

The Transition

Of and For Former N.C. State Park Employees

March 2006

Issue No. 11

PLEASE READ! For a little while I'm updating this new version of The Transition and it doesn't have all the pictures or links working yet. This is not John's fault, it's just taking me a little time to get the time and get it right so please be patient. I'll get it all working soon. Thanks for your patience. Kevan Burnett

This issue of The Transition is almost a photo issue. Several events occurred since summer worthy of photographs. Several photographs are of special interest items, unrelated to current events but still special to those of us who spent many years with State Parks.

We missed many former employees at the Former Employee Reunion. We don't know when the next one will be, but we are hoping to make the reunion an annual event. We'll let you know of this year's gathering. We are open to suggestions for time and place. Let me or Leon Carter know of them.

Ginger and I have been taking Spanish at the local Community College since the beginning of last Fall. We really enjoy it but the commitment of time is huge. I don't know how Ginger managed to study for her elementary education-teaching certificate and take Spanish at the same time. She is much more adept at Spanish than me. She will complete her education to earn her teaching certificate this Spring. She should have no trouble finding a position this Fall!

Get in Touch and Stay in Touch!
John L. Sharpe

Events

Walt Gravley's retirement celebration was held on September 30 at Mount Mitchell State Park.

The restaurant lounge could not have held any more people. A fine barbecue lunch was enjoyed while the McDowell Family Band, a wonderfully talented bluegrass band, performed music. Walt received many gifts from his peers, including a hand carved plaque from Larry Milton and a carving of a black bear by famed carver David Boone.

Many, many retired and former state park employees were present.
Several folks had a good time roasting Walt as he sat in the hot seat.

Good Luck Walt!!



T.N.C.S.P.F.E.R.

The Third North Carolina State Parks Former Employee Reunion was a time of good fellowship and a chance to get reacquainted with old friends. Morrow Mountain State Park's renovated lodge served as the perfect location. Of course, perfect Fall weather helped out.

Leon and Annie Laura Carter, Phil and Barbara McCorkle, Tommy and Mary Wagoner, Judy Warren and sister Marge Hahn, Scott Daughtry, Mac Goodwin, Dave Burney, Larry and Linda Milton, Jim and Lois Billings, Oren and Lucy Hawkins, Howard Stewart and I enjoyed a great time of fellowship and fun. Of course, the food was again the best in the world! Barbara McCorkle won the correct pronunciation of T.N.C.S.P.F.E.R. contest with the most correct pronunciation (according to the rules committee judges).

It was good to see Dave Burney, who left the system in the early 80's and who now resides in Hawaii. Dave continues his professorship at Fordham University and he and Lyda are operating a farm propagating rare and endangered plants endemic to Hawaii.

Kenny McGrady's retirement luncheon was held on December 14 at the Community Building at Lake Norman State Park.

As reported by Leon Carter, 14 former employees with 3 spouses attended with a total of between 80 and 85 people present. Several of the West District Maintenance Mechanics came to honor their friend and peer. Lew Ledford didn't roast Kenny very long; payback is Hell! Ray Walker and Leon took up the slack in the roasting department. Kenny was as well done as the Barbecue!

The former employees who were in attendance were: Tom Wells, Walt Gravley, Thomas Sutton, Cecil Widener, Tommy and Helen Johnson, Phil McNelly, Tommy Wagoner, Scott Daughtry, Kevin McNaughton, Faye Hutchinson, Robert Skinner, Jay Wild, Jim and Lois Billings, and Leon and Annie Laura Carter.

Good Luck Kenny!



Mike Seigh's retirement party celebrated the career of a dedicated State Parks employee.

The party was held at the Y.M.C.A. summer camp near Wake Forest. The camp is a very unique and appropriate setting for a state park employee's send off. Many former and current employees honored Mike with a great turnout. The American Red Cross gave Mike their greatest award for saving a life at the State Fair.

Mike was placed in the hot seat and it wasn't long before he was sweating. We will never know whether he was sweating because of what was said or what might be said!

Good Luck Mike!



