Statement of Theodore Stockton Midgett 7/2/10 – Tape recorded interview and statement taken by Beth Midgett

Questions are asked by Beth Midgett of Hatteras NC, answers are from Theodore Stockton Midgett
He was born in Rodanthe NC in 1928 and he and his brothers operated the Hatteras Manteo Bus line from 1938-1965

Q. When you ran the bus line and you traversed the area of Pea Island National Wildlife refuge, did you use just one way of getting through there? Did you have one dedicated roadway that you used? Or how did you traverse that area the 13 miles or so of the refuge? What paths did you take, were you limited to one? Did you ever have fish and wildlife try to limit you to one way of using the refuge?

A. No, we did not just use one way. We used whichever way was best for the particular day and weather and most of the time that was inside of the dune line going through Pea Island, but as one of my drivers has often said, we took route 1001 which is a hundred and one different ways.

Q. As far as the paths that ran through there, the sand paths, or I understand that there were areas that there were mats that were laid down to do some crossings if need be on the dunes and there were some bridged areas that were done in later years through the refuge before the road went in. Who was involved in building those and who was involved in maintaining that roadway a little bit more than just driving over it? We people actually trying to make it an easier trip for you in certain spots?

A. Yes, there were quite a few improvements made from time to time which I always thought it was done by the WPA workers and some of the CC workers. There were bridges built, three bridges crossed over new inlet which led through Pea Island and there were ramps crossing some of the dunes that were made by the wildlife refuge. Whatever was needed to do, was done through either the PWA or the national park service or other workers, local, or other workers that might help.

Q. So improvements were made and many roads were used in plain sight of USFWS management and also Department of interior management? Nobody ever made a move to stop you and in fact they may have even assisted in some cases. Is that correct?

A. That is absolutely correct in fact, we had fish and wildlife and national park service people who rode the bus daily with us, no doubt everybody was familiar with Ben Dixon Mac Neal who lived in one of the park service houses at Buxton, he was quite a frequent rider and there were not many days he wasn't with us. But nobody ever asked us or told us where to go, or how to go, or when to go. So we decided ourselves which way to get there.

Q. I realize that, if I understand correctly, that the bus line was franchised in 1938 and that's when you said you started running the buses with your family, brothers. They used station wagons to start with is my understanding but before 1938, 1938 you would have been 10 years old, do you remember riding through Pea Island on any of these roads up to the ferry at Oregon Inlet?

A. Oh yes in fact I started driving the bus quite a bit when I was 10 years old, I didn't drive the full trip sometime, but I filled in as a relief driver and with my brothers but I started when I was around 10 years old, and as everybody used to say, he always had to sit on a pillow either that or look through the steering wheel. But I managed to drive it and drove it quite frequently and I have had help from the park service and help from the fish and wildlife and I've also helped them several times.

Q. When you said you've had help, you've had help from them maybe when the bus was stuck or when did you have help from them as far as with the bus line?

A. It was more or less everybody helped everybody else. If we were stuck, the passengers would get out and push and also if a park ranger came along, he would help and everybody had to help one another because it wasn't a freeway to travel in other words you had to depend on your neighbors and your friends to help.

Q. Would you say in your experience did more vehicles move off the North end of the Island from Hatteras Island or did they cross they ferry from Hatteras over to Englehard. Which was the route that most people took if they needed to go about their public business or get off the Island?

A. Well, back from '38 on more people used the northern end of the Island which was much easier to travel across the ferry than it was to have to have your car slid on or lifted onto just an old freight boat. Which they could only carry about three cars so therefore as time come on why more people used the roads everyday.

Q. Prior to 1938 when the bus line was established do you remember traveling northward from your home in Rodanthe through the Refuge by vehicle and getting on the ferry up there?

A. Several times, in fact, my daddy had a truck that he had someone to operate that helped build some of the roads in through the refuge and I traveled with my Dad, as you know I was quite young at that time but I remember traveling with him several times.

Q. and your father passed away in 1938 correct?

A. That is correct.

Q. As far as the busses themselves, and the station wagons, that type of thing, were they regulated or permitted in any way to travel through the refuge or did

the refuge ever do inspections as far as safety inspections or did you have to have a special piece of paper to go through there or anything like that?

A. No there were no regulations at the time, we did not have to have even any license on the busses nor neither did I have any driver's license. I never was stopped until after I was 16 years old.

Q. it's my understanding from your brother Anderson that you delivered mail to the Pea Island Coast Guard Station and also the Oregon Inlet station that you actually delivered things to those stations?

A. Oh yes, I delivered mail and picked up things for the members of the Coast Guard, in fact I sometimes even had lunch with them and also at Pea Island, which was one of the friendlier stations on the Island which was all colored at that time, they traveled with me quite a bit back and forth, and they were always welcomed and we were always welcomed into their station and they were always glad to help anyway possible.

Q. Did you deliver mail, if I remember, you've said you delivered mail further down the island in later years. Do you remember round abouts what you did as far as mail service delivery before the road went in?

A. Oh yes, before the road went in, we had the mail franchise and we delivered to each and every post office on the Island as well as we would drop mail off to some of the Coast Guard Stations and we picked up packages for the people at the Coast Guard Stations. Also, we delivered a daily newspaper which was the Virginian Pilot from the starting of the bus line until ended the bus line and that was the daily news coming into the whole Island.

Q. Would it be a truthful statement to say, that the entire traveling public whether it's your bus line, whether it was freight trucks, whether it was passenger vehicles that they all traversed Pea Island over whatever path went, that they used that as their method to reach the north end of the island and the ferry?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. So you had a bus line that made at the very least daily trips, in later years two trips a day, on a regular route for close to 35 years, 25 of which, a quarter of a century, you ran the bus without a paved road, but with full traveling rights wherever you needed to go on the Island as conditions warranted?

A. Oh Yes, that is correct, every day, no one ever tried to stop us.

Q. How did you know when someone needed picked up? Did you have regular bus stops?

A. Yes, people knew what time we normally would come through and they'd be out by the road. Also, when we came up to areas where we knew people would normally be, we would honk our horns. People just knew.

Q. So did you consider your bus line to be public transportation of the Island?

A. Oh yes, we were the only public transportation on the Island up to Manteo. There were private cars, and they sometimes could have problems in the sand, most folks didn't have four wheel drive, it was expensive and we knew how to drive.

Q. You said you would connect with another bus line up the beach?

A. Yes, we worked with the Virginia Dare bus line which ran from Norfolk to Manteo we would take people back and forth to connect with them on a a regular schedule.

Q. So it would be a truthful statement that your Hatteras Manteo bus line traveled up and down the Island from 1938 to 1965 on a regular daily schedule...continuous, every month, day in and day out, season after season and before the road was put in, you traveled through the refuge lands by whatever road of the many to choose from with no limitations?

A. That is absolutely correct.

In summary, I, Theodore Stockton Midgett personally attest to the fact that my brothers and myself ran the Hatteras Manteo bus line which served the traveling public on the Island for over 35 years. My father franchised the business is 1938 because he saw the opportunity for a viable business in the amount of vehicular traffic that was traversing the Island after the ferry began to run at Oregon Inlet. I am proud that we provided this valuable service to our Island and it's visitors for 35 years. A public thoroughfare definitely existed before 1938 through what became the refuge area and continued right up until the paved road was built. Our bus line and the traveling public openly used the roads throughout the refuge without restriction and improvements were made by the government to accommodate and ease our use of the non-paved roads.

This information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge information and belief under the penalties of perjury.

T. Stockton Midgett

North Carolina
Dare County

I Katherine Ruth Price a notary public of Dare County, N.C., certify that T. Stockton Midgett

Personally appeared before me this day, and being duly sworn, stated that in his presence T. Stockton Midgett (signed)

(Acknowledged the execution of) the foregoing instrument.

Witness my hand and official seal, this the 6 Day of July 2010.

Notary Public My commission expires 12/21/2013 2013

KATHERINE RUTH PRICE
NOTARY PUBLIC
DARE COUNTY, NC
My Commission Expires 12-21-2013

Statement of Anderson Midgett 7/2/10 – Tape recorded interview and statement taken by Beth Midgett

Born in Rodanthe NC, Operated the Hatteras Manteo Bus line from 1938-1965

Q. Speak to me about the creation of the bus line and why it was created? Why it was needed at that time?

A. My daddy and his son Stockton Harold Midgett started the bus line July 28th 1938 and we ran that bus line for 35 years until after the bridge was built in 1963 and we continued to run it until 1965 I believe. We traveled up all through where the refuge is, across the ferry at Oregon Inlet, proceeded on into Manteo making one round trip each day. We had no roads as such so you went anywhere you could make a track and gradually build your own roads. You traveled on dirt all the way through the refuge through the whole island and the first highway you saw was when you got to what they called the whalebone right outside of Manteo just a few miles. I am sitting at my table talking with Beth who is trying to get information from me concerning what I know about transportation on the island. I can tell you there was transportation long before that up through the refuge because all the coastguard, my daddy included, was traveling that way. Toby Tillet had a ferry going across Oregon inlet that was taking cars, some of the ferries were like 3 to 4 cars some finally got to 7 or 8 cars. Then the state took the ferry service over and we still ran with no highway down. The first highway we got down on Hatteras island was in '54 and that was put in from Hatteras to Avon then they gradually got us connected on up into Manteo. But I can tell you straight out that there were all kinds of roads through the refuge, sometimes after they built the dykes we had certain places we went over because they cut ditches along them but they left places for transportation to go over. I'd be glad to tell you anything I can Beth if you have any other questions.

Q. You said that you would use the back side of the dune line to make whatever track you needed until it would become established and then you can use it with regular frequency, is that what most of the people did who drove up through there? Were they using your tracks or were they creating their own tracks? The other question would be… I would assume if this was going on it was right out in the open nobody was trying to disguise the fact that they were using the refuge and it was right in front of any fish and wildlife or any people that were out there?

A. You are correct on that there were a lot of different tracks, a lot of times they all led into one in certain areas depending on how the beach was and if a track got too bad, then you moved over and built your other tracks. Now sometimes we went up the surf on low tides, but I always stopped into Pea Island Coast Guard Station to put the mail off and Oregon Inlet to put the mail off so I was on the inside most of the time right in that area. Besides we had bridges that we went over in the beginning of our run, right South of Pea Island Coast Guard Station which was right in the middle of the Refuge so we crossed those bridges and then we hit old dirt roads the rest of the way. Now there were some of those roads that were put in there by the WPA and they put sand and mud and built them

up a little in between the bridges so all of this was in what they called the refuge at the time.

Q. Are you aware whether or not the refuge workers themselves were ever involved in any type of road building or bridge building or I think you had referred to brush bridges where they had laid brush that type of thing?

A. As far as I know, they did not do any road building except putting a few things over the dykes at a later date. They had built dykes up and there were some of those put over. But they were doing a lot of dyking and cutting and building for the geese and ducks and waterfowl. But as far as doing any road building in them, they drove the roads just like everybody else.

Q. So it would be a truthful statement to say that really until the highway went in through Pea Island, that multiple roads existed weather dependent and condition dependent, dependent what the conditions were on the ground and that's how people were transported, it was only after the highway went in that you were narrowed to one way up and through Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge?

A. That is so right. Everybody was driving it, it wasn't only the bus line they had mail trucks, freight truck, they had trucks bringing supplies in that were going up and down there one and two times a week, but often. There were cars every day going.

Q. Just to make clear, in your experience once a day for many years and sometimes twice a day once it got into the latter years of the line as you went through Pea island refuge there was never any move by any public official to limit or to block your access by limiting it to just one path or one way of getting through the refuge.

A. That is correct. No one ever stopped me for ever driving on the beach of any place, anywhere, through the refuge or otherwise while I was operating the bus line.

Q. I think you said your preferred method of driving, or the way you normally drove through Peas Island was behind the dune line and not on the beach is that correct?

A. That is correct. Normal driving I was driving back of the dune most of the way because I was making stops at Pea Island and also Oregon Inlet Coast Guard.

Q. and where was the Pea Island Coast Guard Station? Where about now physically would it have been in the refuge?

A. Right where the refuge buildings are today sitting on that hill.

Q. So to deliver goods I remember you saying that Charlie Williams had a freight or delivery service that he ran up through the same area through Pea Island in open use for many years.....if you could touch upon that, what you recall, of him doing and the

number of times you would see him in Pea Island during a week and just what you remember of him.

A. Mr. Williams provided a service that brought most of the food to the Coast Guard Stations and beyond on down to the stores on the Island that he picked up in Norfolk and brought in through the wildlife refuge to Oregon Inlet Station, Pea Island Station, Chicamicomico Station, on down the beach and this was done a couple times a week that this service was run. He was running in the same area the bus was.

Q. Was it for hire?

A. He sold the vegetables and all the meats and everything to the Coast Guard, he had most of them on order from the Coast Guard.

Q. As far as the bus line itself went you had a franchise license and I would work on the assumption you had a state inspection just like you would have to do just like any vehicles do.

