

Spring greetings from Ocracoke Island!

This afternoon as I write, Ocracoke is quiet and subdued. Clouds and gentle rain have settled over the island and a light breeze is blowing. As native O-cockers would say, it's "right airish." On the other hand, it is pleasantly warm and mild. A perfect day to settle down in a comfortable chair with a good book.

Recently, however, we have been blessed with several warm, sunny days—great times for a brisk walk on the beach.

Not long ago quite a lot of seaweed washed ashore. Tangled among the clumps of grass left behind at low tide were treasures from the sea.

Gifts from the sea:



Pictured above are two types of starfish that I found, as well as a large and a small scotch bonnet (the official North Carolina state shell), and two skate egg cases (as children we always referred to them as "devil's pocketbooks").

Of course, dolphins have been plentiful along the beach, as they usually are in the cooler months.

Visible in Pamlico Sound is even the carcass of a dead whale that tragically washed into the shallow waters several months ago during a strong blow.

Only a few days ago beachgoers were presented with another large object mired in the salty water—a 4-wheel drive vehicle. Jesse Spencer was able to pull it free from the soft "quicksand" but I understand it was considered "totaled" by the insurance company because salt water had flooded the engine and electrical system.

Last Saturday Ocracoke Preservation Society sponsored the 27th annual Community Litter Pick-up.

About 75 people gathered near the School at 9 am to pick up bags, gloves, pointed sticks and to find out where they would be working.

Getting our assignments:



In two hours we had filled about two hundred bags and taken several truck loads of litter to the trash trucks.

Relaxing beside a pickup truck full of trash:



By 11 o'clock most of us gathered for hot dogs, pasta salad, chips, drinks and cookies provided by Howard's Pub. The weather was sunny and warm, but not too hot, so we spilled out onto the back deck and into the yard for refreshment, relaxation, visiting and several good stories. A great time was had by all.

Lunch afterwards at the Wayfarer Hostel



As with so many Ocracoke activities the litter pick-up included all generations, from retirees to brownie scouts. Even a few dogs showed up.

All ages participate:

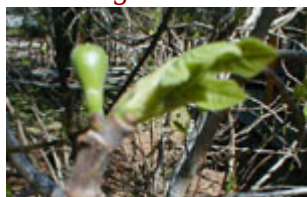


When we returned to our homes and businesses we were pleased to see our roadsides clean

and neat again. On your next visit to the island be sure to be extra vigilant so papers and cans don't blow out of your vehicle onto the roads or the beach. And if you see a stray piece of trash consider picking it up. If everyone picked up just a handful of litter every visit that would go a long way towards helping to keep Ocracoke clean and beautiful.

In the great cycle of life figs are again bursting forth all over the island.

New Fig & Leaf



By late summer, after the second crop of figs has ripened, island kitchens will be stocked with mason jars filled with sweet fig preserves. One of Ocracoke's most popular local delicacies is the dark, moist, and tasty fig cake. If you are lucky enough to come into possession of a jar of preserves you might want to try this traditional island recipe.

Ingredients: 1 cup salad oil; 1 1/2 cup sugar; 3 eggs; 1 tsp. soda, dissolved in a little hot water; 2 cups flour; 1 tsp. nutmeg; 1 tsp. allspice; 1 tsp. cinnamon; 1 tsp. salt; 1/2 cup buttermilk; 1 tsp. vanilla; 1 cup preserved & chopped figs (or dates, if you can't locate figs); 1 cup chopped nuts.

Beat 3 eggs; add sugar and oil. After sifting dry ingredients, add to egg mixture alternately with buttermilk. Add vanilla and fold in figs and nuts. Pour into greased oblong pan and bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or in a well greased tube pan at 350 degrees just a little longer.

Don't forget to mark June 9 on your calendars. This is the date of the "Ocracoke and Howard Street Festivals." A complete lineup of musicians, craftspeople, storytellers and good food will make this an event not to be missed.

For those of you planning a Spring visit to Ocracoke be sure to stop by Village Craftsmen and see some of the new items that are arriving almost daily. Click on "What's New" in the menu panel to the left to see a sampling of some of our most recent additions.

Until your next visit to the island, or our next newsletter, whichever comes first, our best to you all, and please stop by and say hello when you are on the Outer Banks.

Philip and the entire Village Craftsmen Staff