News Updates

Tommy Wagoner writes (1-26-06):

“Mary had some female surgery on Friday, came home Sunday and is feeling fine. I’m going back to Biloxi, MS (Mary and I both went in Dec.) on a Methodist work team on Feb. 5 for a week. Couldn’t remember if I had told you that before. Know how the memory is. Also, I saw Faye Hutchinson at Kenny McGrady’s retirement party and she retired also. I didn’t know that. Don’t have the info on her and probably won’t get it for

Kenny. Anyway, hope you, Ginger and Journey are doing great and watch out for the wire taps. King George is watching us all!"

Robert Skinner reports (10-30-05):

"I was sorry I missed Walt's retirement but Patsy and I were away. We always have something planned ahead. I am going to my moms in Edenton this morning to spend a few days. She had an implant lens put in her eye on Friday and cannot see very well yet. On Friday Patsy and I are going to Phila. To visit her son and granddaughter. Expecting another in January. On Monday we will head back to Alexandria for a few days and take the tram to Washington everyday to the museums. We have a scheduled tour of the White House on Tuesday. Take care."

Alan Eakes writes, via Carter (11-4-05):

"All is well at our new digs is Charlotte. As you heard, we moved to be near our new (5 months) and only grandchild. Our daughter Kirstin had to return to work after three months of leave so we decided that we could provide childcare for them. We watch little "Hall" Ashford IV on Wed., Thurs. and Friday. It's a real treat for us albeit somewhat tiring (wild horses couldn't keep us from doing it).

"I'm sorry I missed the special award for Mr. E. I was aware that it would be given but couldn't get out of commitments here. Same goes for the reunion at Morrow Mountain.

"I still get e-mail at the old address but have a new one that I'm gradually getting to folks (eakes@neusewoods.com) our new mailing address is 753 Brockbank Road, Charlotte, NC 28209. New home phone is 704 522 3975. Keep in touch. Hope all is well with you and your family."

Karl Zorowski lets us know (9-8-05):

"Thank you for the latest "Transition". I miss my days with Parks, but I'm greatly enjoying my new life as a pastor. It's hard to believe I've been in full-time ministry for over a year – God has been good to me and my family. Aspen is now almost 18 months old and has graduated from walking to running – she certainly keeps Cheryl and me in shape! We live out in the country in Columbus County, just south of Whiteville. Visitors are always welcome!

"I wish I could be there for the reunion on October 15, but I will be conducting my first wedding that day. Hopefully, I can make the next one. Give my best to everyone there.

"P.S. Glad to hear your wife is doing better"!

Mike Cavin reports (10-4-05):

"Hello Friends, and greetings from the Arctic. Just want to give you my new e-mail. The first part "laaquada" is the same, but instead of yahoo, it is now gmail: laaquada@gmail.com .

"Hope this note is finding y'all doing well. Winter is fast approaching. Ponds are covered with ice, the last of the Sandhill Cranes migrated out of here about two weeks ago, and we just weathered our first major storm of

the year. Other than that, not too much is happening up here. Still see a few musk ox passing through from time to time, and a dead walrus washed ashore the other day, but that's about it. You know, same 'ol, same 'ol. "I have been keeping track of the hurricanes that you have been having the best I can. Without television; I only get bits and pieces of info. Hope none of you had any damage from your winds and rains! I hope all of you have a good winter!" "Take care and thanks for including me in the loop." "Mike"

Dave Lattimore writes (10-14-05):

"Thanks for the reminder, [of the reunion] John. I thought I might actually be able to attend this year but then the hurricanes came along-just returned from 33 days on an IMT in Louisiana and I'm just too worn out to travel. Really grim down there – in a lot of ways even worse in Mississippi – spent some time flying the area in a helicopter – just amazed at how miles of homes were just flattened. Eerie to drive in east New Orleans – blocks and blocks of abandoned houses and businesses with no one there, except at night when the place turns into some kind of night of the living dead scene – no one there, except at night unless you are with friends with lots and lots of guns. "Last Transition was great – had it forwarded to the command post I was working in, good diversion for a bit. Glad your wife is doing well."