A. Well, they didn't have state inspections at that time.

Q. Ok, if you could explain if there was ever any move to do any inspections or licensing, or did you ever have to present any special papers to USFWS or Department of Interior anything like that for using the Pea Island Area?

A. No I never did have to present anything to the Fish and Wildlife or to the pea island, the game refuge or any of those because it was our busses what was inspected by the state who would send out people with cameras and follow you for a certain ways and check on how everything was and you did most of your inspections yourself that was before inspection days in North Carolina.

Q. As the Seashore was being developed in the forties and fifties, the transition into Cape Hatteras National Seashore what do you recall about those times? Were there public meetings that were here on the Island? Were there public meetings in Manteo? Or other areas that you may have transported people to? Or that you attended? Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the development of the Seashore and how people found out about the development of the Seashore?

A. In answer to your question, there were meetings held in different places I attended a number of them, and I also drove the bus with loads of people all that we could carry on them to Raleigh, Elizabeth City, Manteo and different things that they would have on the Seashore, because everybody did not know just what was going on, we were promised so much that there would always be open beach for all people, the natives could always have fishing rights on it, hunting rights, by Conrad Worth who was then the Secretary of the Interior. In these meetings we were just promised so many things that never did take shape now the question was bout the roads, we knew that with things coming the way they were that someday there would be roads on the Island, it was just a matter of getting

the right Governors and the right people working towards it which for some reason, I don't know just how they expected to get people down if they weren't going to have open roads for them and roads, which I cannot quite understand how anyone could assume that with all the transportation up across through the wildlife refuge that there was ever anyone stopped that I know of by the fish and wildlife concerning their transportation across part of the Island.

Q. Mr. Anderson we have a photo album of all sorts of photos of the bus line and newspaper articles that were written through the years about the history of the bus line and just looking at and flipping through it want to make sure since we are submitting it, other than the newspaper articles and taking into consideration that sometimes the press takes liberty, is the basic history and the basic pictures and the various people involved does it fairly accurately reflect the history of the bus line

A. Yes it does, most of this is starting at a later date then when the bus line started, but these are all pictures back in the 50's and this bus line was started in '38 which you didn't have too many pictures of things back then.

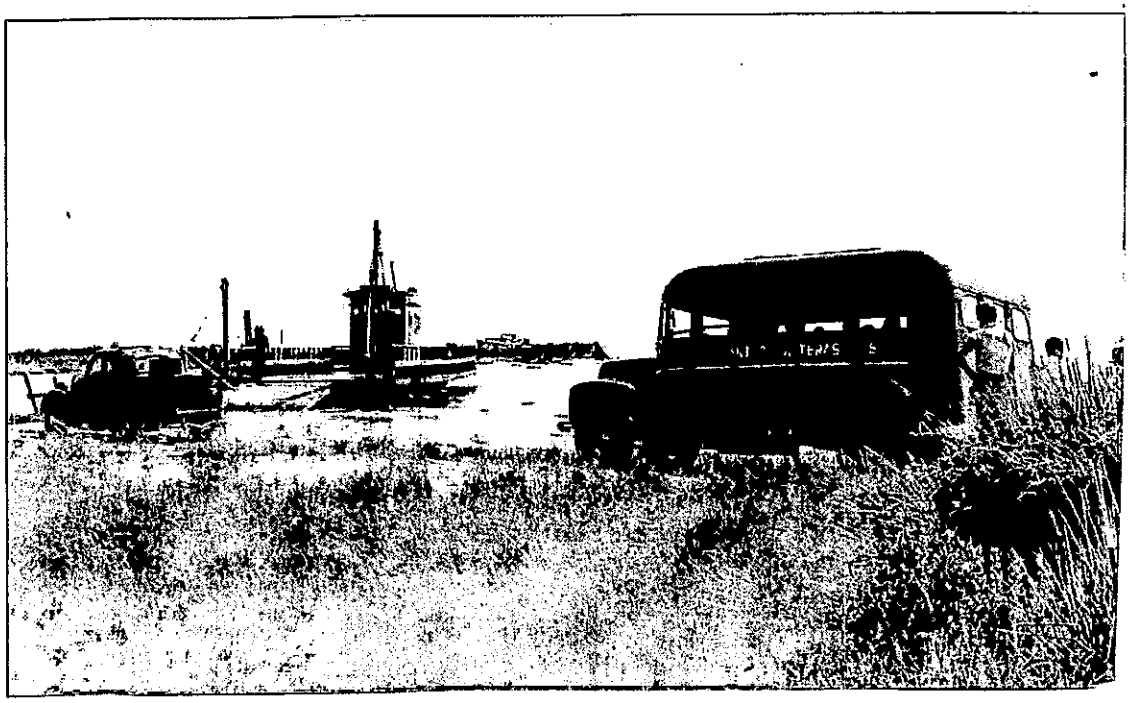
7-7-2010

Anderson Midgett

Signed before me this 7th day of July 2010.

Susan M Austin
Notary Public

Rough, Tough, Sea-Going Bus Line



eras/Manteo Bus waits in board Capt. Toby Tillett's ry at Oregon Inlet around D. The ferry ran the route between Bodie Island and eras Island for more than 25 years.

URTESY OF THE OUTER BANKS HISTORY CENTER

Motoring through sand and surf

Joe Tennis
ff writer

he wildest bus ride

HATTERAS — Some passengers lled it the wildest bus ride in nerica.

The drivers — ages 12 to 15 — unced over sand dunes and uised through surf. They drove rough water in the Pamlico Sound d the winds of hurricanes.

And sometimes the bus got stuck.

But somehow, drivers always ade it to their destinations: downwn Manteo and Hatteras village.

The rough $2.50 ride on the Hatras-Manteo Bus Line took 5½ urs on good days. The bus would ave Hatteras at 8 a.m. and arrive Manteo at 1:30 p.m., then turn round for a return trip.

The Midgett clan of Hatteras operated the line from 1938 to 1973. It was started by ex-Coast Guard member Theodore Stockton Midgett. And it was run, seven days a week, by his sons, Anderson, Harold and Stocky.

Today, Anderson and Stocky Midgett run a real estate company in Hatteras. But they have long memories of a wild and crazy three decades of zigzagging around an island with few — if any — roads.

"It was all sand roads on the bare beach," Stocky Midgett, 64, recalled. "You had sand trails. And we took 'Route 101' — there was a hundred and one different ways to get there. Some days we'd go through without getting stuck. Some days you'd get stuck several times."

And on some days, they had to beware of quicksand, said Anderson Midgett, 68.

In the '30s, wooden tracks lined the sand for a couple of miles between Avon and Buxton. Sometimes the bus line would ride on the tracks. More often, the drivers simply drove over the hardest packed sand they could find.

That wasn't always possible. Stocky Midgett recalled: "Sometimes you'd be near the ocean. And sometimes you'd be in the sound. And sometimes in the ocean."

To cross Oregon Inlet, they rode a ferry operated by Van Henry O'Neal until the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge was completed in 1963.

Riding the line was nearly a necessity if you lived on the island: Few Hatteras Islanders had cars.

Stocky Midgett reckoned that before the road was paved from one end of the island to the other in the 1950s, 90 percent of the island's residents rode the bus.

All told, salt water, overheating and broken springs burned out about 45 buses, Stocky Midgett said. "We would have to replace them before we got them paid for."

Stocky Midgett said the brothers' knowledge of the island was an advantage behind the wheel.

"We were raised in the sand," he said. "And there's not many grains of sand on this island that my brother and I haven't had in our hands at one time or another."

TIPS FROM THE PROS

- Take some air out of the tires. It gives the tire a bigger "footprint" and thus more traction.
- Follow the tracks of others.
- Carry a shovel to dig yourself out.
- Bring a chain in case you need to be towed out or to tow out someone else.
- Don't spin your wheels when you first get stuck. You may just dig yourself into a hole. Instead, rock: Drive forward a little, then back a little. Repeat until you can roar away again.

Photos courtesy of the Midgett Collectio

Above, a carload of passengers try to push their way out of sandy rut on Hatteras Island in the 1950s. Below, Stockton Midgett lets air ou of a tire of his bus before starting a run.

MANTEO HATTERAS BUS

HATTERAS BUS CO.

RENDERS PEOPLE A GREAT SERVICE

Few Have Undergone Greater Hardship to Develop Business Than These Boys

Beginning in 1938 with a Ford station wagon, in ten years the Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line has worn out 30 vehicles, and came near wearing out three brothers. But being young men, they have stuck to the job, and are beginning now to see daylight ahead.

The Midgett brothers, Harold, Anderson and Stockton, Jr., operate this bus route over seventy five miles of sandy going. Sometimes it is a question if the sea will get them before the tough sand trails tear up their bus. For it is often necessary to drive along the surf, and sometimes flood tide creeps in unawares. Then it is a furious and swift attempt to get boards under the wheels and crawl to the bank.

Back in 1938 the late Stockton Midgett of Rodanthe believed the day was coming when a bus line would be profitable. He saw it badly needed, for the people had grown weary of battering their way ten hours to Manteo in a slow and suffocating mail boat, equipped only with pine board seats and no comforts and essential conveniences.

He also wanted to establish a business to leave his three sons.

Like others at the time, he probably expected to see some earlier attempts at a road building than have come to the Banks. So he started the bus line, and he gave it to Harold the elder to operate. As the boys grew up, each in turn became the driver of the bus, and when Harold went off the the South Pacific, Anderson became manager, and Stockton, Jr., principal driver.

When needed, other drivers were pressed into service, but for the most part, the daily round trip to Manteo is driven by one of the three brothers.

This company now operates three large buses, the boys being determined to be assured of a roady vehicle, in case one should be in the shop. When not in use on the route, special charter trips are often operated.

The Midgett brothers have recently built a modern bus station at Hatteras in connection with their garage, which they were forced of necessity to build to maintain their equipment, but the garage is freely operated for the use of their neighbors and the [illegible]

TWO OF THE OWNERS OF HATTERAS BUS LINE

ANDERSON and STOCKTON MIDGETT, two of the Rodanthe boys now living at Hatteras who have made a success of the Hatteras-Manteo Bus. The older brother, Harold, is not in the picture. More about them will be found elsewhere in this paper. The picture elsewhere shows some of the hardships they must undergo, from risk of [illegible] their bus in the sea, when tides overtake it, and passengers [illegible] work furiously to get it to higher ground.

ITER BANKS SHAKES LOOSE FROM A GALE

st Week's Wind and Tide Worked Some Inconvenience, and $50,000 Road Damage

y BEN DIXON MacNEILL

uxton on Cape Hatteras, Jan. — Taking an inventory of from a savage north-easter t lashed the Atlantic seaboard r the week end Hatteras Is- d tabulated one 83-foot traw- lost off Cape Hatteras and Hattears-Manteo bus vir- lly lost in quicksand two miles th of Oregon Inlet, and an imated $50,000 damage done to million-dollar Outer Banks hway.

oast Guardsmen of the Hat- s Island Group intervened in h ship and bus wrecks, taking w and passengers off both bus d ship and finally excavating bus from the sand in which was buried until only eight hes of the roof was showing ve water. The trawler was a l loss, though the Coast Guard rched diligently for some sight it by air survey afterward.

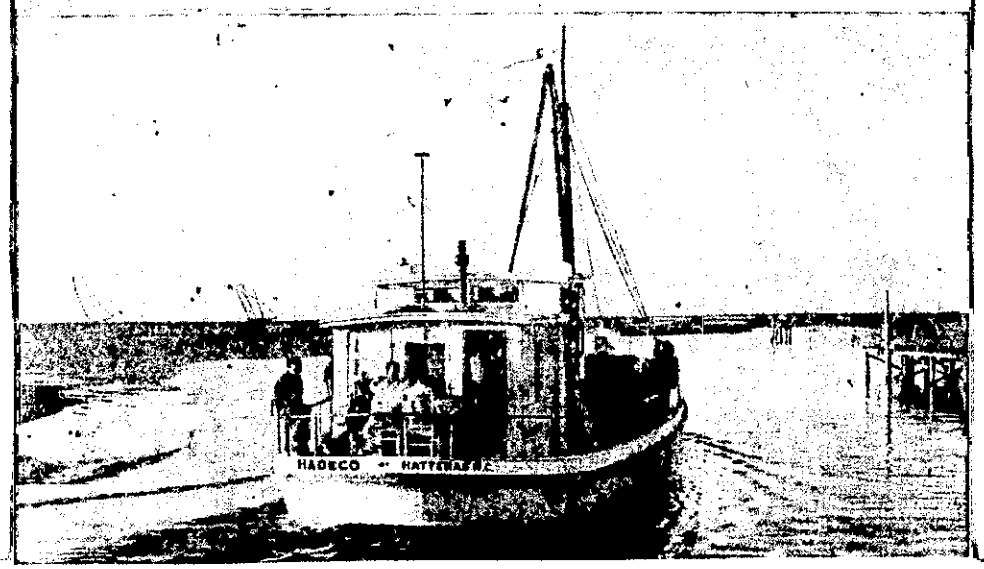
lthough traffic was badly im- ed throughout the day Satur- and through most of Sunday heavy inundation of the high- y, things were restored to tually normal by mid-day esday with most of several usand tons of sand left on the vement being removed by aug- nted road maintenance crews. personal injury or damage s suffered.

