

Former professor, three others inducted into Hall of Fame

By CAL BRYANT, Sports Editor
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During an illustrious teaching and coaching career which spanned 40 years, Bill Sowell touched the hearts and souls of numerous young men and women who passed through Chowan College's gates.

In front of a packed house in Thomas Cafeteria, Chowan returned the favor November 16 at the annual Hall of Fame banquet.

Sowell, who retired in 1995 after serving as a professor and production manager for the college's School of Graphic Communications as well as holding the reigns of the school's golf program for 15 years, was one of four new inductees in the college's Sports Hall of Fame.

Sponsored by the Braves Club, the Sports Hall of Fame is now in its 12th year.

"I am deeply touched by this honor," said Sowell. "but I'm just as deeply touched by the family and friends gathered here tonight."

The South Carolina native holds the honor of having received the very first graphic arts diploma presented by Chowan in 1955.

Sowell loved the college so much that he remained on as a graphic arts professor until 1993.

During that span, Sowell took on the additional chore of coaching the college's golf team. He was twice tabbed as Coach of the Year as well as landing several of his players on the NJCAA All-American team.

"I would hope that someone's life is better because of Chowan College and its coaches who cared," observed Sowell.

Dr. B. Franklin Lowe, vice president for academic affairs, performed the honor of inducting Sowell into the Hall of Fame.

"Bill truly believed in the concept of the student-athlete," said Lowe. "Without question, he was committed to Chowan College and to the education of our youth. His influence is spread far and wide between so many young people."

Joining Sowell in the Sports Hall of Fame Class of 1996 were former Chowan athletes Robert Brown, Andrea McGee and Janet Leonard Rowlands.

Brown (1978-80) was a first team All-American en route to capturing identical honors while completing his college career at Virginia Tech. He went on to an 11-year career in the NFL with the Green Bay Packers.

"I was impressed the very first time I laid eyes on Robert Brown," recalled former Chowan head coach and current day director of athletics Jim Garrison who handled Brown's induction. "He was physical, intense, and aggressive, but the thing that impressed me the most was the way he kept his cool when the action heated up."

Brown was equally impressed with Garrison.

"Coach Garrison gave me the opportunity to excel in football and to get an education," said Brown, an Edenton native. "I'm proud to have had a chance to play for him. He taught me a lot, things which I carried forward throughout the remainder of my football career."

Brown also heaped praise upon his parents.

"My mom and dad raised me the right way," he admitted. "They made me a good



The Chowan College Braves Club inducted its 12th class into the Sports Hall of Fame during the annual banquet following the final football game of the 1996 season. The Class of 1996 includes, from left, Robert Brown, Andrea McGee, Bill Sowell and Janet Leonard Rowlands. (Photo by Cal Bryant).

citizen first and foremost."

Added Brown, "I offer thanks to God, Chowan College and to the Braves Club for this great honor."

McGee's association with Chowan College (1981-83) came through a simple tryout for the basketball team.

"I remember him coming in and trying out," recalled veteran Braves basketball boss Bob Burke who inducted his former player. "He twisted his ankle, but it never slowed him down. I really like that gritty determination."

The rest, as they say, is history.

Earning a bushel basket full of honors—Eastern Tarheel Conference Tournament MVP, Region X Co-Player of the Year, team MVP and Honorable Mention All-American—McGee helped guide the Braves to a 45-12 overall record during this two-year stay in Murfreesboro. He led the team in scoring both years, something

matched only one other time under a Burke-coached team at the junior college level.

"Andrea had a passion and a pure love for the game of basketball," stressed coach Burke.

"I remember the time at Louisburg College where Andrea refused for us to lose," continued Burke. "We were down by four with nine seconds left and no time-outs. He drives the lane, hits a basket, gets fouled and makes the free throw. Louisburg then turned the ball over and Andrea hits an off-balanced shot at the buzzer to win the game."

A humble man, McGee chose to pass out thank-yous to his family, coach and teammates.

"Coach Burke and my teammates pushed me every day in practice," said McGee. "They helped me reach the emotional high it takes to Shop of Murfreesboro.

be a successful athlete."

Evidently, the emotion is a McGee trait off the court as well, as the former Wallace-Rose High School standout became a bit choked-up when talking about his mother.

"She sacrificed so much for me," said a now tearful McGee. "She's such a loving mother and she's been a blessing to me."

Rowlands was a versatile three-sport athlete during her two-year career (1964-66) at Chowan College.

While her athleticism was evident, it was partially due to her efforts that women's sports at Chowan College is alive and well today.

Rowlands helped write the Constitution for the Women's Recreational Association (WRA), an organization designed to meet the needs of female athletes. She served two terms as president of the WRA.

"We arrived at Chowan College the same year with the same ideas in mind," noted former volleyball and basketball coach Janet Collins who inducted Rowlands.

"There were no organized women's sports at the college at the time and we joined forces to help form the WRA," continued Collins. "It's my honor to induct a woman of vision, Janet Leonard Rowlands, into Chowan College's Sports Hall of Fame."

"Wow," expressed Rowlands as she received her induction plaque. "This is a privilege and an honor."

Rowlands, now an ultra-successful coach at First Colonial High School in Virginia Beach, issued a challenge to Chowan.

"Women's athletics has come a long way over the past 30 years," closed Rowlands. "I'm very proud to have had a hand in its formation, but I challenge Chowan to strive to continue to build on the women's sports programs."

Each of the four new inductees were presented with the Sports Hall of Fame rings—Brown from Jack Goldberg of the Braves Club; McGee from Tommy Forbes of Nationwide Insurance; Rowland by Herma Henderson of Henderson Child Care; and Sowell from William Whitley representing the Machine Shop of Murfreesboro.

**Braves Club
inducts 12th class
in impressive
ceremony before
a capacity
audience filled
with friends and
family members**

**McGee first
basketball player
to be inducted;
Rowlands helped
start Chowan
women's athletic
programs; Sowell
served the college
for 40 years;
Brown played
professional
football with
Green Bay
Packers**

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