

Emerald Isle Memories

In honor of my mom, Mary Ann Gores and in memory of my dad, John Gores, b. 1924, d. 2001



Our memories are reflected in the sparkles of the Crystal Coast

My name is Pat Cooper. My husband Greg and I were both born and raised in northwestern Wisconsin. That is where our roots are. In 1991, Greg was hired as a professor of philosophy at Duke University in Durham. And so, with our 8yr old son and 6 yr old daughter, we traveled to NC. In a letter to a friend, I wrote, "I, probably more than anyone else in the family, have grown to love the South. I love the diversity, the culture and the seashore." This story is about the SEASHORE which is still my favorite place on earth.

Images of Today (Oct., 1995)

A skiff of rainbow to the east

Tern prints in the sand

Dolphins leaping joyfully

Teal-brown swells crash upon land.



Thank you for this morning

The seashore for our family is the coast of Emerald Isle, NC, where we have stayed at least 2-3 times/year for almost half my life. On our first trip to EI, we stayed at an oceanfront rental (and its been oceanfront ever since). It was the beginning of a lifelong love affair with the Atlantic Ocean and the beaches of EI. It is a place of beauty and peace for me where I breath easier, my stresses melting away, my spirit melding with that of the sea. It is where my children frolicked and memories were made, and now where their children do the same. It is where I brought my parents and my uncle over the years, and where they discovered that they **actually could** afford to stay for the winter months! It is where aunts, uncles and cousins drove from the Midwest to see us and to learn about what we were raving about. It has changed all of our lives!

My mother is 91 now and, sadly it is too difficult for her to make it to EI, though whenever I see her, we seem to talk about our experiences there. In writing this I asked her “what is your favorite memory?”

Her response: “oh, so many! One of them, I guess, is the first time I ever went there. It was so awesome, and I never lost that feeling. Every time I went, it was like a spiritual place”.

"My memory of first arriving in the late evening and walking on the beach with you (me) is vivid and left me aching to go back over the years. I watched my grandchildren grow there and then my greatgrandchildren, and now I have my memories, and that's good."



Mom and me – our first trip together to EI – October, 1992

"Another precious memory is Dad and I walking on the beach every day, when he could still walk, and how we loved it and had so much fun." (As Mom and I walked the beach, I remember her telling me how she was standing looking at the houses with her back to the ocean and, with the incoming tide, a big wave drenched her. "Dad thought that was so hilarious and laughed all the way back"!

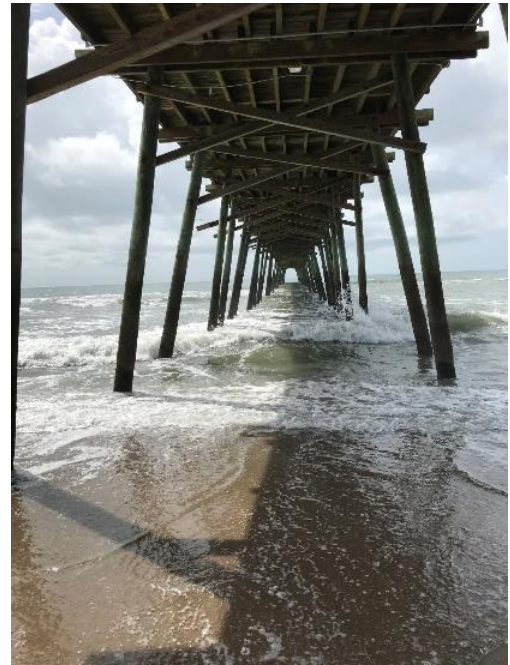


John Gores, beloved husband of Mary Ann and father of me, Dianne, Mary and Laurie. I never expected that a boy raised on a farm in Wisconsin, worked hard all his life to provide for his family, spent his vacations at "the shack" in northern WI, would so totally fall in love with the waters, skies and beaches of EI and the Atlantic Ocean.

