

Sports Hall of Fame inducts foursome

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Roanoke-Chowan News-Herald

Welcome aboard: Larry Canady, Patricia Francis, Hal Henderson and Ralph Thurston. The four alumni were added to the Chowan College Sports Hall of Fame November 8 during an induction banquet hosted by the Braves Club.

Larry Canady, Chowan's first-ever basketball All-American, was hailed by Braves basketball skipper Bob Burke as "one of the best ever to wear Chowan's blue-and-white." Continued the coach, "Back then I was a new coach with new ideas. Larry may not have liked what I was doing, but he buttoned his lip and played hard. He went on to lead us to what was then a school single-season record of 27 wins."

Evidently, Canady liked what he saw in Burke. "Coach Burke was the toughest coach I've ever had," observed the Kinston native who was Chowan's Male Athlete of the Year in 1981. "He had such a big influence on my career, I can look back now and wish that Chowan were a four-year school when I was there. I would have loved to play two more seasons under Coach Burke."

Canady, who resides in Raleigh and works with substance abuse patients at Holly Hill Charter North Ridge, was quick to point out where the praise belonged for his outstanding athletic career. "I give all the glory to God for his heavenly strength," admitted Canady. "I would also like to thank my parents for their inspiration as well as my entire family for all their support."

An outstanding two-sport (basketball, volleyball) athlete while at Chowan, Francis said she could still feel the caring and the warmth at the school. "Chowan College offered me a chance to grow and spread my wings," said the Capron, Va., native. "It's a school that truly cares for its students and its athletes. I can still feel that warmth and that caring here tonight."

Patricia Francis, whose educational career touched many different levels, also expressed her gratitude toward one certain Chowan professor attending during the Hall of Fame banquet. "I was told by fellow Chowan classmates to drop any class taught by Mr. (Warren) Sexton because he was such a tough teacher," recalled Francis. "Well, sure enough, I was assigned to one of his classes and I tried to get out of it, but coach (Janet) Collins urged me to continue. I'm glad I did because Mr. Sexton taught me that when life offers challenges, you can succeed through hard work."

Collins inducted her former two-sport standout by saying, "I know her family is very proud of Patricia, as are we here at Chowan College. She is a dedicated professional."

A two-time NJCAA All-American during his Chowan football career, Hal Henderson was inducted by legendary Braves coach Jim Garrison. "Hal was a beautiful sight to see in a Chowan uniform," said Garrison. "Others said that he was too small to play as a defensive end in college football, but they were wrong. He was the first freshman I ever had to become an All-American and he backed that up with being honored again in his sophomore year."

"Chowan College is better off for having had Hal here," closed the coach, "and I hope he is better off as well." The Charleston, S.C., native answered by jokingly responding, "Believe me, everything coach Garrison just said is the truth."

Henderson, who went forward to enjoy a banner football career at the University of South Carolina, added that he felt at home while at Chowan. "I'd do anything to help this school," noted Henderson. "It was my home away from home for the two years I was here and I'll treasure those times forever. What I accomplished on the football field was just a little piece of the puzzle."

"Family" atmosphere at Chowan was so special to Ralph Thurston that he enrolled at the school not once, but twice. The former All-Conference football performer for the Braves saw his stay in Murfreesboro interrupted by the Vietnam War. Believing strongly in his commitment to God and Country, Thurston left school to serve as a medic aboard the USS Repose stationed off the Vietnam coast. The ship set a record for most time at sea during one



Inducted into the 13th Chowan College Sports Hall of Fame, November 8, were (l-r) Patricia Francis '69, Larry Canady '81, Ralph Thurston '65 and Hal Henderson '80.

Chowan's first All-American basketball player among inductees

tour of duty.

One would think that a former offensive lineman, who went on the fight against Communism, should be labeled as a "tough guy." However, Thurston let his emotions show during his Hall of Fame acceptance speech.

"Why me, what did I do to earn this honor?" quizzed Thurston, choking back the tears. "What you are presenting me with here tonight, is not mine alone. I would like to thank my parents for the sacrifices they made to put me through school. Thanks to my brothers who were there to pick me up when I stumbled and fell. Thanks to my friends for their undying love and support. I humbly accept this award for all those people."

Charles Taylor, a former Chowan teammate, inducted Thurston. "With Ralph, what you see is what you get," stressed Taylor.

"Here's a man so in love with his country that he sacrificed a portion of his college education to serve his nation in a time of war. That hasn't changed at all over the years because Ralph is still very kind to his fellow man."

Thurston, who resides in Chesterfield County, Va., is in the real estate and insurance business. His close ties with Chowan remain intact today as he serves on the board of directors with the Braves Club.

Each of the new inductees was presented with a Hall of Fame plaque and ring.

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