

What He Knows Could Fill A Library

By JOHN MORGAN

It is not generally known that Sea Pines Co. maintains a veritable storehouse of specialized resort information in its private library, located in the Sea Pines office complex.

So, it is even less generally known that the man behind the little-publicized repository is islander Don Hobart, a former senior vice president of Philadelphia-based Curtis Publishing Co.

The library is Hobart's brainchild. His marketing acumen was brought to the attention of Sea Pines board chairman Charles Fraser in 1959. At that time, Hobart was one of the guiding hands behind *Holiday* magazine, published by Curtis, and had been from its inception in 1946.

"I got involved in recreation and travel with *Holiday*, so I knew about resort marketing," Hobart noted last week, as he reclined in his glass-walled office adjacent to both the library and the Sea Pines telephone switchboard.

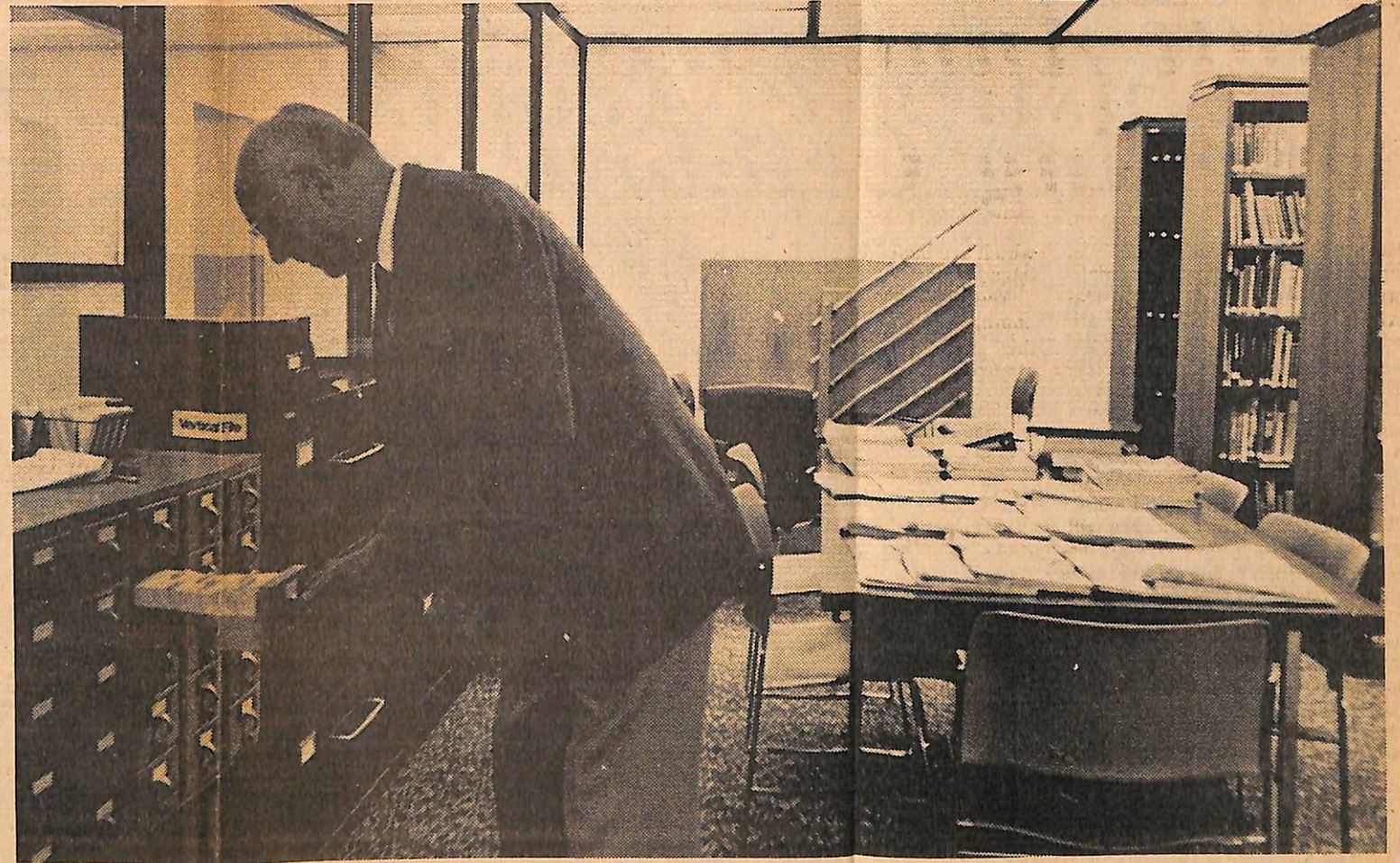
Energetic, Youthful 78

He is a dapper, stately gentleman of 78 years whose youthful appearance and obvious energy belie his age. He credits only the genes from his grandparents (they lived to be very old) and the fact that he quit smoking cigarettes years ago for his appearance. But one suspects his determination to maintain an active old age has helped as well.