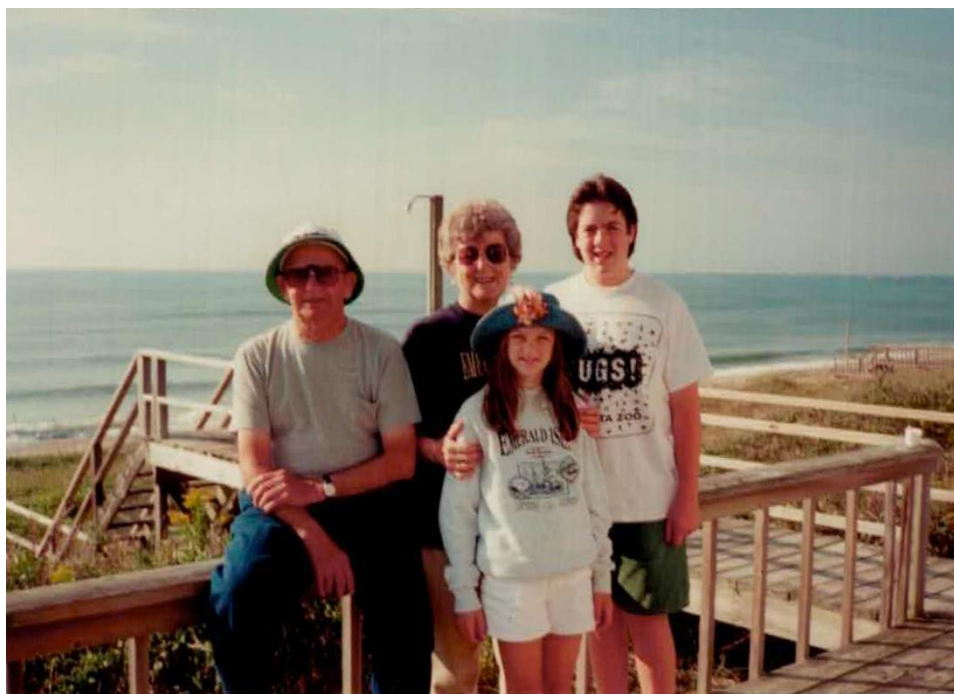
In the winter, my folks shared the rent for a lovely place at Sound of the Seas with my Uncle Jerome and closed up the Chetek, WI house Jan. through May. I would bring the kids (and often one or another of the children's friends) every weekend from Durham. They would all three stand up on the balcony and wave when we drove up. I cherish those memories.

I never dreamt that my dad would love the seashore like he did. When he could still get down there, they would walk for miles on those blessed beaches. They made friends with other walkers, my uncle frequently starting the conversation by his opening line, "I'm from Wisconsin" (his Green Bay Packers jacket probably gave it away before he said a word). My dad was, unbeknownst to us initially, in early to mid-stages of Alzheimer's, but he did so enjoy the seashore, and he would collect "worry stones" endlessly as well as some really nice conch and olive shells. My uncle was especially successful at finding beautiful shells and other sea momentos. I still have many of them that I just can't part with. I wish I had more photos of him now.

And, of course the dolphins – we all love watching them feed, jump and play!



How many times have I stood under the Bogue fishing pier in the midst of a walk?



1995

Dad, Mom, Jesse and Johanna

Dad also loved watching the shrimp boats and ships from the balcony as well as the fighter planes flying overhead from Cherry Point. There was always something for him to do, even when he could no longer get down to the beach.

During those winter months, they would go every Sunday to St. Mildred's Catholic Church in Swansboro, eat at Rucker John's or Mike's, and Mom and I would shop at the Plantation and at Swansboro for clothes that tickled her fancy. She got a lot of compliments on her wardrobe when she went back to Wisconsin!



That was the winter, but our other forays were in the spring and, my favorite, in the fall. We haven't missed a year since 1992 (except one year during COVID). In that time, our children have grown and have decided to live close enough to EI that they go several times a year with their own children now. We also go all together every October. We have always been so thankful and felt so very fortunate that we have been and still are able to spend time on the beaches of EI. And oceanfront rentals are so fun each time!



The shells are different in the spring and fall, and the beaches are still not overly crowded. My mom and I watch the sanderlings as we walk (they remind her of her grandmother, tiny, busy, scuttling about). And I can still not see a pelican flying overhead without thinking of my paternal grandmother who had their wry look which made you wonder what she was thinking!

The spring and fall were when my husband Greg, took my dad and uncle fishing in the sound; he now does the same with our grandsons.

2006

Mom and I never miss a trip to Rucker John's for the salad with hot mustard bacon dressing and honey croissants!

An Ocean Backdrop



Jo, Mom, Jesse



Jo

1994

Dad, Mom, Jesse and Johanna



2006

*Finally, a photo with my son, Jesse!
Also, me, Mom and sister Laurie*

Busy in the Kitchen



1994

Mom and Johanna



2007 - Mom and my husband Greg - lots of activity in the kitchen!



Dianne clearly hasn't gotten the concept of "wet hand/dry hand" for breading fish



"Wine"ding Down in the Evening



Me, Mom and cousin Cathie. Mom's face looks joyous!