Discomfiture of the bus on its rning run toward Manteo Sat- day morning will likely go wn in Island legend and cer- nly will be something for ockton Midgett to tell his ndchildren about when they ne to bless his middle age.

Midgett was driving along, eping well to the middle of the hway because it was under ter of about a foot depth and re coming with the rise of the e. Without warning the pave- nt gave way and the bow end the bus disappeared from sight. idgett and his passengers got t the rear door, which was nted upward above the rising od.

Coast Guardsmen from Oregon let, seeing the distress from the kout, sent down their truck d took off the passengers and dertook to help get the bus out. e bus continued to dig in and high tide Saturday night all it but the top eight inches had ppeared under the water ht in the middle of the pave- nt.

WHY THEY NEED ROADS AT HATTERAS



PERISHABLE FISH, valuable to the people must be shipped by boat. Roads would bring their market nearer. Without roads, the people are forced into "horse and buggy days," so to speak.

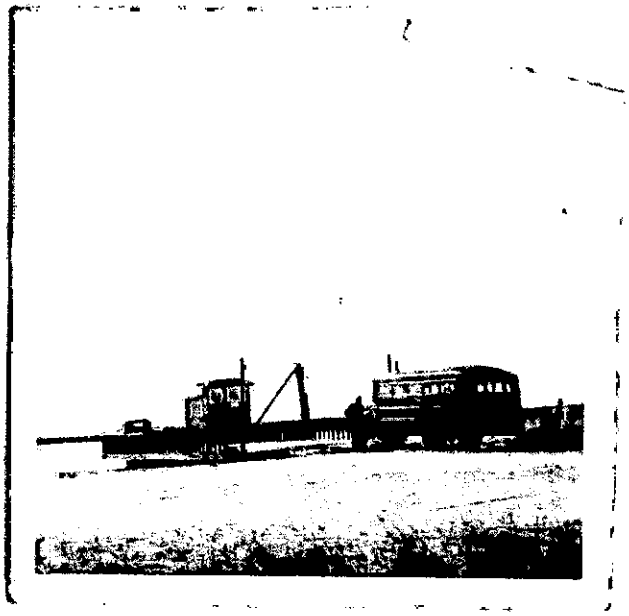
[illegible] and throughout the night relayed messages from the distressed trawler crew, the operations office. The crew were taken off by the Sun Oil Company's tanker Louisania Sun after daylight and were later transferred to the cutter Mendota.

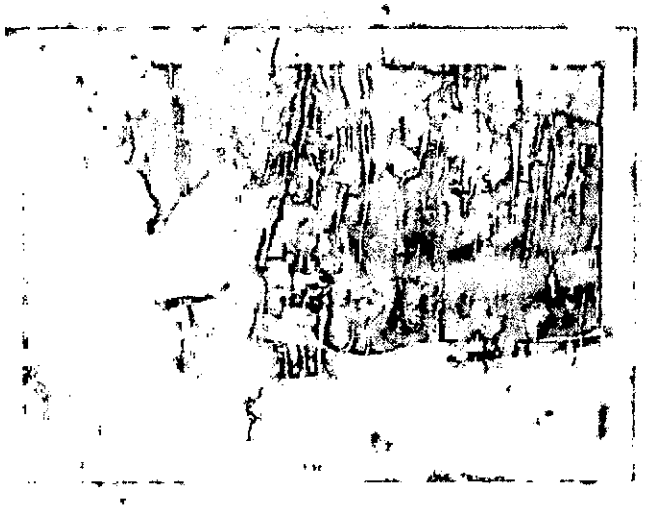
Early Sunday salvage operations on the foundered bus were underway under the personal supervision of CWO Cyrus Gray, Group Commander. When the water began to fall pumps were brought and the hole into which the bus worked itself during the night was pumped dry and sand dislodged from around the buried bus. It was hauled out after twelve hours work and towed to Hatteras by the Chicamicomico Duck. Damage to the vehicle was not estimated but it suffered little beyond immersion in salt water and sand. Meanwhile the relief bus had burned out its rear end and the third bus was called from Hatteras to the scene to take over passengers and the day's newspapers, arriving at its home base about five hours late.

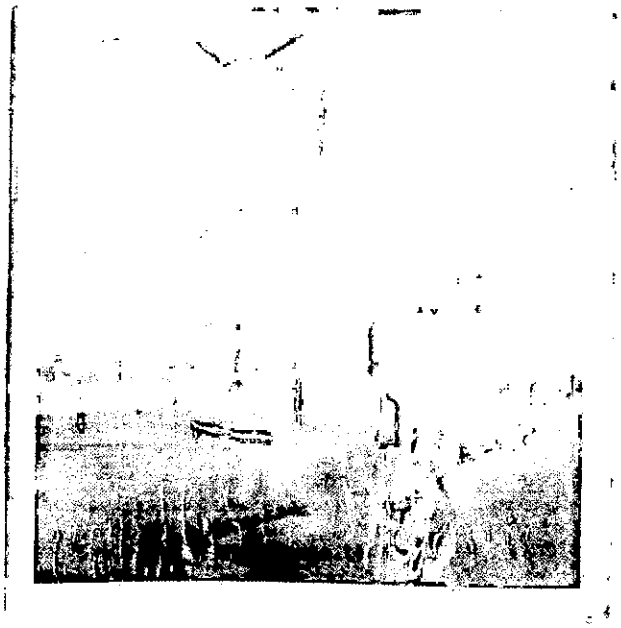
Damage to the highway at the scene of the wreck was curiously little. As soon as the bus was out of the hole the rising tide obligingly brought sand and filled it in again and pavement was being laid on it again by maintenance crews by the middle of the week. Engineers are puzzled by the business.

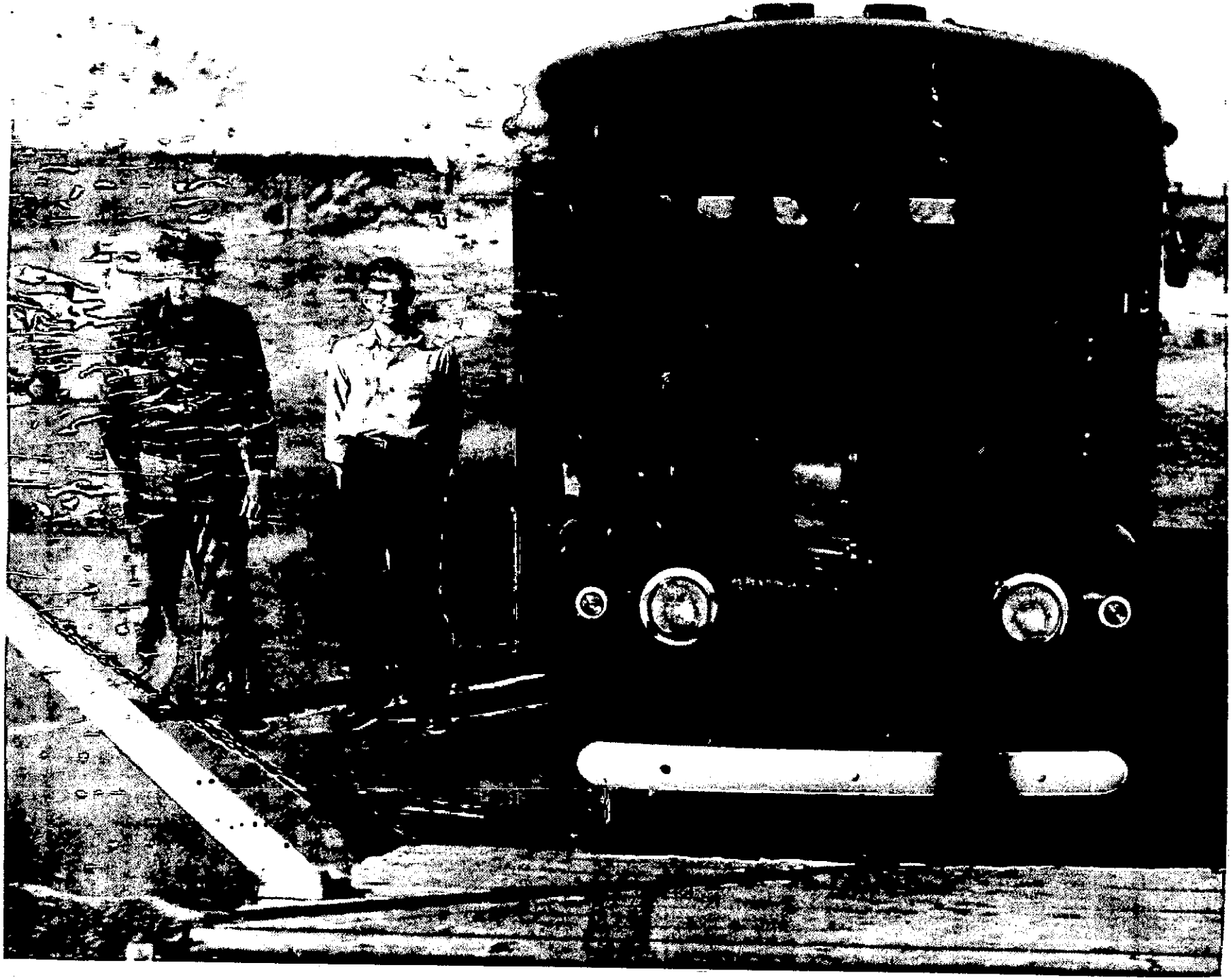
Almost the whole length of the road from Hatteras to Oregon Inlet was under water at some stage of the unusually high tide but no great damage was done, except the nicking of the edges of the pavement which will require many weeks to restore. Damage to the Island was in-

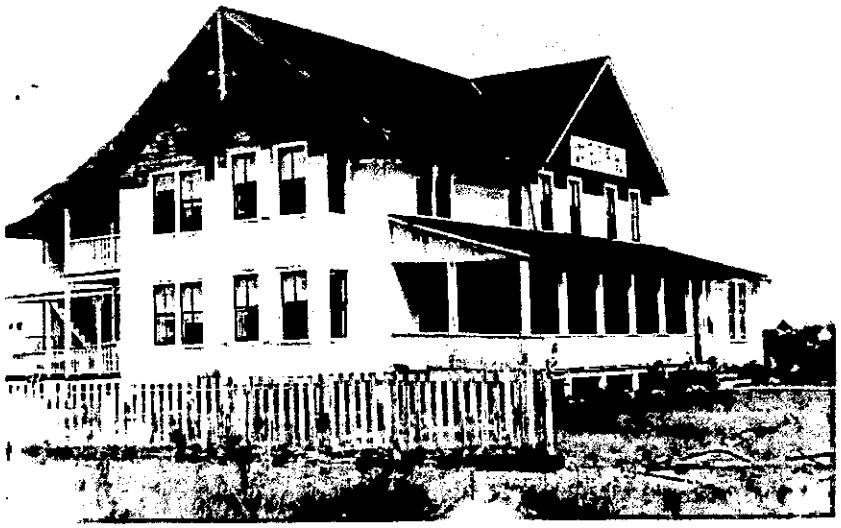
Saturday night, about midnight, the tower at Cape Hatteras station with Donald Hill on watch became third point of a triangular communication with District Operations and a sinking trawler 23 miles south east from the station on the other corners.

