

## **THE LITTLE RED BOOK WAGON THAT COULD**

*The year-long saga of the library's "covered wagon"*

By CHUCK WATERS

This time last year, the Carteret County Public Library's Little Red Book Wagon was a sodden mess.

In operation since David Pleace first lovingly banged it together more than 20 years ago, the book wagon - like many other structures in Carteret County - suffered serious damage from the effects of Hurricane Florence in September 2018. A wooden storage shed filled with books tipped over onto the wagon, and the side access doors to the wagon were completely torn off on both sides. Books on the outside shelves were totally destroyed. Otherwise, the trailer structure was sound, the inside of the wagon was intact, and the books in the storage sheds were fine. But the wagon's book-selling season was cut short, and the remainder of the book-selling schedule for September and October had to be cancelled.

Help was needed to right the wagon, cover the side access doors, and seal the exposed areas with tarp until permanent repairs could be made. On Sept. 28, 2018, Carteret County native Billy Beck volunteered the use of his tow truck. With help from a FEMA worker, Mr. Beck righted the shed, emptied the book wagon, and covered it with tarp. He declined financial payment for his efforts, but was rewarded with an armful of books for his 8-year-old son, who came along to help.

Repairs to the wagon began in earnest on January 4 of this year. Richard Forward towed the wagon into place at the corner of Cedar and Pollack streets. Craftsmen, painters and other volunteers who assisted with the restoration work included Lora and Vic Fasolino (with associates Scott and Mike); Richard Forward, Doug Vaughan, Nancy Wolfe, Patti Frank, Diane Meelheim and Meg Forward, president of the Carteret County Friends of the Library. Also assisting was Mr. Pleace, consultant and original designer of the Little Red Book Wagon. Building supplies were donated by Safrits Buuilding, Atlantic Veneer and Ace Hardware.

On Saturday, January 12, the Book Wagon was returned to its home base behind the Carteret County Public Library at 1702 Live Oak St., where the finishing touches were applied. A new coat of marine varnish was applied to the exterior shelves; a second coat to the outside frame, and new lettering emblazoned on one side. Through it all, Friends president Meg Forward expressed her appreciation to members, volunteers and the Beaufort community for their efforts to help get the Little Red Book Wagon back in business, just in time for this year's spring, summer and fall tourist seasons.

"We are grateful to Lora and Vic Fasolino for their workshop space and tools, to Diane Meelheim for help and leadership in organizing us, and the entire community, which

came together for assistance," Ms. Forward said, adding that individual financial donations to the Book Wagon Fund provided necessary funds for the repair work. The Little Red Book Wagon is currently in hibernation for the winter. But it will reopen for business as usual in the spring of 2020, back at home on the corner of Cedar and Pollack streets on the Beaufort waterfront.

## **SIDEBAR**

### *Beaufort's husband-and-wife "citizen ambassadors"*

The husband-and-wife team of David and Shirley Pleace are among Beaufort's finest citizen ambassadors. And David has a Governor's Award for Volunteer Service hanging on his wall to prove it. (*See sidebar, below*).

David Pleace and eventual wife Shirley were both born in West London (UK), but they did not know each other at the time. Not until they separately emigrated to Montreal, Canada (David in 1956 and Shirley in 1957) and happened to meet during a skiing outing. The encounter went well, and the couple were married in 1960. The Pleaces are blessed with three sons and six grandchildren.

After settling in Raleigh, the Pleaces "found" Beaufort through a "Homeport" ad in the *Raleigh News & Observer*. As happens with many folks, they were charmed by Old Fish Towne and bought a townhouse for visiting on weekends. Both retired from their "day jobs" in the early 1990's (David from Nortel Networks in 1990 and Shirley from NTSU in 1993) and swapped the townhouse for a lot in Beaufort. A professional engineer with an MBA degree, David designed and built the home in which the couple still resides.

Once settled permanently in Beaufort, the Pleaces immersed themselves in volunteer work with the Beaufort Historical Association. Shirley signed on as a docent, while David took the wheel of the 1958 English double-decker bus used on the popular motor tours of the Beaufort Historic District. He also located a retired 1968 Central London bus to replace the aging (no automatic transmission or power steering) double-decker. David had the roof removed to accommodate "open air" seating and the bus was shipped to Charleston, SC. Three volunteers drove the bus back to Beaufort, where it remains in operation. David Pleace continues his avid interest in the bus's welfare to this day.

With Beaufort's busing situation well in hand, Mr. Pleace turned his engineering skills to brick masonry. Catherine Cloud and Bennett Moss introduced David to Fort Macon State Park historian Paul Branch, who tapped Mr. Pleace's engineering expertise in rebuilding the fort's hot shot furnace, the cookhouse, and the large bread oven. At the same time, Shirley joined the Friends of Fort Macon Board and volunteers as a tour guide during the summer. David also joined the Friends of the Carteret County Public Library in Beaufort. The library's support group had just lost the old Beaufort Train Depot as a storage repository for used and donated books to be sold at library book sales. Contacted by Bill Hubbard (Friends' president at the time), Mr. Pleace recalled a design he had seen at a Nashville (Tenn.) flea market and designed and built a book

sales trailer that could be towed by a pick-up truck. As David remembers, he initially painted the trailer (or "wagon") blue and yellow, colors of Beaufort's town flag. Local artist Jim Williams suggested painting the wagon red, so it would draw more attention. And the Little Red Book Wagon was born.

## **A DAVID PLEACE TMELINE**

1997 - David designed and built the Little Red Book Wagon, which is still in use today  
2000-2002 - Served as vice president of the Friends of the Carteret County Public Library in Beaufort

2003-2007 - Served as president of the FOL

2010 - Chosen "Volunteer of the Month" by the Carteret Community Foundation.

Nominated by the Friends as he retired from the Board of Directors after serving for 20 years

2010- David Pleace was presented the Governor's Medallion for Volunteer Service by North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue in Raleigh. The award recognizes the top 20-25 volunteers in the state. Medallion recipients are nominated at the county level by the county award coordinator. Only one Medallion nomination is permitted per county. A statewide panel reviews and evaluates all these nominations to determine the award recipients. Medallion award recipients are honored at an annual recognition ceremony, during which the Medallion is placed around the neck to signify the volunteer's great service to the community.

[http://www.carolinacoastonline.com/entertainment/around\\_town/article\\_9da07b7a-46d8-11e7-9cbf-17fb4a69d9d3.html](http://www.carolinacoastonline.com/entertainment/around_town/article_9da07b7a-46d8-11e7-9cbf-17fb4a69d9d3.html)

### **David and Shirley Pleace**

**Before and after pictures of the Little Red Book Wagon. (Donated photos).**