Hobart is currently directing a complete reorganization of library material. And what will his next task be after the reshuffling is finished: "By then, it'll be time to start the reorganization all over again," he said. Five female assistants periodically help him update the library.

The library consists of one long, low-ceilinged room with stack upon stack of resort information, several

Don Hobart consults the card catalog in the Sea Pines special library while researching a resort analysis he is conducting (Photo by John Morgan)



study cubicles, periodical tables and shelves of video cassettes chronicling various aspects of resort operation.

The rows of books and studies deal with all areas of resort trade, recreation and travel — everything from bird watching to operating a restaurant to building a condominium to water skiing.

The material in the library is used primarily by Sea Pines employes for reference and research into their various duties. For example, a Sea Pines restaurant manager may study methods of training a food and beverage staff from the video cassettes, or a real estate salesman may study an analysis of the vacation home market in any section of the U.S. It is not a circulating library, however. "We do not lend books out," Hobart said. "None of them leave this room."

Hobart is employed there as a consultant. He sets his own hours and usually averages about three hours a day. "I may and I may not come in tomorrow, but I'll keep my eye on what's going on down here," he noted.

No analysis of the resort market existed anywhere until *Holiday* magazine, at Hobart's behest, began surveys in the 1940s on where vacationers in various income groups and geographical locations spent their time and money.

Hobart had created a library at *Holiday* similar to the one here — from scratch. So, by the time he came to Hilton Head for a visit in 1959, Fraser was aware of Hobart's potential and hired him as a consultant. Hobart moved to the island in 1968 and was named to the Sea Pines Co. board of directors.

Thanks to Hobart's research, Sea Pines now boasts a complete marketing analysis for every income group of products and services in the resort, recreation, land development and housing industries.

Donald M. Hobart, 78 Years Young

By Young Dawkins

What on this great green earth could make a 78-year-old man who has lived a full and successful life forego some of the pleasures of retirement to continue in a job that offers very little public reward?

In the case of Donald M. Hobart, it is his way of fighting back the advance of time. "I enjoy doing this kind of work," Hobart said. "It keeps me young, active and alert."

The work Hobart does is to run the Library of the Institute of Environmental and Research Studies for the Sea Pines Company, a library he started at the

request of Charles Fraser and one which he considers to be one of the finest of its kind anywhere.

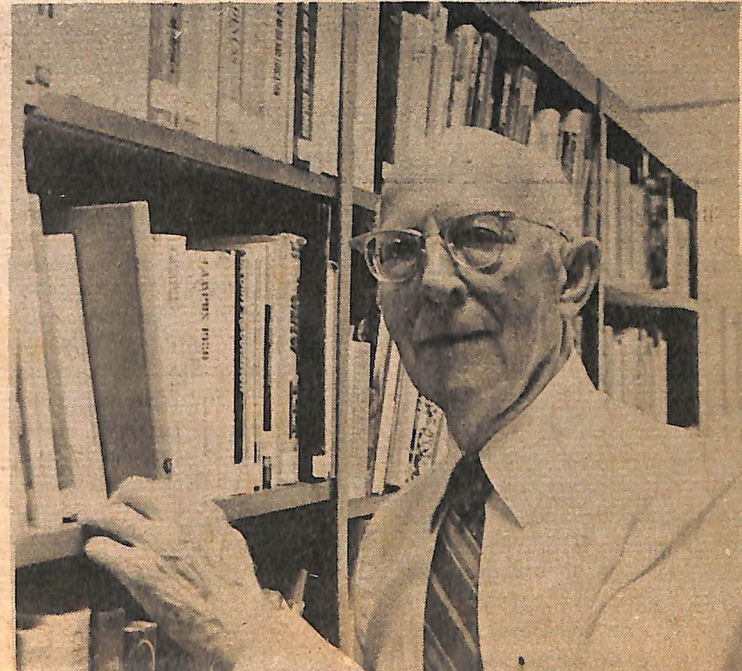
"After I retired from the Curtis Publishing Company, Mr. Fraser invited me down to Hilton Head to act as a consultant," Hobart said. "It soon became clear to me that the people trying to put Sea Pines together needed a reference area where they could find out the answers to the many questions that such a project posed. And when those sort of people need answers, they need them now, not next week."

The result of that effort was the present library, a neatly indexed affair that includes information about virtually every phase

imaginable involved in building a resort like Sea Pines. And as Hobart likes to point out, "Charles Fraser uses the library more than anyone."

The library got its start in 1963 when Fraser lured Hobart to the island from his retirement home in Charleston to act as a consultant. In addition to the library, Hobart also served on the board of directors of the Sea Pines Company until March of last year.

A home for the library was found in 1970 when it was housed in one of the old lighthouse keeper's cottages in Harbour Town. A year later, it was moved to its present location at the Sea Pines company offices.



Life of retirement means work for islander

By Jane Hayes

Don Hobart doesn't look like a man preparing to celebrate his 83rd birthday and his 50th wedding anniversary, and he certainly doesn't fit the stereotype of a retiree, although he left the Curtis Publishing Co. in Philadelphia 18 years ago after a 39-year career with that firm.