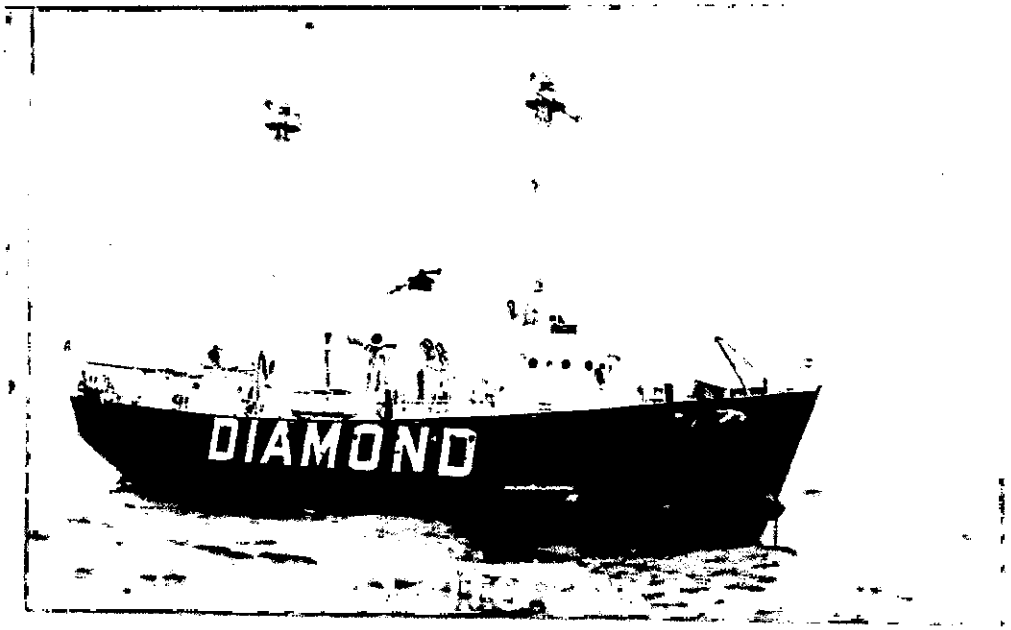


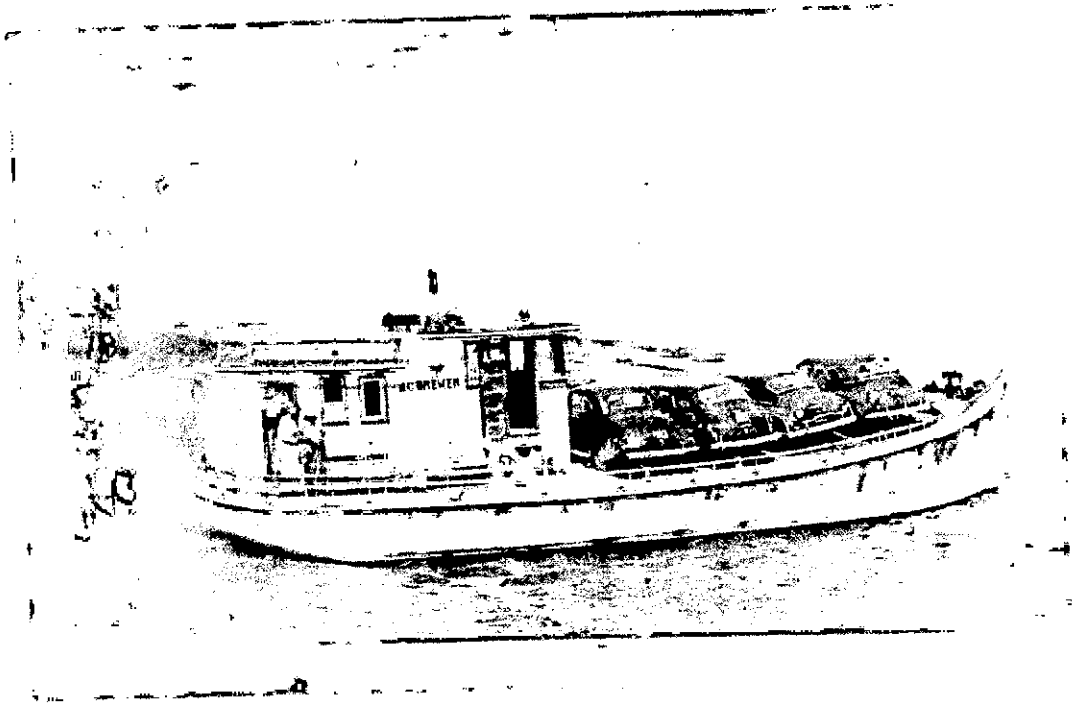









DIAMOND



HOTEL
HATTERAS NORTH CAROLINA
MR. MRS. W. "SCOTTIE" GIBSON PROPS.

U.S. Weather Bureau Hatteras, N.C.

The Midgett brothers operate a bus route with one vehicle and a disappearing road

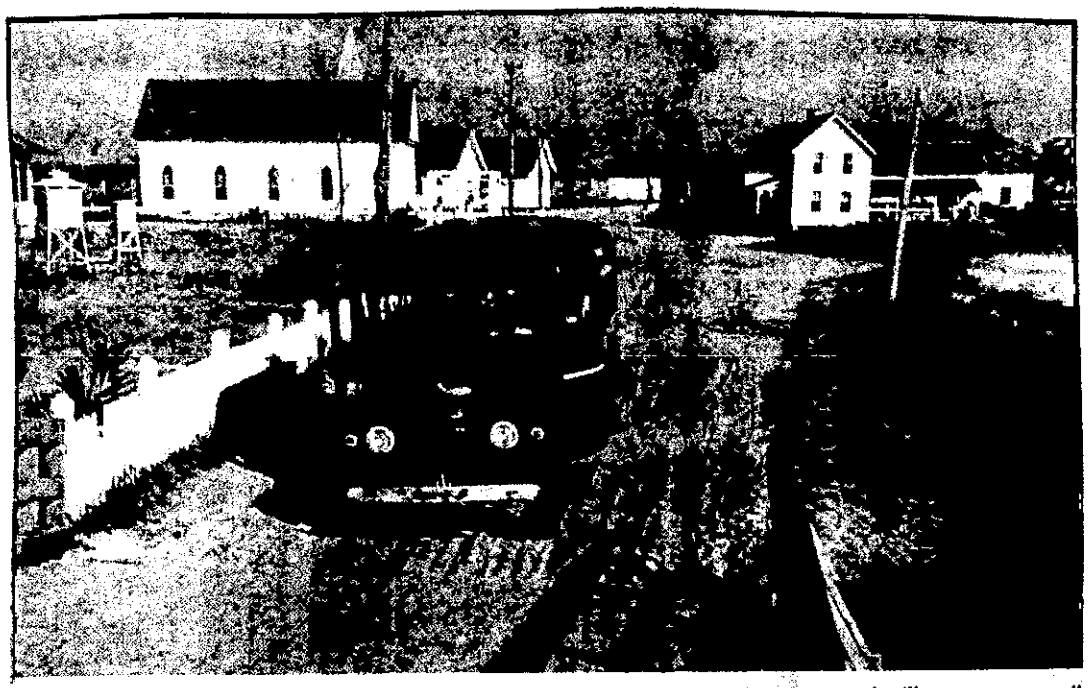
The 4,000 persons, mostly fisherfolk, who dwell on North Carolina's Outer Banks, narrow keys separated by tidal backwaters from the mainland, live an isolated life. Their only connection with the mainland is an overworked bus that makes a daily round-trip along the keys. Its route winds over dunes and along the water's edge where the surf obliterates all traces of a road.

Seven days a week the 30-passenger vehicle crawls the 70 miles from Cape Hatteras to Manteo for connection with the bus to Elizabeth City. Then it retraces the route, speeding up to 45 miles an hour on the hard-packed sand, slowing to five miles an hour among the dunes. Its drivers are also its owners, three native Carolinian brothers named Harold, Anderson, and Stockton Midgett.

One of the brothers daily drives the bus on the 140-mile round trip between Manteo and Hatteras. Near Buxton, where these passengers wait, are pine woods. Elsewhere, route lies across bare dunes.

While the bus awaits arrival of the ferry to carry it across Oregon Inlet, separating upper and lower keys, passengers wade in the bay.

Roads are scarce in the North Carolina keys, and so for miles the bus line operated by the three Midgett brothers of Manteo, N. C., follows beach.



The Ford bus grinds through the sand past the church at Rodanthe. Route leads through sparsely-settled region, where coastal villages are small clumps of white-painted wooden houses. THE END.

BUS

Wildest Toughest Bus Goes Modern

N GOING BUSMAN — Stockton Midgett, best sand on the Outer Banks, no longer frightens passengers by g in the Cape Hatteras surf as he had to do at times be- he new road was built—but he delights in making the ver what was recently America's wildest, toughest bus in only 2 hours and 15 minutes. It used to take nearly urs—if the bus didn't mire into too many sand traps. e has been doubled to meet demand for transporation to ras, where the nation's only National Seashore Park will uated. He is shown here beside his bus on the Oregon ferry, which bridges with a 20-minute water hop the connecting the Atlantic Ocean and Pamlico Sound. It's s an interesting trip, and sometimes quite rough. — (N. C. Bureau Photo).

★ THE new road down the sand bank to Hatteras takes the thrill out of the bus trip. The Midgett family has been running this bus route for about 30 years—driving over the sand trails, and sometimes detouring in the surf to find harder packed sand.

e wildest, roughest bus line in rica is a victim of modern con- ence.

initiated passengers will no er be frightened out of their wits their land-based conveyance s straight into the Atlantic n — as the Hatteras-Manteo used to do without the slightest ing. Nor, unfortunately, will dwellers seeking thrills by riding sand trail to the "Graveyard of Atlantic" find them either as or as genuine as in the days re the highway down North lina's Outer Banks to Hatteras hard-surfaced. "Progress" exacts ll, too.

he new Outer Banks highway is nearing completion along all its nile length, and the bus trip be- n the town of Hatteras, near the k-sand cape that mariners have ded since the beginning of America, and Manteo on Roanoke Island, where Sir Walter Raleigh planted the first English colony in America, now takes only 2 hours and 15 minutes. In the days before the hard-surfaced highway, when the bus followed sand trails, rolled over hard beach, and at times actually wallowed through the surf to gain its name of "Off-Shore Bus," the trip took nearly 6 hours — if it didn't get stuck often, and the passengers were brawny and pushed it out of sand traps without delay.

Building the road, influx of hotels and motor courts, and beginning the Hatteras National Seashore Park, increased demand for public transportation to such an extent that on July 28, the 14th anniversary of the beginning of the bus service where a bus route was thought to be impossible, the runs between Hatteras and Manteo are being doubled. Instead early afternoon departures from both terminals.

Many Thrills Gone

A lot of the thrill of riding the sand trials, the beach and the surf past ancient wrecks on the Hatteras coast are gone, but more and more tourists are finding the bus the best way to travel the Outer Banks to Hatteras. Unless they are experienced sand drivers, many motorists leave their expensive cars at Manteo and complete the trip to Hatteras on the old faithful bus. It's surer and it's quicker, because the bus, being a State franchised public carrier, has priority on the Oregon Inlet ferry. Passengers on the bus will get across while drivers of private vehicles may take their turn waiting a place on the ferry, which can't begin to carry all the cars across the inlet, which has

ATTERAS BUS LINE ADDS EXTRA ROUND TRIP SCHEDULE DAILY

1954 June

The Hatteras Bus line, which a the old days before modern ighways was billed as "one of he toughest bus trips in the orld", now operates the entire istance between Manteo (and onnecting bus companies) and latteras, (a distance of approxiately 60 miles) over modern ighways. Beginning June 5, here will be two instead of one ound trip daily between the uter Banks village of Hatteras nd all other communities on latteras Island and Manteo here n Roanoke Island, it was anounced today by Stockton Midett.

Midgett is one of three brothrs who have owned and operaed the bus line since the days f no roads on the Outer anks.

The new schedules effective aturday, June 5, call for bus epartures from Hatteras daily t 7 a.m. and 1:10 p.m. From Manteo buses will depart at 9:45 .m. and 3:30 p.m.

With the new schedule effective it will be possible for a erson to travel to south side of Oregon Inlet and spend time sportsfishing in the surf or visiting Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and the new maritime museum soon scheduled to be opened and return to Manteo on the same day. Likewise it will give persons on Hatteras Island an opportunity to visit Manteo or the Dare Beaches and return the same day.

In addition to the improved bus service, the Midgetts also offer a jeep taxi at Hatteras in which visitors may take trips to Hatteras Inlet, Cape Hatteras and other places, along the surf [illegible] the dunelands with[illegible] or getting stuck in the

Visit To Hatteras Is Made Convenient By Extra Bus Trip

MANTEO, July 29—The world's toughest bus trip is no longer that, and an extra schedule has been added to take care of the thousands of tourists and vacationists who are hoping to get their first glimpse of far-famed Cape Hatteras now that a paved road has been built from Nags Head to the seven villages of North Carolina's fabulous Outer Banks.

The new schedule, originating in Manteo daily at 8:15 o'clock was established on Monday, 14 years to the day from the time that the Midgett boys, Stockton, Harold and Anderson, began operating a daily service between Hatteras and Manteo where connections were made with Virginia Dare Transportation buses operating to Elizabeth City and Norfolk. The new schedule leaves Hatteras at 2 p. m. and arrives at Manteo at 5:30.

During those early years and for many years their bus line was the only one which operated over roadless beaches, self made trails through the dunelands and across marshes and when the tide was at ebb, along the ocean's surf. In those days it was a trip that took a minimum of six hours to one way and sometimes much longer, especially after washouts, extremely dry weather when the sand was soft and deep of during storms. During the 14 years less than one score trips have been cancelled, and even those were started, but resulted in mishap along the way. Sometimes it was deep sand that put the bus out of mechanical operation, and on a few occasions the rising tides across quicksand along the surf interferred.

In recent years, the going has been better. Each link of the new Hatteras highway, started during the Cherry Administration and completed during Scotis administration, sped the trips to mainland points some what. If it were not for some 30 minutes lost on each trip waiting for and crossing the Toby Tillett-created ferry now owned and operated by the State, the trip to and from Hatteras, about 65 miles, can be made in less than two hours. With the various stops at communities, the twice daily schedules (including ferry) are made in three and half hours or less.

