



Photos contributed
Left: Bob Schaffran runs the show at the Derby Day fundraiser for the Fort Caswell Rifle Pit.

Above: A crew removes soil behind the passageway wall that is bowed six inches and could collapse. To correct it, hydraulic jacks are placed inside the pit, and over time the jacks are tightened and repositioned to move the wall in place and make it plumb.

Fundraiser to repair World War I range at Caswell Beach

Derby Day event assists rifle pit

For a fifth season, Bob Schaffran will serve as master of ceremonies for the Derby Day Celebration, a fundraiser for the non-profit Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range. Schaffran is among the five directors of the group that will stage the event Saturday, May 6, from 2:30 to 7 p.m. at 45 Pinehurst Drive, Caswell Beach.

The group is raising money to stabilize the World War I rifle range located in a residential community beside Oak Island Golf Course. The target pit once belonged to Fort Caswell when the fort saw action during two world wars, but has since been left to deteriorate through the years .

Schaffran’s outfits that demand attention from arriving guests are different each year—he dresses in bold colors and unusual attire and makes it fun to watch him. Through the years he sometimes appears in a suit with a top hat and other times he shows up in shorts and colorful sports jackets.

While Schaffran might keep the crowd guessing about his costume, there’s never any question he’ll make the event entertaining. He keeps the momentum going with a booming voice as he conducts the six tabletop horse races throughout the afternoon.

In between announcements and races, Schaffran conducts drawings for door prizes, encourages folks to participate in the silent auction and plays music of the times. “Over There”, “This Is the Army Mr. Jones” and other World War I musical selections will be played this

year as the group is focusing on the years of the Great War.

Assisting Schaffran with his performance for the first time will be a World War I re-enactor from Pennsylvania, Carl Mauney, who recently made a hit at the Centennial Commemoration of the date the U.S. entered the Great War. The event was held at the site of the rifle range and was sponsored by the Friends group and the Brunswick Town Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution. Mauney arrived in full period military dress and kept the crowd entertained by describing the various parts of the itchy wool uniform from his feet up to the helmet on his head.

Mauney will be announcing Military Moments on May 6, naming those who served from Brunswick County and other areas of the U.S., telling stories about their lives.

So far these pictures and stories have been placed on a Wall of Honor on the website as well as on display during fundraisers. “We’re hoping that those people who sent the military and family pictures will attend and enjoy seeing their loved ones on the wall to be honored,” said Ron Eckard, a founding member of the Friends organization.

The event will include a luncheon. Those wishing to attend may send an e-mail to ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com. More information about the historic preservation project is available at www.caswellriflerange.com.