"I can't imagine a person having a better retirement than I've got right here," Hobart says, as a look of satisfaction spreads across his face.

Some retirees might dispute that statement, because for all intents and purposes, Hobart does as much now as he did when he was director of research and senior vice president at Curtis with a staff of 75 people. And he does it virtually alone.

As a consultant for the Sea Pines Co., Hobart mans the resource center in the firm's executive office building, a smallish room "with the best view on the island," he maintains. The library contains the usual complement of books and publications and extensive files of island-related materials. Its most valuable resource may well be Hobart.

"When I first came here, I decided that I would collect material about the island. I started with the Sea Pines Co. and have books about their operating statistics that go back to 1964," Hobart said.

He also began collecting information from the Hargray Telephone Co. and the Palmetto Electric Cooperative and compiled statistics about building permits issued for construction on the island.

Island population

Several years ago, when islanders began talking about the



Don Hobart enjoying retirement

possibility of incorporation, Hobart decided to work out some population statistics for Hilton Head. He and Fred Howell, who was head of the Marketing Research Division of Sea Pines, went to the census people and asked them how to compile such figures.

"Their formula was based on the number of children attending local schools. Using their methodology, Fred and I came up with population statistics that were so far off they were laughable," Hobart said with a chuckle. "The census bureau system wasn't valid here because of the large number of older people."

Through a system of trial and error, Hobart and Howell finally worked out a method of accurately estimating island population. A look at his statistics proves the validity of "Hobart's estimates," as he calls them.

His projection for the end of

1975 showed an anticipated resident population of 6,900. The April 1975 census figure was 6,911. Hobart estimated the 1980 island population at year's end will be 10,500 persons. The preliminary census figures for April of this year show 10,242 people.

Hobart is no lightweight when it comes to compiling statistics. He's been doing it professionally since 1923, when he joined the commercial research department at Curtis in Philadelphia. After a stint with the company's advertising division in Cleveland, where he met and married the former Elizabeth Cross, Hobart returned to the firm's headquarters in Philadelphia to replace his former boss.

During World War II, he assisted in developing a future planning operation for the publishing company. He helped found *Holiday* magazine and then conducted surveys on the travel

habits of the American public. One such survey ended up in the hands of Charles Fraser.

Long-distance commute

How Hobart ended up here is another story. He and Elizabeth purchased a carriage house in Charleston in 1957 and proceeded to restore it. Hobart became a long-distance commuter.

"I lived in Philadelphia and went to Charleston every couple of weeks," he said. "A woman we became friendly with in Charleston moved to Hilton Head to take over the food and beverage operation at the former William Hilton Inn. In 1959 we came to visit her and met with Charles. He expressed an interest in having me work for him as a consultant."

"In 1963, after I retired, I came down here and joined the Sea Pines Board of Directors." Hobart says he suggested and then successfully battled for a company library, "because growing firms need one."

Sea Pines' first library was located where Signe's Harbour Town shop is now. When the executive offices were put in near Sea Pines Circle, the facility moved there. A third move took place when the executive offices moved to their present location.

"Grant Morehouse's wife was our last 'official' librarian," Hobart recalled. "One day after she left, I said to someone, 'Who the hell is running the library?' He replied, 'I thought you were.' And that's how I ended up here."

Hobart is a veritable gold mine of information about Hilton Head. If he can't tell you something off the top of his head, he knows where to locate it within his well-organized domain. His notebooks contain reams of material detailing the island's growth.

Checks census

For many years, "I guess ever since Dick Dey took over at the Chamber of Commerce," Hobart has compiled population

statistics for the chamber. Conscientious as he is, he checks them against final census figures, although it is somewhat surprising that he bothers. His statistics are amazingly accurate.

Since 1970, he has predicated his figures on an annual growth rate of ten percent. That rate, he feels, will decrease over the next five years.

"It's a statistical thing," he says. "When you compound the figure annually, the higher your base number is, the lower your growth percentage will be."

Through 1985, Hobart predicts the permanent population on the island will grow at an annual rate of seven percent. Beyond 1985, the percentage will decrease even more.

Although he is pleased with the proven accuracy of his statistics, Hobart is proudest of an island goods and services survey he put together.

"It occurred to me that if I could discover how much state sales tax businesses on the island paid, I could pretty well figure out how much business everyone had done for a given year," he said. "It worked, too."

The survey does include estimates of volume for Hilton Head businesses with headquarters off-island, but the bulk of the information is an accurate picture of business growth here for the past several years. The survey, Hobart rightfully claims, is a significant accomplishment.

He is currently helping Louise Franklin with a study of island water and sewage usage and water purity. "Now don't you say it's my project," Hobart warned. "Louise is doing all the work."

Hobart used to play golf in his spare time until a recurring back problem forced him to put aside his clubs. "Now I'm just a walker, when I'm not compiling statistics," he says with a smile.