[Aycock Brown Photo from State Magazine]

Here's a stretch of the new macadam road, which comes within a few yards of famed Cape Hatteras light, shown at left.

Hatteras Bus Line To Add Trip on Manteo Schedule

Hatteras, N. C., July 15—As a result of the new paved highway here on Hatteras Island and public demand, Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line officials plan to add one round trip daily beginning on Monday, July 28.

Under the new schedule, the bus will leave Manteo during the early morning, making one stop at the intersection of U. S. Highways 64, 264 and 158 and the Hatteras Highway at Nags Head to pick up vacationists who wish to make the trip down the Outer Banks. The present schedules originate at Hateras at 8 o'clock and goes to Manteo, and beginning the return trip from Manteo at 2 o'clock. There will be stops in all villages.

The Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line is owned and operated by three brothers, Anderson, Stockton and Harold Midgett. Their first scheduled run was 14 years ago on July 28. Since then the bus line has received national publicity as being the "toughest bus trip in the world." During most of the line's history, trips have been made over roadless beaches.

The new highway has cut down the running time between here and Manteo to about two and a half hours. In the old days it took from six to seven hours to make the trip [illegible]

of a single bus a day, the new schedule provides for early morning and swift currents and sometimes is quite rough.

Many people are familiar with the Outer Banks — the pencil thin string of sand bars guarding the upper part of the 320-mile long coast of North Carolina — and the seven picturesque towns with their Coast Guard Stations, wreck-strewn beaches and historic Hatteras Lighthouse.

Line 30 Years Old

It started over 30 years ago, as a dream of Coast Guardsman Theodore Stockton Midgett. He figured the comforts of civilization — doctors, drugs, mail, visitors, etc. — should be brought to and from the sand strip island by motor car, just as people enjoyed such things on the mainland. So he bought a station wagon and turned it over to his eldest son, Harold, for hauling passengers and express during vacation time. There being no road, the first buses carried no license tag. This is another distinction Hatteras lost with the coming of modern civilization in the guise of paved road. Other distinctions that it is relinquishing include absence of jails, policemen and tax collectors.

When the elder Midgett died, son Harold set seriously about converting his dream of an Outer Banks bus line into reality, and in 1938 he formed the Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line, a corporation which still holds the original franchise. Harold's two brothers, Anderson and Stockton, are also officers of the corporation.

Demand for service soon made it necessary to replace the station wagons with larger vehicles, and to the surprise of everyone, 20-passenger buses had little difficulty making the sand and surf run under the expert pilotage of the Midgett boys.

Since the beginning of service, 14 years ago, the bus line has worn out 30 vehicles — but it hasn't missed a schedule. The fare had to be relatively high ($2.75 plus tax), because the sand and salt wore out buses so fast the replacement cost was, and is, terrific. Maybe the only reason the Midgett boys ever showed a real profit was because they did their own driving and took care of their own maintenance. Now that they are doubling service and using double the number of buses, it means they'll have to hire more outside help with consequent sharp payroll rise. Maybe the increased volume will take care of it, but that is to be seen. New 35-passenger buses are being added to make a total of four in the fleet.

Best Sand Driver

Stockton Midgett, who is conceded to be the best sand driver on the Banks, is chief driver now. He's no more talkative than most Outer Bankers, and he's never found anything very exciting about the wild, tough days. No one ever gave birth to a baby in all the thousands of miles of rough driving, no one got very sick or passed away en route even when it looked like the bus might be caught in the surf by the rising tide. (It never was.) Stockton doesn't recall many celebrities — oh, a couple of governors, and there was a four-star general, but he doesn't remember his name, and dozens of senators, politicians and writers.

Harold Midgett, a veteran of Okinawa, and eldest of the brothers, is in poor health, but continues to serve in an executive capacity. Anderson, who was also a pioneer sand driver, is president of the company and handles the inside work.

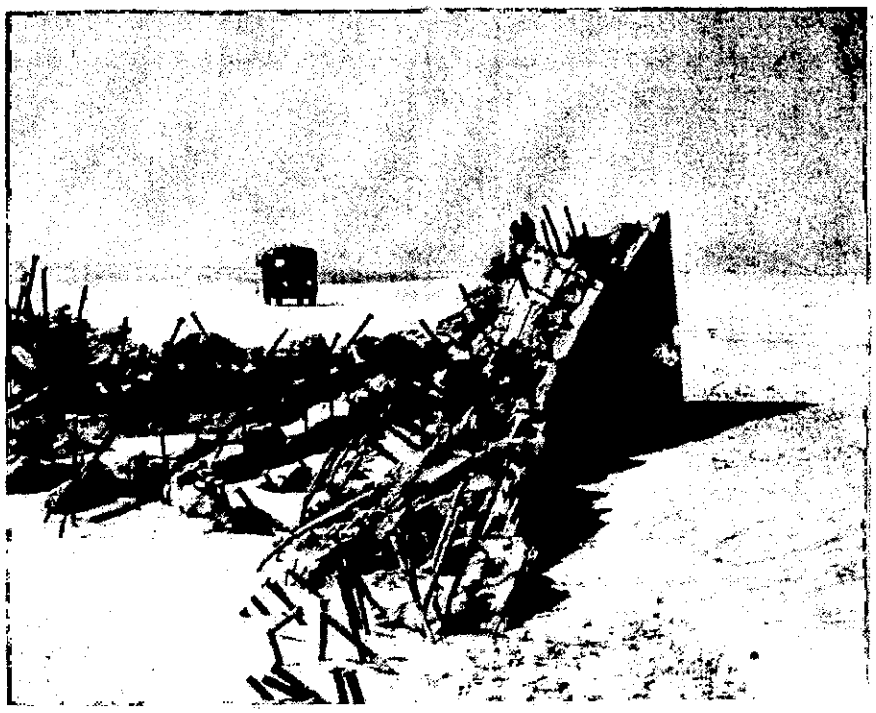
The Hatteras bus business is getting bigger every day, but it will never lose its human qualities as long as the Midgetts are the Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line. Take the recent plight of a New York photographer, for instance. He had to get away on the bus to make a plane connection up-state, but through a mix-up the bus left him at Scotty Gibson's hotel at Hatteras. The photographer was frantic when he learned that the bus had departed without him.

Hearing his loud wails, Scotty simply picked up the phone (sure, Hatteras has them) and told Anderson Midgett that the bus had left a passenger and it was very important that he catch up with it.

"Think nothing of it," responded Anderson, jumping into his own car and speeding over to the hotel. He loaded the somewhat dazed photographer and inside of 20 minutes had caught up with the slower moving bus.

"That," observed the New Yorker by way of appreciation, "is real Southern hospitality. It's the first time the President of a company ever dropped everything to see that I didn't miss the bus!"

But that's the way most Outer Bankers are when you get to know them.

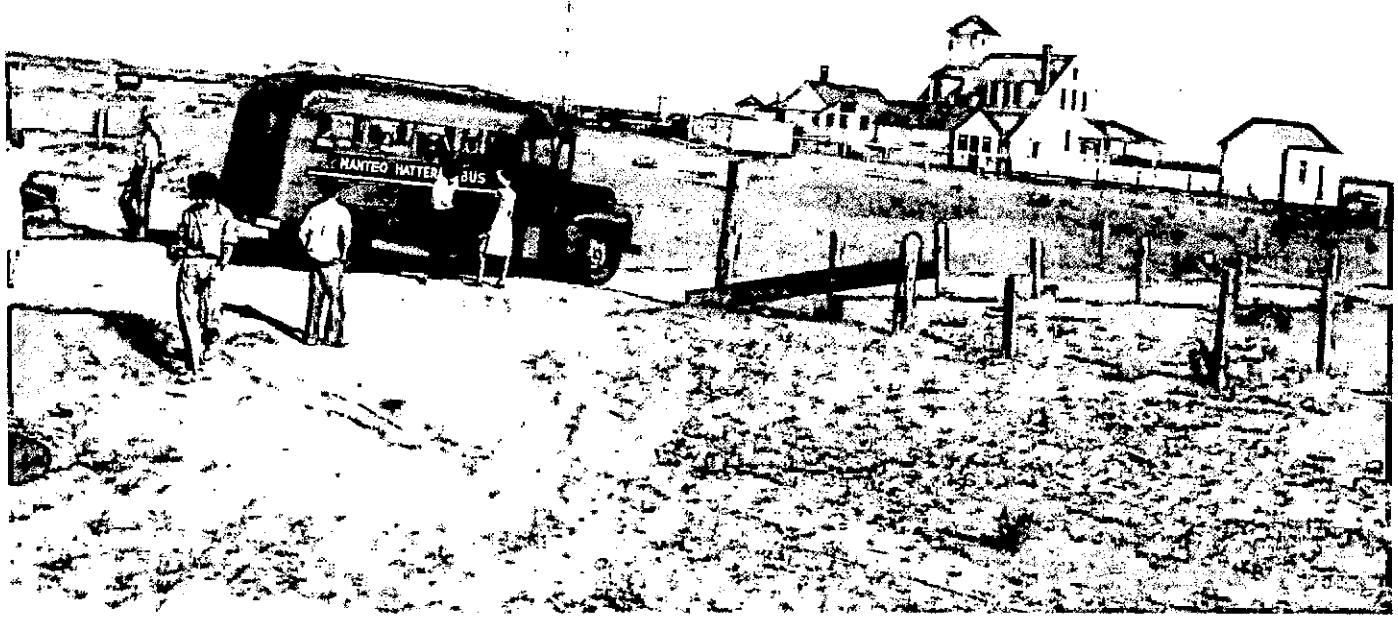


ROUGHEST, TOUGHEST BUS ROUTE—Here is the Hatteras Bus before the advent of the new hard-surfaced highway. It has just detoured into the Atlantic Ocean and is now coming out of the surf onto the beach. Passengers got a close-up of an ancient shipwreck. Many wrecks are still strewn along the 40-mile Hatteras beach, part of which is being incorporated into the nation's only National Seashore Park.—(North Carolina News Bureau Photo).

[N. C. News Bureau Photo]

This picture shows the Hatteras bus before the advent of the new hard-top highway. The vehicle has just turned from the surf out onto the beach after making a detour smack into the Atlantic ocean. At this point, patten ers got a close-up view of an ancient wreck.

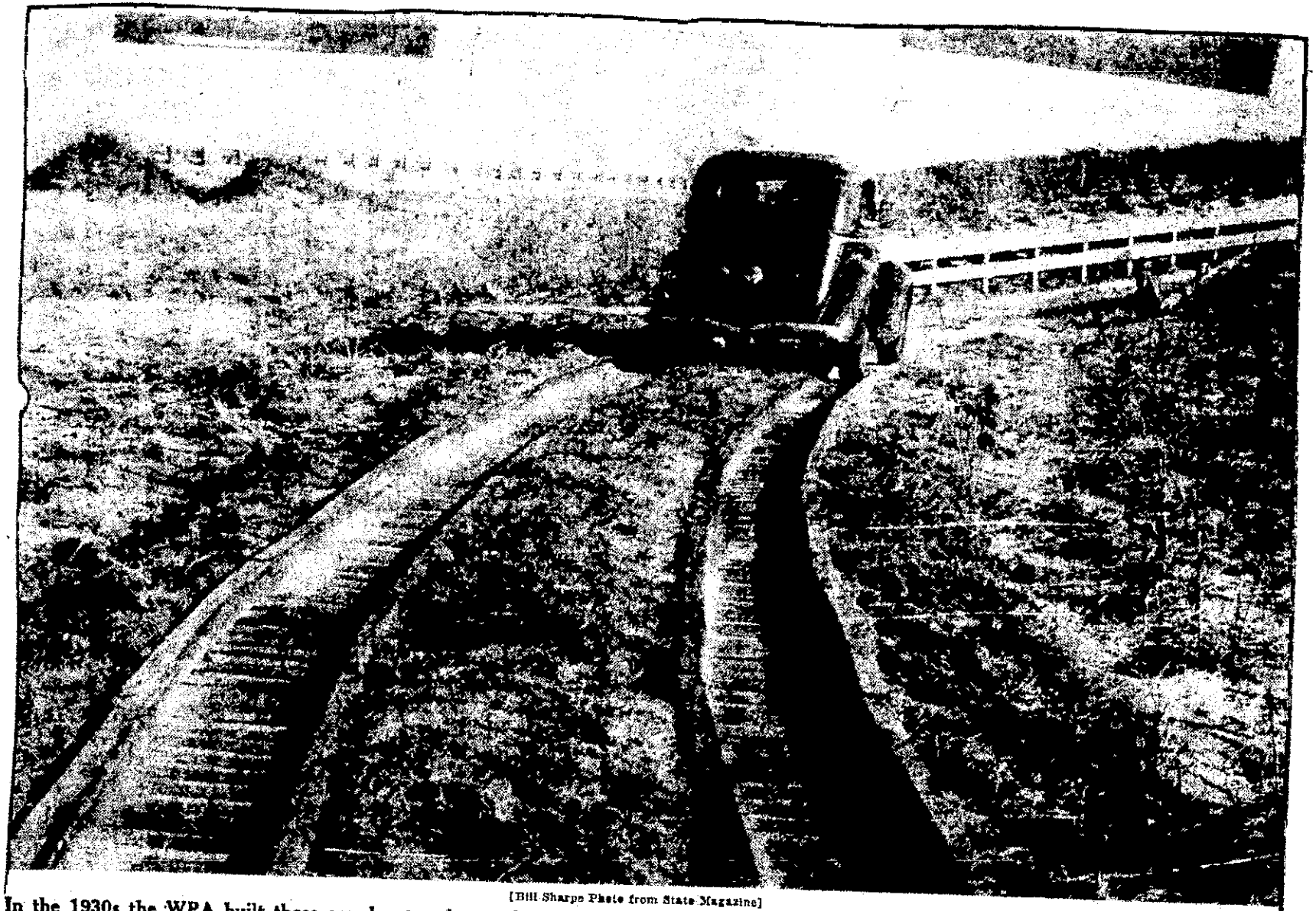
Greetings from Hatteras Island, North Carolina!