Joe Franklin writes (12-17-05):

"We took a driving vacation out West Oct. 4th to Oct. 29th. Visited my sisters, one is Loveland, CO and one in Tucson, AZ. We drove 6,400 mi. (WOW!) and saw some really big country, even went to Roswell, NM – a very interesting place. Went to Bush's ranch in Crawford, TX but they weren't at home. Ha! One of the highlights was riding the Durango to Silverton steam train; 3 ½ hours each way with some gut tightening rails on a ledge about 300' above the canyon river below. I caught some cutthroat trout above 9'000 feet in a beautiful nat'l forest in CO. And Pat and I golfed at 6600' in Durango. A golf ball really flies good in that thin air. Also got a real desert course in Tucson – just like it looks on TV – lots of sand and cactus with a few green spots. I could write many pages on things we say but I'll spare you for now. One thing I wanted to share is that I found John (Barnett) & Carol's ranch. I knew the towns Silver Cliff and Westcliffe (that's how they spell 'em) but nothing more specific. Remembering Carol's art interest we stopped at an art gallery in Silver Cliff and sure enough the ladies there knew John & Carol and had a rough idea of where they had lived. They had heard it was up for sale and directed us to a realtor. With his directions we found the ranch (40 acres) about six miles to the southwest. This was in the Wet Mountain Valley with Sangre de Cristo Range to the east. The valley is approx. 10 miles wide and mostly grassland. Their ranch was partly in the flat grassland

and partly in the area that starts rising into evergreen/aspen terrain as you can see in the photo. The peaks in the photo are over 13,000'. Their ranch is about 8000'. It is a beautiful place. I've always regretted not getting out there to see them. It was a promise kept late.

"Hope that you have a pleasurable Christmas season and that Santa's good to both of you."

[I too wish that I had visited John and Carol on their Ranch. I will keep my promise to visit there as well, Joe]



[Click picture for larger image](#)

Cedric Squires reports (12-20-05):

““Com. Istar Senior Sharpe”, That’s about all the Spanish I can remember from my one semester of freshman Spanish – and I feel sure my grammar and spelling lacks a great deal to be desired. And I thank you for your letter of 12-15-05. It was a warm surprise.

“Actually, when one considers my lofty age, I’m really in surprisingly good health. My only slight physical defects are my left ear functions at only about $\frac{3}{4}$ power and my vision is about “20/30”. After I broke my life long record of not even having spent a night in a hospital and two nights in a near by hospital because of an irregular heart beat (a condition I’ve had on a lesser scope since age 6), I am back to feeling just as good as a “groan” person.

“Me and the other two dogs are hale and happy and if I feel the need to converse with a human type being, I now have my 51 years old son and his fine wife living just next door up the hill.

“Although you are considerably behind my lofty years, I admire your nerve in taking a ‘foreign’ language. I am afraid languages were a tough mountain for me to climb back in my “school days”. I crawled through two college semesters taking Spanish and the above salutation is about as far as I can stumble.

“John, I think your efforts to draw some of our State Park retired employees together is a noble effort. I only wish I were not such a stick in the mud when it comes to travel. But after receiving orders- NOT TO DRIVE – from my doctor, I had to pay heed to the “old pill roller”. Having “No Wheels” is a harsh order to follow especially since I have a near new pickup truck and a three year old Buick LeSaber parked in my

carport and being directed "NOT TO DRIVE", came as quite a shock to my ego! I pray I will be able to pass my driving tests in the future after I have had a chance to study my driver's manual. Not being passed on my last driving test (my actual driving test was O.K. but my written test I flunked pretty badly.

"To the best of my memory, this was the first test I have ever just plain failed. I guess at 81 and 8/12 's I am really fortunate to still be able to do most anything I could do 20 years ago. I know a number of people, my age, who have some difficulty remembering where they live and one poor soul, age 84, who is unsure who he is --- oh my!

"Like the old fellow who was shaking hands with his preacher, after the sermon and was praising his preacher on such a good sermon. The old fellow said, "preacher, your sermon was uplifting, inspiring, and very thought provoking! "I really felt like a new man after I woke up."

"Warm best wishes to you and yours throughout the holidays and New Year!

"I have no problem turning the "word flow" on – but shutting it down is another matter".