2010

Mom and Dianne



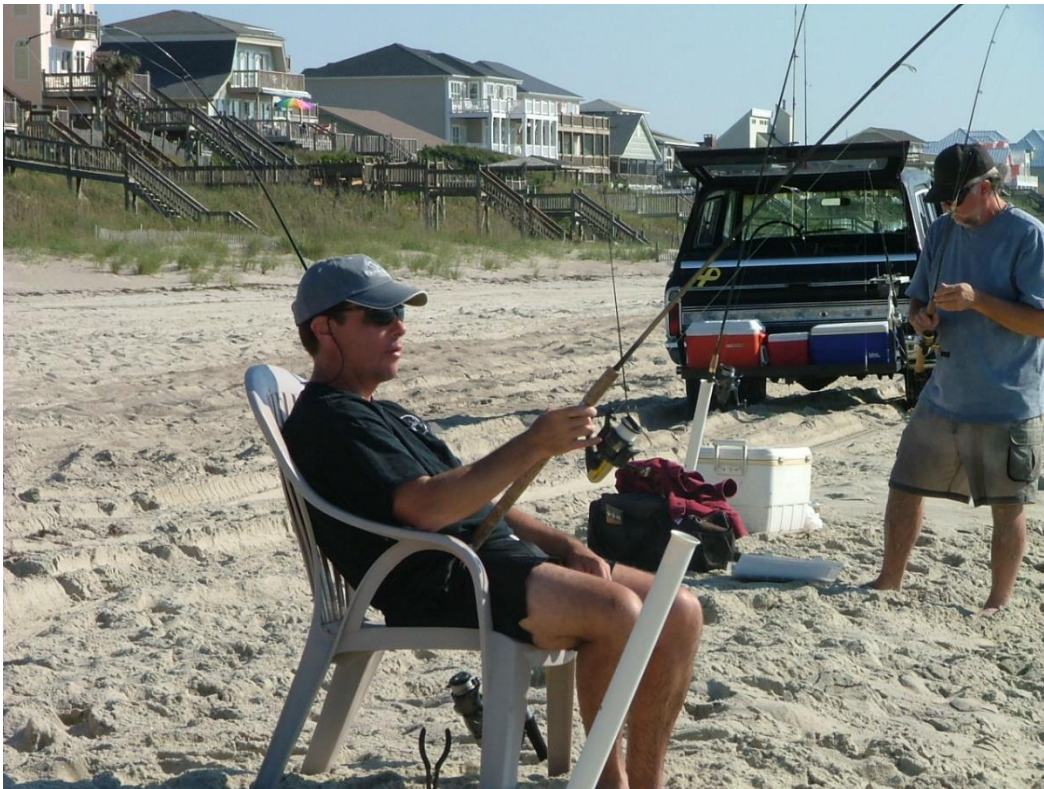


2010
*Dianne's girls, Jessica
and Kate*

Surf Fishing



My hubby of 46 years, not much of a walker but sure is a fisherman!



I don't even have to ask Karl and Greg about their favorite memories!