It takes 45 minutes to cross two-mile stretch of water. Bus schedule depends to a great extent on the tide. Normally set for 8 a.m. from Hatteras, departure is an hour earlier when tide is high.

The Midgetts carry merchandise for stores in the isolated communities, which have no other transport service. Repairs on the machine must be made during the overnight stay at Hatteras terminal.

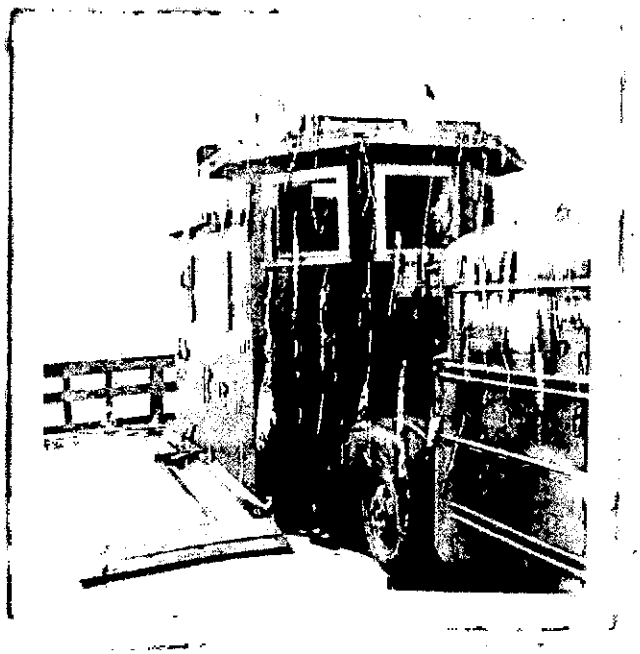
MANTEO HATTERAS BUS



[Bill Sharpe Photo from State Magazine]

In the 1930s the WPA built these wooden tr acks on the sand to help cars get over the dunes. The plan was costly and in many ways unsatisfactory (imagine two cars meeting in the middle of one of these). Another unsuccessful attempt to conquer the sand was the laying of hay and straw on the dunes in the hope of aiding traction. It didn't.

HERE IS ONE DARE COUNTY "OCEAN HIGHWAY" ITS PEOPLE MUST USE EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR



NO! This isn't the proposed highway to Virginia Beach, the lu[illegible] road we are told will bring the millenium to Dare. This is a scene that happens often along the road by which travelers to and from Hatteras must be [illegible]ed constantly in transacting [illegible] affairs with the outside [illegible]

The above picture was made one day last month just south of Oregon Inlet by Tom Grimes of Elizabeth City. There is no highway along the bare and difficult beach and the bus driver at great risk to his equipment, must resort to traveling along the ocean side, along the surf, where the sea washes up under the wheels, and sprays the gear with salt.

This is one of the occurences that happen almost daily. The tide was rising, the sand was soft, the bus was stuck, the ocean sweeping in about it. The passengers had to get out, and by hard labor, lugged an old ocean pound net stake, 30 feet long, and as big as a telephone pole to the scene. After strenuous work, they succeeded in prizing the bus from the quick-sand, and with old boards and wreckage under the wheels, at last got the vehicle out of the sea. Another 20 minutes and the bus would have been a total loss in the rising tide.

During the effort that was being made, one passenger, a retired Coast Guardsman, Bate Williams of Wanchese was stunned when the heavy pole cracked down on his skull with temporary paralyzing effect.

And it is places like this that seem to be often forgotten when roads are asked for. While the 2,500 people who live in the Hatteras area suffer daily for the need of a road, new schemes are being hatched up. Talk about your ocean highway; Dare County alreadys has one to Hatteras, but it has had no improvements since God made the world and turned it over to mankind. God is probably ashamed of having done it. Man ought to be ashamed too, that no real effort has been made to build this road to Rodanthe, and Hatteras for more is the proof.

THE ABOVE PICTURES have been sent by J. E. Pfeiffer of 760 Lincoln Avenue, Pitman, N. J., whom we thank for his interest and comments, as follows:

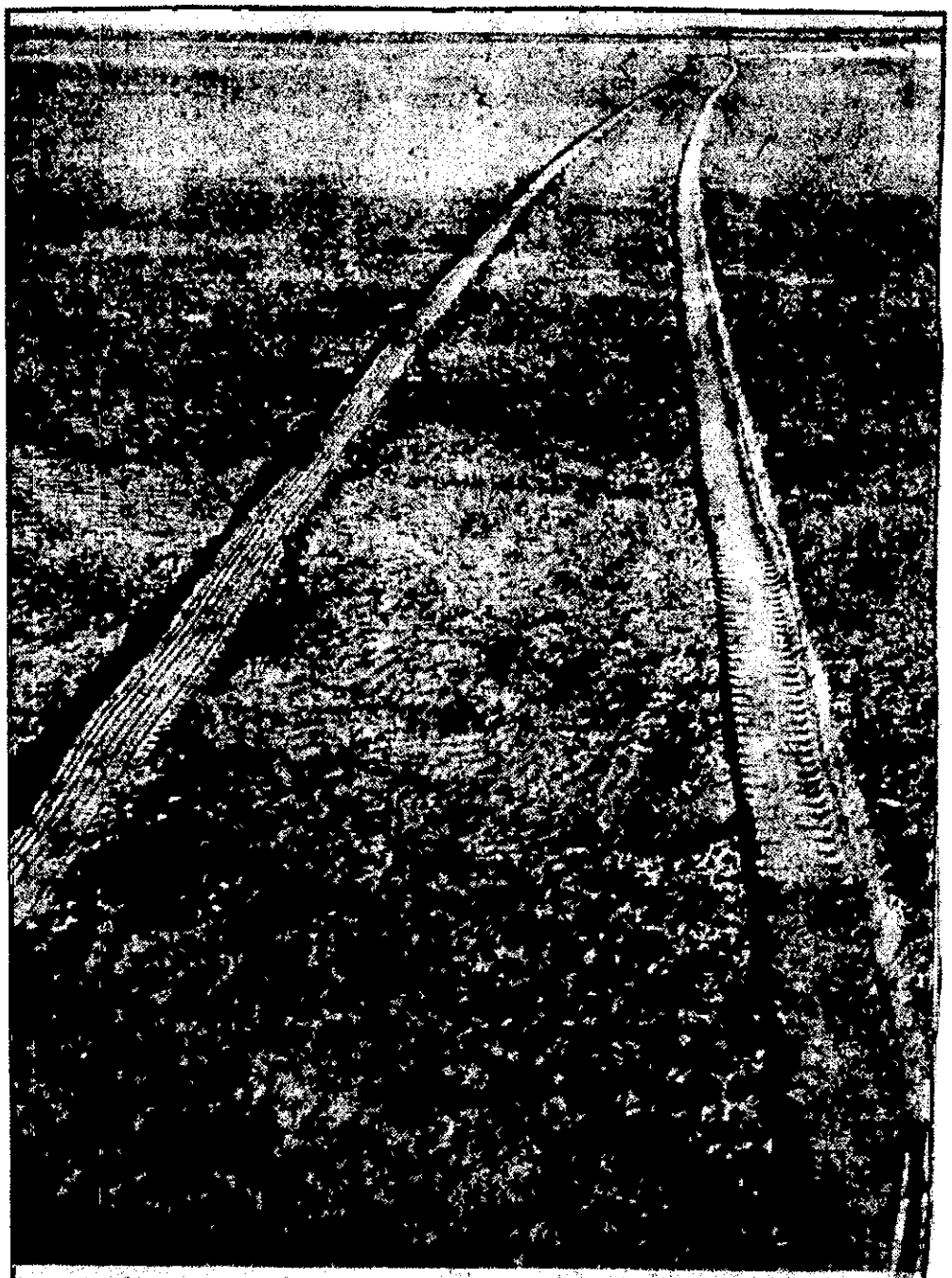
"I am enclosing some photos which you might like to publish or hold in your archieves for future use. I used to fish down there frequently—but not much since the roads have been built. The roads has opened the Outer Banks to every Tom, Dick and Harry.

"Two pictures are of the old Manteo and Hatteras bus; one on the old Oregon Inlet Ferry.

"Two pictures are of the old Hatteras-to-Ocracoke mail boat and ferry. These are interesting and amusing. If you will notice part of the windshield had been broken out and replaced with cardboard with a small peep-hole for the captain to see through.

"One is of Scottie's Hotel. I am sure it has changed.

"The driver of the ox-cart charged me a quarter to take his picture. I almost flipped when I ask him his name and he told me it was Midgett."



Sharpe, Tar Heel chronicler, calls this "Old 108." Before the new road was [illegible] Bankers were wont to advise visitors to "take route 108" to Hatteras, [illegible]use there were 108 different ways to get there, all of them thru treacher[illegible] sand.

The Hatteras bus business is getting bigger every day, but it will never lose its human qualities as long as the Midgetts are the Hatteras-Manteo Bus line. Take the recent plight of a New York photografer, for instance. He had to get away on the bus to make a plane connection up-State, but thru a mix-up the bus left him at Scotty Gibson's hotel at Hatteras. The photografer was frantic when he learned that the bus had departed without him.

Hearing his loud wails, Scotty simply picked up the phone (sure, Hatteras has them) and told Anderson Midgett that the bus had left a passenger and it was very important that he catch up with it.

"Think nothing of it," responded Anderson, jumping into his own car and speeding over to the hotel. He loaded the somewhat dazed photografer and inside of 20 minutes had caught up with the slower moving bus.

"That," observed the New Yorker by way of appreciation, "is real Southern hospitality. It's the first time the president of a company ever dropped everything to see that I didn't miss the bus!"

[illegible]re are three boys from Ro[illegible] now living at Hatteras—[illegible]ld, Anderson and Stockton, [illegible]dgett, who ought to have a monument of granite erected to their memory for their unceasing devotion to the cause of transpo[illegible]tion for their people. They [illegible] boys who have kept the [illegible] going for more than ten years, despite the treacherous sands, the bitter winds; the salt sea which destroys their property. Theirs has has been a great and tough battle against tremendous odds, but they are still going strong and after all the years of toil, are building a business that will be worth much in years to come. They paid dearly for it, and only out of the devotion to the dream their father had of founding them a business, have they had the inspiration and courage to fight on. When mere lads, their father, the late Stockton Midgett of Rodanthe, thought up the idea for his boys.

And the folks of Hatteras Island have stuck with them, traveled on their bus in sickness and in health; in joy or in pain, battered and bruised year in and year out by the shaking up across the rough beaches.

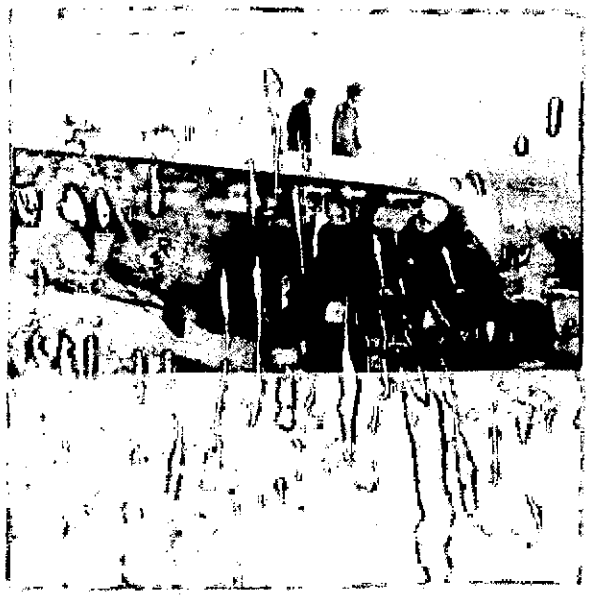
The above picture is just a little sample of what they have to put up with down there. Had there been no passengers on this trip the bus most likely would have been lost.

[Aycock Brown Photo]

Bus passengers, if they're lucky, may witness a scene such as this during a trip to Hatteras. Photo shows A. W. Drinkwater, of Manteo, North Carolina's wreck commissioner, conducting a vendue—selling salvaged merchandise and equipment from a wrecked ship at public auction.

