



## CAPT. OMIE TILLETT RECEIVES HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOR IN NC

**MANTEO NC:** On Thursday March 5, 2009 the Dare County Boat Builder's Foundation, in partnership with the Roanoke Island Aquarium and the Aquarium Society, hosted a banquet honoring Captain Omie Tillett.

Captain Omie is a 2009 recipient of the Order of the Longleaf Pine, which is awarded by the Governor of North Carolina. The Order of the Longleaf Pine, created in 1965, is the highest and most prestigious honor granted by North Carolina and is presented to individuals who have a proven record of extraordinary service to the state. Contributions to their communities, extra effort in their careers, and many years of service to their organizations are some of the guidelines by which recipients are selected for this award.

Regarded as a pioneer in the Carolina boat building and fishing industry, Captain Tillett received the award Thursday evening, March 5<sup>th</sup>, at an event that included dinner in front of the Aquarium's large shark tank, followed by a formal presentation in Neptune's Theater.

Director of the Aquarium, Joe Malat, began the presentation by welcoming guests and sharing a story about his first encounter with Capt. Tillett in the late 70's while working at Billy McCaskill's tackle shop.

"At that time I knew a little bit about how to catch a fish from the beach, but I didn't know much about offshore fishing," explained Malat. "I would ask questions of the captains and mates whenever I could. I was so impressed by the fact that Omie would always take the time to patiently answer my questions, no matter how stupid those questions were, asked by someone he hardly knew. As we all know, that is just his way and one of the qualities that make him such a special man."

Malat then turned the presentation over to John Bayliss, president of the Dare County Boat Builder's Foundation.

Bayliss recognized board members in attendance and then provided a brief explanation of the Foundation's mission and accomplishments since its beginning.

"It began as a fundraising fishing tournament," said Bayliss. "All of us in this room were touched and devastated to lose one of our own, Taylor Harrison, too soon and too young to cancer. Several friends came together to figure out how to make sure his two children, Mallory and Alex, had the money they needed to go to school."

Since then, the tournament raised not only enough money to put Mallory and Alex through school, but it is now continuing the tradition of the tournament in an effort to provide scholarships and funding for educational programs in Dare County.

In 2009, the Taylor Harrison Memorial Scholarship of \$1000 will be awarded to nine students in Dare County – three from each high school for a total of \$9000 in funds – based on academic merit and financial need. Scholarship applications are available both online at [www.dcbbf.org](http://www.dcbbf.org) and through each high school's guidance department.

In the spirit of the Foundation's mission, Bayliss announced the start of a second scholarship that will be available beginning in 2010.

“On behalf of the board, I’m pleased to announce that the Omie Tillet Scholarship Fund will be available through the Dare County Boat Builders Foundation in 2010,” said Bayliss, to which the crowd responded with a standing ovation. “We have set aside \$5000 in a restricted account, and our goal is to raise \$20,000 toward the endowment this year.”

Bayliss then added that anyone interested in supporting either scholarship should contact a board member directly, or via the website – [www.dcbbf.org](http://www.dcbbf.org).

Dr. Neal Conoley then took to the podium to present a look back in time at the man and the legend, Captain Omie Tillett.

Dr. Conoley explained that Captain Tillett was nominated for the Order of the Longleaf Pine by NC Senator Marc Basnight for his leadership in the sportfishing and boat building industry. A mentor and teacher to many of the boat builders, captains and mates present that night, Captain Tillett’s spiritual and personal impact on an entire culture and community is a feat deserving of the Governor’s highest honor.

Upon receiving the plaque with his wife Patsy, Captain Tillett received another standing ovation from the crowd. Overwhelmed with the recognition and humbled by the presence of more than two-hundred folks – all of whom have been touched in some way by his presence in the boatbuilding and fishing community – Captain Tillett gave heartfelt thanks to everyone in attendance and the Lord.

“I have what I have because of God and the love he provides me,” Captain Tillett said smiling. “Where there is love there is God, and he’s here. And I just thank him so much for all of you and everything I have.”

***For more information, please contact:***

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