2012

*Never know what you're going
to catch!*



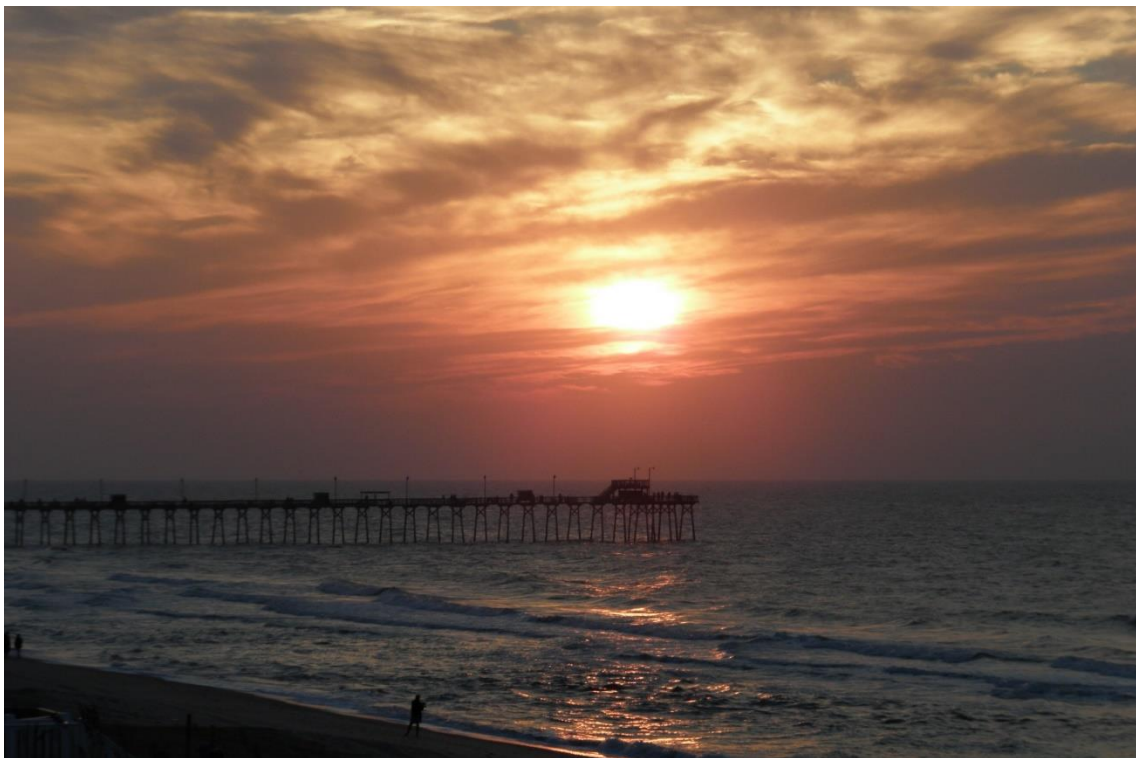
Soaking Up the Sun



Beach beauties—Cathie, + me, Mom and sister Dianne



Maybe too much sun. My son, Jesse, grew up going to El. He learned Y turns in the driveway of our rental at age 14.



One of 100's of glorious sunrises I woke up to.

Long Walks on the Beach



2006



2012

Me, Mom and Dianne



Our daughter, Johanna, SIL, Ian and grandsons, Cooper and Jack. Another one would be coming before long!

The Matriarch of the Family



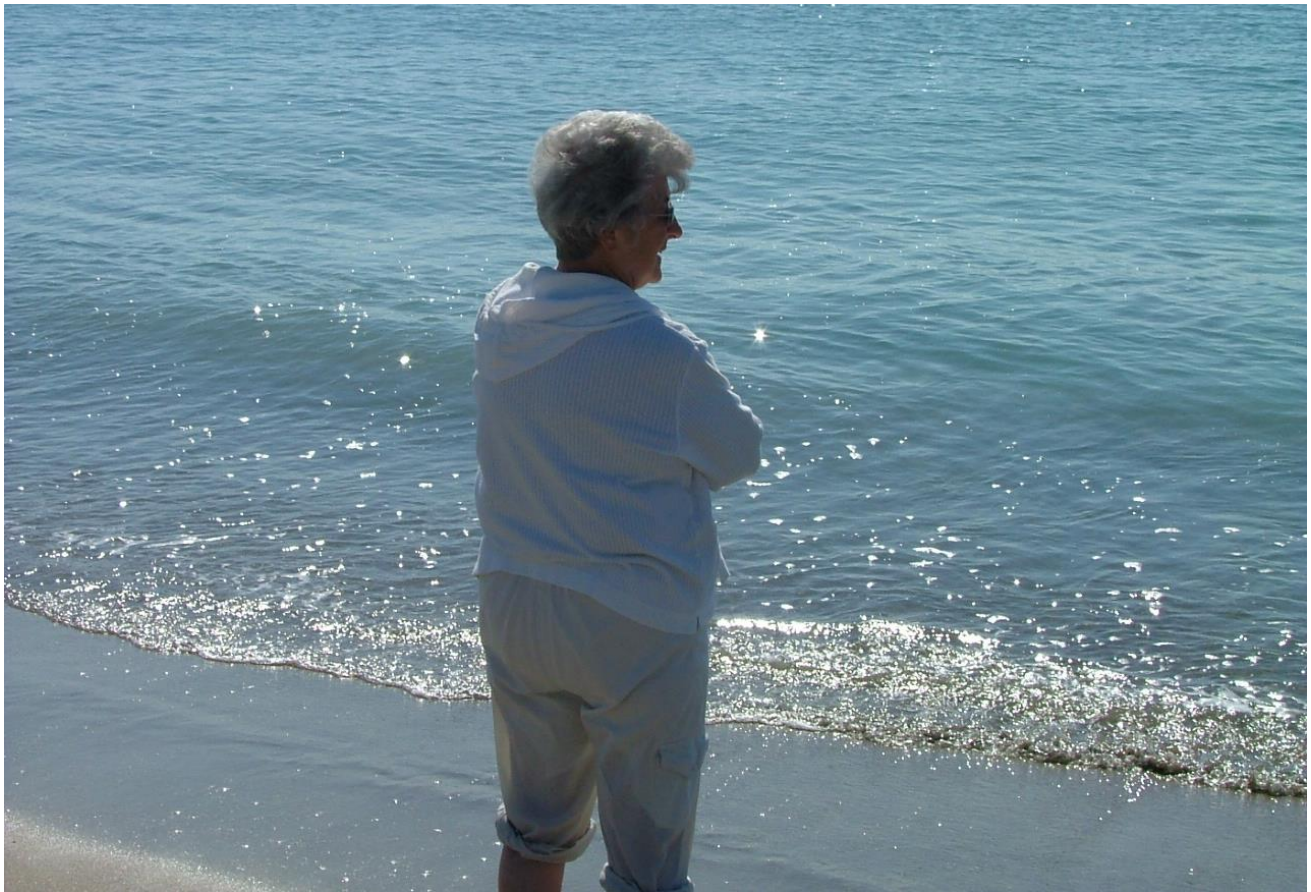
The jacket is from Swansboro, one of her favorite places to shop