The Pitfalls of Island Travel

HATTERAS BUS DISAPPEARS in the middle of a paved highway in 1954 at Pea Island. Coast Guardsmen from the Oregon Inlet Station came to the rescue. Driver Stockton Midgett and his passengers got safely out the back door before the bus sank deeper in the middle of a paved area of N. C. 12. The bus was finally pulled out the next day.



Midgett Brothers: Pioneers In Transportation on Hatteras Is.

By DIANE RANSOM

HATTERAS — As a child and even a teenager the greatest thrill at the end of the school was anticipating the arrival of summer and a trip to Cape Hatteras.

Arriving at my grandparents home in Hatteras village was almost a step back in time where dialect, colloquialisms, and way of life were completely different and most unique; a treasure of heritage that has always been cherished, protected, and honored.

Even though my family sometimes visited aunts and uncles in Manteo before heading down the banks, I realized at a very early age that my life line with Hatteras began with the Hatteras bus line and the Midgett Brothers.

They were usually the first Hatterasmen we saw and they always welcomed us as returning islanders. Their warm greeting made us very aware that regardless of where we lived, Hatteras was still home.

Of course, my parents never had to be reminded of this for when they used the term home, even though they spent almost thirty years away from the island, "home" meant Hatteras.

The bus ride of sixty miles over sand and surf flats, before the completion of a paved highway, was always the highlight of my summer.

But one aspect of that long, often bumpy ride that I couldn't comprehend as a child was why my mother, with a tiring travel already behind her from Long Island, New York didn't share my anticipation and excitement of that bus trip from Manteo to Hatteras village.

Now thirty years or so later, a mother myself, and about my mother's age at that time, I finally understand how the body of one approaching middle age appreciates a more comfortable and tolerant means of travel.

Yet those years of riding the former Ersie Midgett of South Rodanthe (now known as Waves), and the father of three sons: Harold, Anderson, Stocky, and one daughter, Joyce, obtained a franchise for a bus line between Hatteras and Manteo.

For twenty-five years their public transportation vehicles, which included station wagons, commando cars, a truck, and school buses, skirted sand dunes, camel humps, and ocean waves on a 60-mile route of sand roads and surf flats.

During this period of island history, the Midgett brothers' bus line transported thousands of people, local and newcomers, to and from Hatteras Island.

The small bus line, because of its unique and sometimes dangerous route due to tides, quicksand, gravel beds, and storms, made headlines and subheadlines in newspapers and magazine publications from New York to Florida.

Harold, the oldest son, was the first to operate the bus line. He moved to Hatteras village, staying at the Atlantic View Hotel, and drove the early vehicles from Hatteras to Manteo.

He took a Hatteras bride, the former Aldena Ballance, and soon his younger brothers Anderson and Stockton also moved to Hatteras where they finished high school, and like their older brother, married Hatteras girls.

Anderson married Kathryn Hurdle, formerly of Elizabeth City, then a Hatteras school teacher, and Stockton took as his bride the former Elizabeth Austin of Hatteras.

All three brothers drove for the bus line, becoming the most skilled and daring drivers along the Outer Banks. Stocky, as he was called, started his driving career as a teenager and for a while sat on a pillow so he could see over the steering wheel.

I remember one summer a

From 1944 to 1946, Harold served in the South Pacific with the U.S. Navy, so Anderson and Stocky operated the business, which had become a corporation. When Harold returned home, he and Chancey Meekins of Avon built a garage mainly to service the buses. It is still operated in Hatteras as a full service garage.

The Midgetts made the bus repairs themselves, sometimes having to travel to West Virginia to get tires, which along with parts, had become very scarce during after World War II.

The bus left Hatteras village at 8 a.m., stopped in each island village, arrived at Manteo between 11 and 12 a.m., met the Norfolk bus, and returned to Hatteras village around 5 p.m. if road and weather conditions were suitable.

If the sand roads were too soft the trip was made, in some areas, along the surf. It was not uncommon for passengers to get out of the bus and do a little or a lot of pushing and shoving if the vehicle bogged down in the sand.

Stops in each village were always welcomed by travelers. Local people often got a chance to say hello to a relative or village friend as the bus stopped at a particular store to unload newspapers, packages, and passengers.

Sometimes the stop at Rodanthe was a little longer for the Midgetts always stopped at their mother's store or went in the house to see her; but an old orange crush, in the dark bottle, and a package of nabs were mighty good by that time.

Such stops were also appreciated by the early tourists and visitors to Hatteras Island who found the bus ride a unique experience. Stopping at the island villages, where an English dialect was detected and older women still shielded themselves from the sun with their handmade sun

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"Think nothing of it," responded Anderson, jumping into his own car and speeding over to the hotel. He loaded the somewhat dazed photographer in his car and inside of 20 minutes had caught up with the slower moving bus.

" 'That,' observed the New Yorker by way of appreciation, 'is southern hospitality. It's the first time the president of a company ever dropped everything to see that I didn't miss the bus.' "

Driving those sixty miles on sand roads, skirting dunes and gravel beds, at times ocean waves and occasionally bogging down in the sand were everyday occurrences for the bus driver; but a few times, during stormy weather, conditions could become even more serious and the bus wouldn't make its destination.

In such a case, a relief bus

See PIONEERS, Page 8A

the Hatteras bus will always have a very special place in my childhood memories and I regret that my son, though an islander by birth and heritage, will never experience that exciting mode of travel; or the pioneer feeling of forging one's way home, often at the mercy of nature and unpredictable island terrain.

Pioneering is a noble word and best describes the Midgett brothers and their father, the late Theodore Stockton Midgett of Rodanthe.

Forty-three years ago the senior Midgett and Coast Guardsman, who like many of his forefathers served at island stations for 25 years, decided Hatteras Island needed a transportation system.

During years of traveling up and down the Outer Banks he, like Stanley Wahab of Ocracoke, decided to do something about this need.

"He was interested in providing a service for the people of the island," related his youngest son and namesake, Stockton Midgett Jr. "After being stationed at Ocracoke he realized the need for transportation even more, and was influenced by Wahab, who started a bus service between Ocracoke and Hatteras."

In July of 1938 Theodore Stockton Midgett, husband of [illegible] of them [illegible] likely a newcomer, remarked uneasily that the driver was just "a mere boy." But "mere boy" or not, Stockton Theodore Midgett Jr. at an early age could out-drive most people of his day.

The first vehicle used by the Midgetts was a 1938 Ford stationwagon. "It lasted about six to eight months," recalled Anderson, "and we used others."

Commando cars, the first four-wheel-drive vehicles, and the only ones outside of Coast Guard jeeps used on the island, were put to use after the war by the Midgetts. They came in handy especially during a time when inlets cut the island.

Probably the most famous and unusual of the vehicles was a Ford truck called the "old blue goose." The body was built in Philadelphia, Pa. and the seats were arranged along the sides of the vehicle as well as in rows.

"We used that a long time," commented Anderson, "until we wore it out."

Eventually school-type buses were utilized. The chassis were purchased at a plant at High Point, and the bodies put on at Wilson.

"Thousands of people rode those vehicles but it was the local people who really kept us in business," said Anderson.

Many accounts circulated and many stories and news articles were written about the Hatteras bus line, its route, and the determination of the Midgett brothers to bring and continue a transportation system to Hatteras Island.

"There are three boys from Rodanthe now living at Hatteras," stated one news article . . . "Harold, Anderson, and Stockton Midgett, who ought to have a monument of granite erected to their memory for their unceasing devotion to the cause of transportation for their people.

"They are the boys who have kept the bus line going for more than ten years, despite the treacherous sands, the bitter winds; the salt which destroys their property.

"Theirs has been a great and tough battle against tremendous odds, but they are still going strong and after all the years of toil are building a business that will be worth much in years to come.

"They paid dearly for it, and only out of devotion to the dream their father had of founding them a business have they had the inspiration and courage to fight on . . . and the folks of Hatteras Island have stuck with them, traveled on their bus in sickness and in health; in joy or in pain, battered and bruised, year in and year out, by the shaking up across the rough beaches."

Another account was written in a New York newspaper and also eventually ran in North Carolina papers. A New York photographer was the recipient of Midgett hospitality when he missed the Hatteras bus.

"He had to get away on the bus to make a plane connection up-state but through a mix-up the bus left him at Scott Gibson's hotel at Hatteras. The photographer was frantic when he learned that the bus had departed without him.

"Hearing his loud [illegible] Scotty simply picked [illegible] phone and told A[illegible] no bus [illegible]

MIDGETT BROS. GARAGE
BUS STATION
HATTERAS-MANTEO BUS LINE

n't develop.

interesting account ported in the News and er concerning such an ictable incident.

Midgett (Stocky) was along, keeping well to iddle of the highway e it was under water of foot depth and more with the rise of the

hout warning the ent gave way and the the bus disappeared ght. Midgett and his ers got out of the rear hich was canted up-

undertook to help get the bus out.

"The bus continued to dig in and by high tide all of it but the top eight inches had disappeared under the water right in the middle of the pavement.

"Early Sunday salvage operations on the foundered bus were underway under the personal supervision of CWO Cyrus Gray, Group Commander. When the water began to fall pumps were brought and the hole into which the bus worked itself during the night was pumped

Damage t was not estimate fered little beyond imm n in salt water and sand.

"Meanwhile the relief bus was called from Hatteras to the scene to take over passengers and the day's newspapers, arriving at its home base about five hours late.

"Damage to the highway at the scene of the wreck was curiously little. As soon as the bus was out of the hole the rising tide obligingly brought sand and filled it in again and pavement was being laid on it

recalling those early years of the bus line, "and we met a lot of interesting people. It was hard work and when the highway came we had to sell, but we were a hundred percent in favor of the paved road."

The brothers sold their bus line to Virginia Dare Transportation Company of Manteo July 18, 1963, driving the bus up until the day the line was sold.

During the years the Midgetts operated their transportation system they employed other drivers who shared in that pioneering adventure: Melvin Midgett, Raymond Midgett, Floyd Hooper, Roy Gray, A. B. Stowe, Milton Barnett, and Edison Meekins.

With the paved highway the beginning of the end of the Hatteras Bus Line was also documented by the news media: "For many years after establishing the service from Hatteras, business flourished, partly due to the lack of most other feasible means of transportation.

"As late as the 1950's Hatteras Island lacked a hard-surface road from north to south end, and numerous travelers found far more safety in traveling with the Midgett family, than to put their own vehicle to the mercy of sand and sea.

"More times than not the daily trips between Manteo and Hatteras were made on roads created by the determination and spirit of the driver, for back in those years the roads were mere sand trails.

"As paved roads were built, residents of the village purchased vehicles in order to go and come at their own will, and patronage to the Hatteras line dwindled.

"In more recent years, a large portion of the business which has supported the line has been in the form of parcel service to the seven villages of Hatteras Island . . . .

"What used to take nearly

"Uninitiated passenge continued the news artic "will no longer be frighten out of their wits when th land-based conveyance hea straight into the Atlan Ocean as the Hattera Manteo bus used to without the slightest war ing.

"Nor, unfortunately, w city dwellers seeking thril by riding the sand trails the 'Graveyard of th Atlantic,' find them either a thick or as genuine as in th days before the highwa down North Carolina's Oute Banks to Hatteras, was hard surfaced.

"Progress exacts its to too. A lot of the thrill of ridin the sand trails, the beach an the surf past ancient wreck on the Hatteras coast ar gone . . . ."

"You have to accep changes, with progress, a they coime along," sai Stocky. "It's a better lif today . . . but looking bac there were many pleasa memories."

Sitting in their attracti comfortable real estate offi at Hatteras village, one four they now operate in Da County, Anderson and Stoc do not look back too often, rather to the future, a trail all pioneers.

A momento of those ea years, a framed college pictures and news artic hangs on an office wall.

