

Catherine and Victor Meekins

Catherine Deaton was a young music teacher, but she knew about newspapers. Her father was publisher of a weekly newspaper in Mooresville.

When Catherine married the sheriff of Dare County, Victor Meekins (1897-1964) in 1929, among the first things she thought about was a newspaper for the then-isolated Outer Banks and Roanoke Island.

Once their three children were brought along, in the early 1930s, the Meekins started the weekly Dare County Times.

In his early 20s, Victor Meekins had worked for the legendary W.O. Saunders on the Elizabeth City Independent, so he fell naturally into the role of both leading public figure and newspaper editor. Catherine handled much of the other news and managed the business.

Meekins continued the dual role of editor and sheriff until 1946. Then, he became chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners. Catherine, meanwhile, was busy with newspapering. At one time, the Meekins published weekly newspapers in Tyrrell and Hyde counties and at Nags Head. They consolidated them into the Coastland Times in 1949. The newspaper is still owned by a son.

Victor Meekins was a man of all purposes for his native Outer Banks. He was born in a big 19th-century house on the northeast “soundside” shore of Roanoke Island. His family had been on the island since colonial days.

He boosted tourism, backed development of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, pushed for bridges and roads and developed advertising materials for the area he named “the Walter Raleigh Coastland.” He also became a well-to-do owner of beach property in the post-World War II boom times on the coast.

Victor Meekins’ editorial style was pithy and strong. His news stories, especially about projects he considered vital for his community, were unabashedly one-sided. Off the editorial page, he was known for his colorful profanity and laconic good humor.

For nearly 30 years, Meekins collected (or concocted) colorful stories about the Outer Banks in columns titled, “The Old Sea Captain

and the Drummer.” The pieces were assembled in a booklet, with the subtitle “Salty Dialogue from the Land of Wind and Water.” The paperback was for years a favorite of visitors to the Outer Banks.

By Roy Parker Jr.
January 1998