How many times did I watch Mom with one of her grandchildren – in her element at EI!



Mom and granddaughters Jo, Kate and Jessica. She watched Jo grow up here. Kate and Jessica came several times from Minnesota, a really precious memory!

A favorite pastime - reading on the balcony (Mom was a librarian)



Mom on a spiritual journey

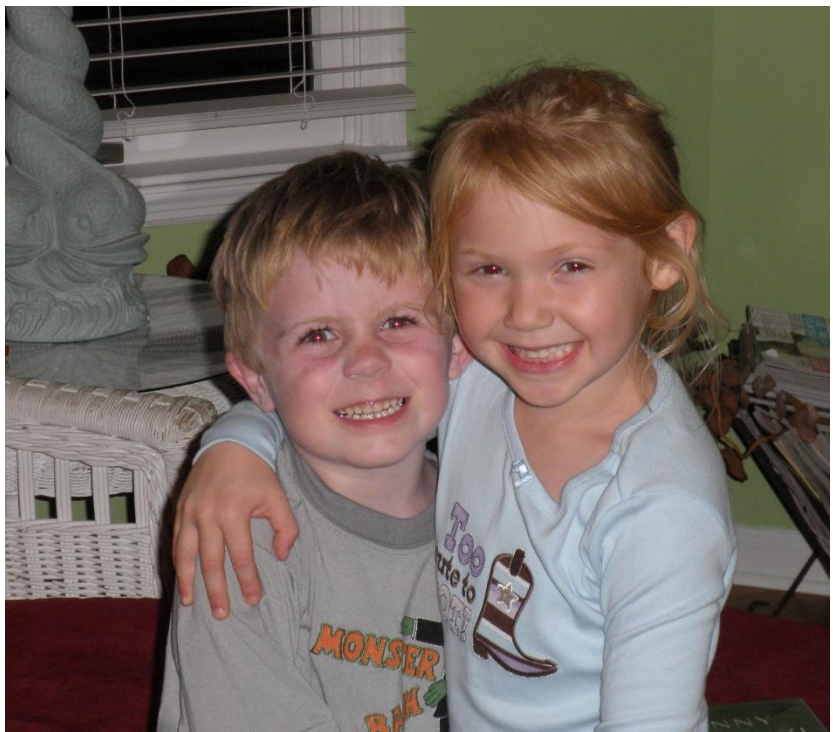
Extended Family



My cousin Cathie, me, Mom and my sister Dianne, who brought my parents to EI and NC for so many years – thank you, Dianne!

2010

Jessica's Ethan and Katie's Aubrey





*Greatgrand-
children
from
Minnesota,
Aubrey and
Ethan!
Wonder if
they still
have their
shells!*

2012

*Do you see a
face in the sand
at Aubrey's
feet?*





Granddaughters with greatgrandchildren!

Aubrey and her mom, Kate



The Grandkids



Another one here, Cooper, Jack and Cole



The Jennings boys, our grandsons



Jack, our middle grandson



Cole, my third grandson

I think that lastly, I would like to include in these memories, the funeral of my maternal grandmother, who was perhaps the person closest to me. It took place in 1992 and I remember visualizing the sea to calm myself. In looking through photos, I found a journal from my October 19, 1995 trip to EI.

"Happy Birthday, Grandma. There is something that I'm doing now which I did at your funeral – listening to the ocean – its soothing powerful secure sound – it whispers and roars. It helps me understand that life does not revolve around me, but that I am a part of life. That's important. ...

It easy to say, when I go back to work, that "reality has struck", but I can HEAR, smell, see, feel the ocean wherever I am . . . and I'm so grateful for that".



Thank you in the evening