Scott Daughtry writes, via Mike Seigh (3-20-06):

Hello Mike, It is always so good to hear from an "old friend." Ain't retirement great, Just never enough time. I have hear of others working part time, I just have not been able to face that ugly possibility, so far. I have however, gone back to school. I enrolled in the community college Residential Construction Certification Program. I am getting hands on exp. in masonry, electrical, framing, plumbing, and HVAC. I decided that I could do more for people in disaster areas if I had better skills. This is a 8-5 M-F class so it will keep me tied up till mid April. During spring break we spent a week at Winter place skiing. It was great, we practically had the place to ourselves.

We spent most of Jan. in Arkansas and S. C. playing with grandchildren. You know I have a brand new granddaughter named Zoe. Every time they put one of those grandchildren in my arms I am convinced that it is the most important thing that I have ever been a part of.

I am going to Lowland this weekend with my duck hunting buddies "The Gun and Glass Club" for some over eating, serious lying and a few adult beverages. I am also going to take child care training from the Baptist Men's disaster relief program the last weekend in this month in Sanford so I will be certified in mass feeding, recovery, and childcare. In April I am going to the Ranger Skills class to talk to some new Rangers, you know that I am loving that. I have the local Shrine fish fry on the 7th and I am marching with the Shrine "animated Animals" in the Shad festival on the 8th. Tom, sometimes they let me be the Wolf, but mostly I am the Pig.

Janet and me are going to Gulfport Easter week on a feeding team, and back again for a week in May on a construction team. We have reserved a cabin at MOMO in May for a camping trip with the twins. Janet has been asked to do her basket thing at a big festival in High Point called Celebrate our State in June. After that we are going on another cruise to Alaska for a couple of weeks. Back in time for the 4th at the Eno. and in Aug. we are going on a mission trip to Montana for a week. We plan to drive and spend several extra weeks looking at some of the local attractions like Yellowstone, the Black Hills and so on. In between all of this is the beach, garden, fishing and the grandkid's.

There is just not enough time, but the good Lord has certainly blessed me with a lifetime of good friends and I sure do miss seeing them all. But thanks for letting me know how you are doing and what's going on in your life. I may send this to Lewis, Tom H., Susan, Tommy, Howard, Judy, Cliff, John S. and some others in hopes that they to will have a few minuets to let us know how and what they are doing.

Hope to see you real soon,
your "Old Friend Scott"

Mike Seigh received the highest award that the American Red Cross gives to those who exhibit exceptional performance in saving a life.

What award could mean more than one for saving another person's life?
Congratulations Mike!



[Click picture for larger image](#)

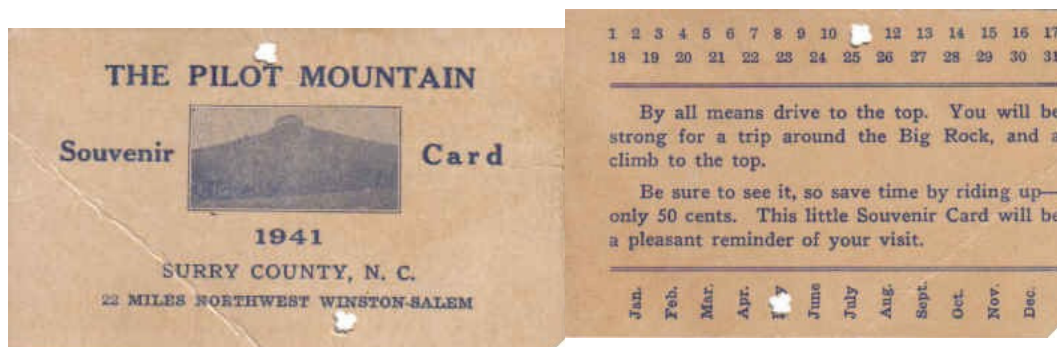
Items of Special Interest

This photo was taken at the 1984 Superintendent's Meeting at the Yorkshire Center.



Click picture for larger image

Andy Whittaker sent the photos of the Pilot Mountain entrance ticket before it became a State Park and was a privately owned park.
 At the time of the ticket Pilot Mountain had a large swimming pool and a dance hall with live music on weekends as well as the roadway to the summit.
 Thanks Andy!



This photo of Clyde “Hoppy” Hopson and his wife Geraldine was provided by Oren Hawkins
 and was taken on the day of Hoppy’s retirement from being a ranger at Mount Mitchell State Park in the early 1980’s.



[Click the picture for a larger view](#)