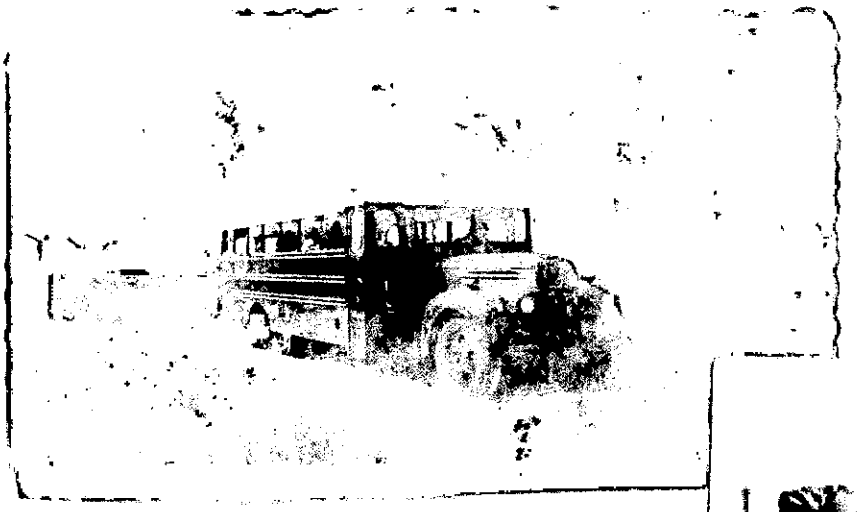
In the reception area of office, also on a wall, a framed letter congratulations fro President Gerald Fo commending the isla Midgetts for their years service with the Life Savi and Coast Guard service

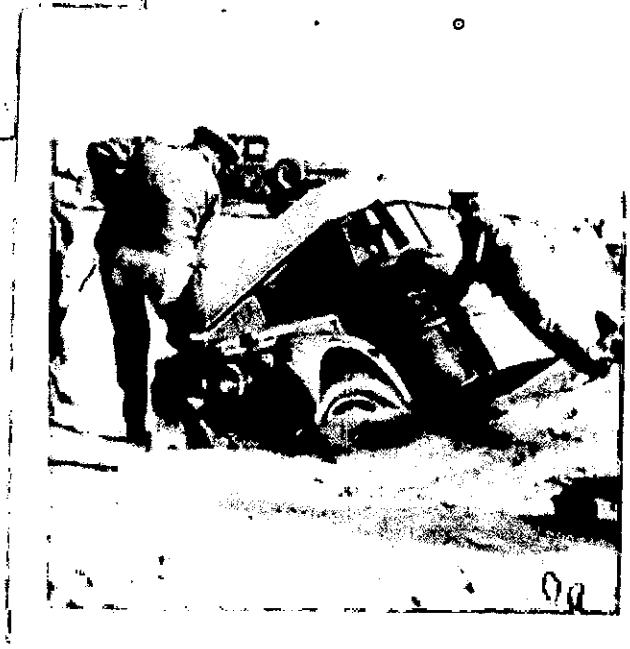
The three sons of Stockt Midgett Sr. didn't serve in t U.S. Coast Guard as did many of their relatives, th father, and forefathers; b their contribution to t transportation system Hateras Island in opening t area to tourism was inde an act of life saving to people and to the economy the island.

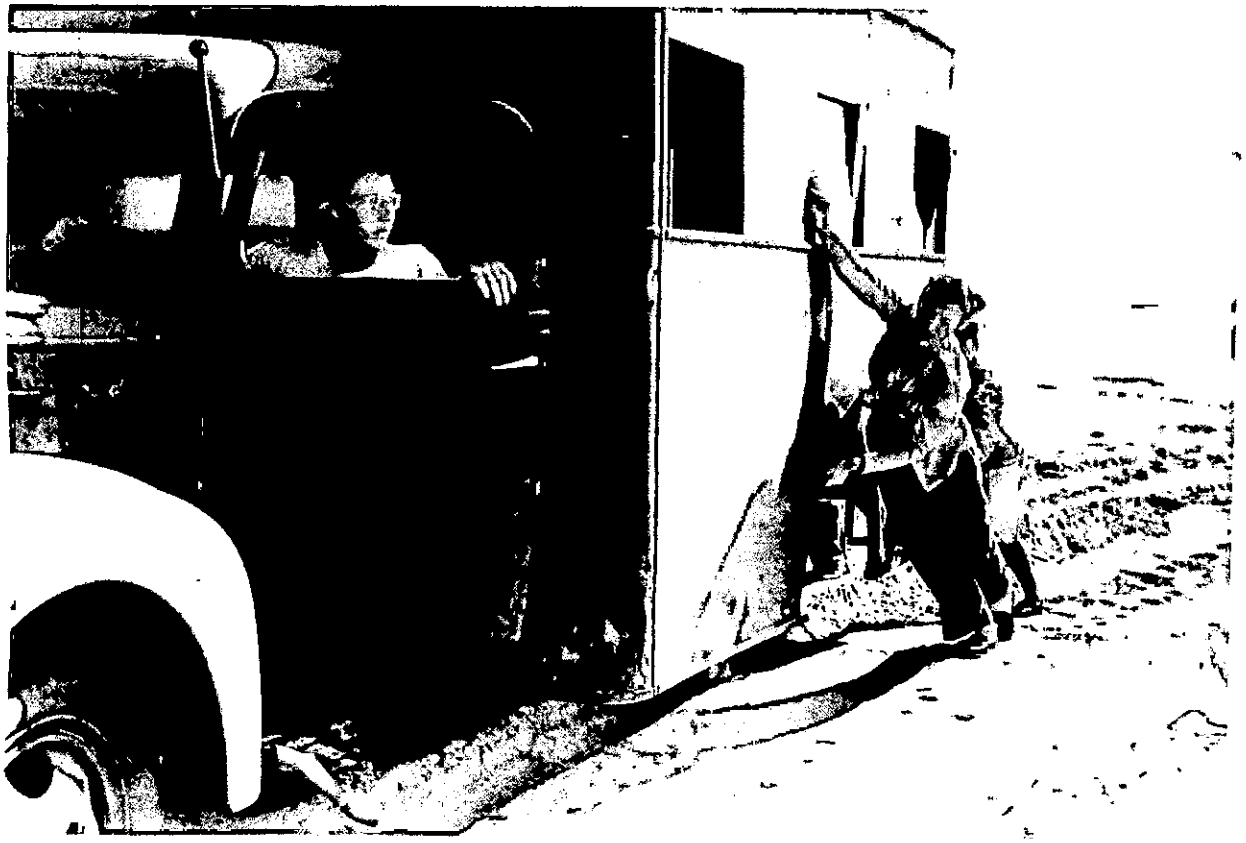
With the death of Haro

'I Lost the Bus'

ROUD ACCOMPLISHMENT of the Midgett Brothers was start- the first public transportation system on July 28, 1938 on Hat- as Island. The Hatteras Bus Line picked up passengers in nteo, boarded the then-Oregon Inlet Ferry and drove down oss the sand flats to Hatteras and six other small villages that along the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.







Hatteras Bus Chugs Along But Most of Thrills Are Gone

Hatteras, N.C.—The wildest, toughest bus line in America is a victim of modern convenience.

Uninitiated passengers will no longer be frightened out of their wits when their land-based conveyance heads straight into the Atlantic ocean—as the Hatteras-Manteo bus used to do without the slightest warning.

Nor, unfortunately, will city dwellers seeking thrills by riding the sand trails to the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" find them either as thick or as genuine as in the days before the highway down North Carolina's Outer Banks to Hatteras was hard-surfaced. "Progress" exacts its toll, too.

The new Outer Banks highway is now nearing completion along all its 60-mile length, and the bus trip between the town of Hatteras, near the quicksand cape that mariners have dreaded since the beginning of America, and Manteo on Roanoke Island, where Sir Walter Raleigh planted the first English colony in America, now takes only 2 hours and 15 minutes.

In the days before the hard-surfaced highway, when the bus followed sand trails, rolled over hard beach, and at times actually wallowed thru the surf to gain its name of "Off-Shore Bus," the trip took nearly 6 hours—if it didn't get stuck often, and the passengers were brawny and pushed it out of sand traps without delay.

Building the road, influx of hotels and motor courts, and beginning the Hatteras National Seashore park, increased demand for public transportation to such an extent that since July 28, the 14th anniversary of the beginning of the bus service where a bus route was thought to be impossible, the runs between Hatteras and Manteo have been doubled.

Instead of a single bus a day, the new schedule provides for early morning and early afternoon departures from both terminals.

A lot of the thrill of riding the sand trails, the beach and the surf past ancient wrecks on the Hatteras coast are gone, but more and more tourists are finding the bus the best way to travel the Outer Banks to Hatteras.

Unless they are experienced sand drivers, many motorists leave their expensive cars at Manteo and complete the trip to Hatteras on the old faithful bus. It's surer and it's quicker, because the bus, being a State franchised public carrier, has priority on the Oregon Inlet ferry.

Passengers on the bus will get across while drivers of private vehicles may take their turn waiting for a place on the ferry, which can't begin to carry all the cars across the inlet, which has swift currents and sometimes is quite rough.

Many people are familiar with the Outer Banks—the pencil thin strip of sand bars guarding the upper part of the 320-mile long coast of North Carolina—and the seven picturesque towns with their Coast Guard stations, wreck-strewn beaches and historic Hatteras lighthouse. Not so many, even tho they may have ridden the unusual bus, know the story of what until very recently was the wildest, toughest bus route in America.

It started over 30 years ago, as a dream of Coast Guardsman Theodore Stockton Midgett. He figured the comforts of civilization—doctors, drugs, mail, visitors, etc., should be brought to and from the sand strip island by motor car, just as people enjoyed such things on the mainland. So he bought a station wagon and turned it over to his eldest son, Harold, for hauling passengers and express during vacation time.

There being no road, the first buses carried no license tag. This is another distinction Hatteras lost with the coming of modern civilization in the guise of a paved road. Other distinctions that it is relinquishing include absence of jails, policemen and tax collectors.

When the elder Midgett died,

Continued from Page 3

son Harold set seriously about converting his dream of an Outer Banks bus line into reality, and in 1938 he formed the Hatteras-Manteo Bus line, a corporation which still holds the original franchise. Harold's two brothers, Anderson and Stockton, are also officers of the corporation.

Demand for service soon made it necessary to replace the station wagons with larger vehicles, and to the surprise of everyone 20-passenger buses had little difficulty making the sand and surf run under the expert pilotage of the Midgett boys.

Since the beginning of service, 14 years ago, the bus line has worn out 30 vehicles—but it hasn't missed a schedule. The fare had to be relatively high ($2.75 plus tax), because the sand and salt wore out buses so fast the replacement cost was, and is, terrific.

Maybe the only reason the Midgett boys ever showed a real profit was because they did their own driving and took care of their own maintenance. Now that they are doubling service and using double the number of buses, it means they'll have to hire more outside help with consequent wharpiddy roll rise. Maybe the increased volume will take care of it, but that is to be seen. New 35-passenger buses are being added to make a total of four in the fleet.

Stockton Midgett, who is conceded to be the best sand driver on the Banks, is chief driver now. He's no more talkative than most Outer Bankers, and he's never found anything very exciting about the wild, tough days.

No one ever gave birth to a baby in all the thousands of miles of rough driving, no one ever got sick or passed away en route even when it looked like the bus might be caught in the surf by the rising tide. (It never was.)

Stockton doesn't recall many celebrities—oh, a couple of governors, and there was a four-star general, but he doesn't remember his name, and dozens of senators, politicians and writers.

Harold Midgett, a veteran of Okinawa and eldest of the brothers, is in poor health, but continues to serve in an executive capacity. Anderson, who was also a pioneer sand driver, is president of the company and handles the inside work.

Greetings from Hatteras Island, North Carolina!

VIRGINIA DARE TAKES OVER OPERATION OF HATTERAS RUN

Public transportation facilities to and from Hatteras Island began a new era this week, as the Hatteras-Manteo Bus Line operation was sold to Virginia Dare Transportation Co. of Manteo. The new owners began operating on Tuesday, the 26th anniversary of the founding of the line from Hatteras, which was started by the late Theodore S. Midgett, and carried on by his sons, Stockton, Anderson, and in the early years Harold S. Midgett, now of Norfolk.

The move is looked upon as providing a much greater service potential, operated as an integral connection with Virginia Dare's other schedules, which provide three-times daily service between Norfolk, Elizabeth City and Manteo.

For many years after establishing the service from Hatteras, business flourished, partly due to the lack of most other feasible means of transportation. As late as the 1950's, Hatteras Island lacked a hard-surfaced road from north to south end, and numerous travelers found far more safety in traveling with the Midgett family, than to put their own vehicles to the mercy of sand and sea. More times than not the daily trips between Manteo and Hatteras were made on roads created by the determination and spirit of the driver, for back in those years the "roads" were mere sand trails.

As paved roads were built, residents of the village purchased vehicles in order to go and come at their own will, and patronage to the Hatteras line dwindled. In more recent years, a large portion of the business which has supported the line has been in the form of parcel service to the seven villages of Hatteras Island.

New Schedule Aug. 3

Under the new schedule which begins August 3, the daily service will originate in Manteo rather than Hatteras. On that date, departure from Manteo will be at 9:45 a.m., arriving in Hatteras at 11:45. The return trip will depart Hatteras at 3 o'clock, arriving in Manteo just before 5 p.m. for connection with northbound buses.

Virginia Dare officials point out that this will enable travelers destined for New York, for instance, a direct connection with no stop-overs and traveling time something less than 12 hours. Many of the service personnel, both Coast Guard and Navy, are expected to find this arrangement advantageous in utilizing week-end passes.

The Volkswagens which have been utilized for several years by Hatteras-Manteo were retired early this week, and service will be maintained for the time being at least, with full-size road coaches.

MIDGETT BROS. GARAGE
BUS STATION
HATTERAS-MANTEO BUS LINE

MIDGETT BROS. GARAGE
BUS STATION
HATTERAS-MANTEO BUS LINE INC