organized a wonderful outdoor community pig pickin' and pot luck dinner.

Islanders Visit & Laugh at the Pot Luck:



Surrounded by Van's eclectic collection of used and discarded tools, ancient trucks, and sometimes-working heavy equipment, islanders gathered to share news, tell stories and listen to local musicians.

Children play on Van's Converted WWII Truck:



A donation jar was set up on the makeshift food table for contributions to the Sigma Willis Memorial Scholarship Fund. Island native, Sigma Willis, who died in the Spring of 2002, had been a steadfast supporter of the Ocracoke Island Fishing Tournament. He was one of the original founders of the event, and served on the rules committee, and as judge.

Van & Friends Enjoy the Afternoon:



The Scholarship Fund was established by the Board of Directors of the Fishing Tournament. Each year a \$500.00 scholarship is awarded to a graduating Ocracoke senior to help defray college or university expenses.

Contributions are always welcome, and can be sent to:

The Sigma Willis Memorial Scholarship Fund
PO Box 703
Ocracoke, NC 27960

When my father, Lawton Howard, died just over a year ago, our family designated that half of the money contributed to his memorial fund be given to the US National Park Service specifically for the care and maintenance of the Ocracoke Pony herd.

My father's interest in the ponies continued a long family tradition of involvement with this unique part of island history. My grandfather, Homer Howard, and great-grandfather, James Howard, were both acknowledged as expert Outer Banks horsemen. My father's brother, Marvin Howard, started the Ocracoke Mounted Boy Scout Troop in the mid-1950's.

On July 1, Park Ranger Bill Caswell announced the beginning of the new "Ocracoke Adopt a Pony Program." Initiated with the money collected for my father's Memorial Fund, the program now allows interested persons to adopt an Ocracoke Pony for \$25.00.

A photograph album of island horses is on display at the National Park Service Visitor Center. Visitors to the Center can choose a favorite pony, fill out a brief application, and receive a handsome presentation folder with a photograph of their chosen pony, and an official certificate identifying their adopted horse.

On behalf of the Park Service, Bill presented me with the first certificate. It reads as follows:

Bonita Sorpresa:



Cape Hatteras National Seashore Adopt A Pony Program

Be it known to all that the holder of this certificate is the official adopted parent of

Bonita Sorpresa

Bonita Sorpresa or Pretty Surprise is a Bay Mare, and was born on Ocracoke Island in 1992. This is the first certificate in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Adopt a Pony Program. It is given to Philip Howard in memory of his father Lawton Howard, who was a life long advocate of the Ocracoke Ponies. Donations made to the Park's Pony Program in Lawton's memory were used to help start this program.

(Signed) Lawrence A. Belli

Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore

All donations are used to manage, care, feed, and protect the Ocracoke Ponies.

If you would like to adopt an Ocracoke Pony you can do so at the Ocracoke Visitors' Center, or you can mail your donation (\$25.00 + \$2.00 for shipping) directly to:

Bill Caswell
c/o US National Park Service Visitor Center
PO Box 568
Ocracoke, NC 27960