

The Decree

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History, Theater hosts Jefferson

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On March 7, Thomas Jefferson came to N.C. Wesleyan College. Interrogated by a reporter and the audience, Mr. Jefferson stood his ground on the stage of Minges Auditorium that evening.

In his email announcement, History Professor Dr. Rick Watson had invited the college community to join the History and Theater departments and the general public to see whether questions about "Sally Hemings, separation of church and state, or the famous partying at the University of Virginia will embarrass him."

Thomas Jefferson's character is brought to life every day at Colonial Williamsburg by Bill Barker, who researches constantly any writings by or about Jefferson's life, actions, politics, and acquaintances and becomes "Mr. Jefferson" to his fellow interpreters in the colonial town and to crowds from around the country.

Barker, a history major and an actor himself, left the formal stage for this new career of "historical interpretation" — living the part of a historical figure for museums, re-enactments, and recreations like Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts, and Old Salem in North Carolina — when he dis-

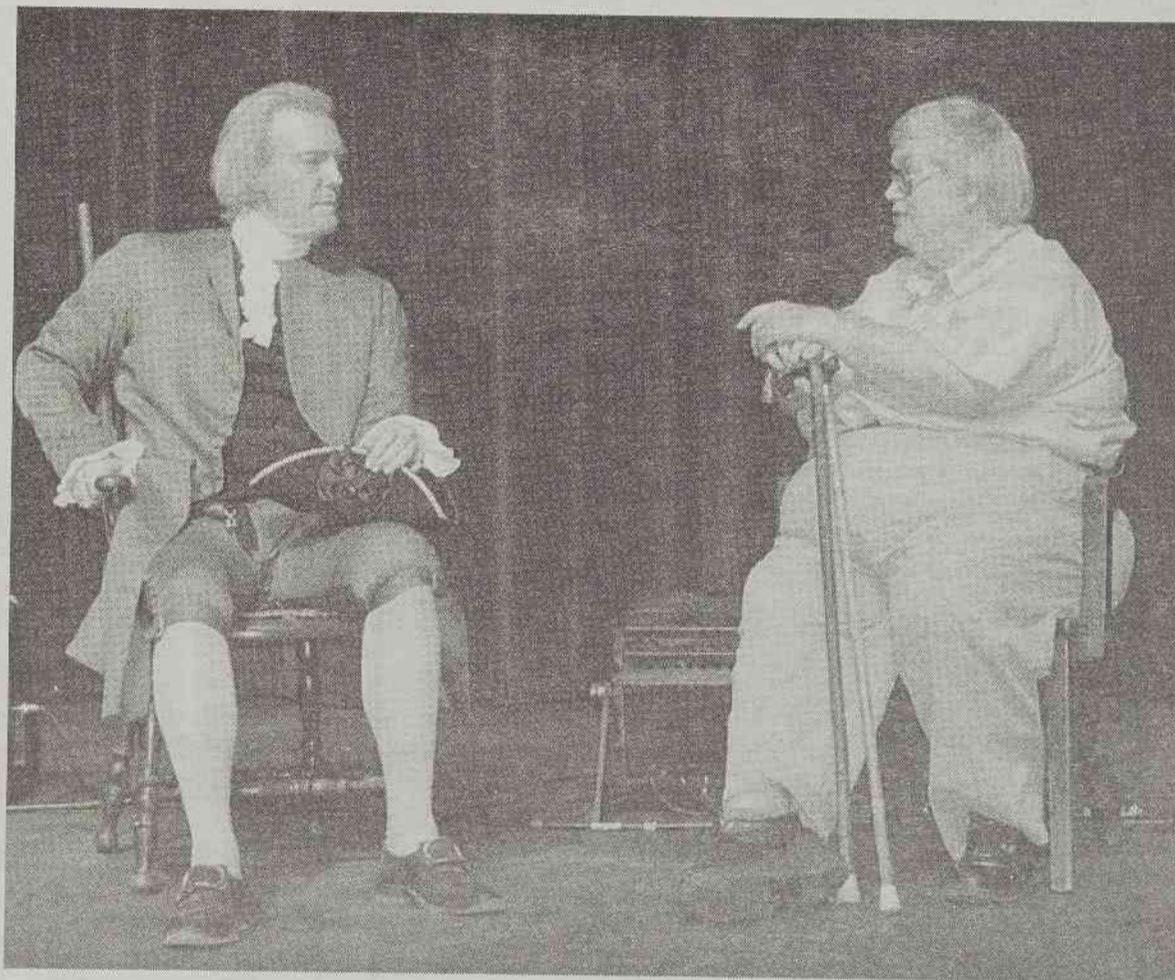
covered that he had both a knack for living the part of Jefferson and the 6'3" height, body build, and blond hair of the third President of the United States.

During his interpretation, Barker must become Thomas Jefferson, a situation that requires his full understanding of the character regardless of his own opinions on politics, history, family, or any other issues.

Barker was brought to the campus by Ken Ripley, publisher of the *Spring Hope Enterprise* and the N.C. *Wesleyan Decree* and active in journalism education. Ripley organizes and funds a tour in the spring of each year that includes selected evening events and Nash County public schools, where, he says, attendance most often runs into the hundreds for each appearance by Barker/Jefferson.

During the evening performances, Ripley and other editors engage Mr. Jefferson in an impromptu question-and-answer "press conference," where any questions that Jefferson might have been able to answer can be asked by the press corps or the audience. Barker's job is to answer as Jefferson himself would have answered, with his opinions, examples, tone, and bearing and often in Jefferson's own published words.

To play his part properly and well, Barker dresses in period costume, down to frilled cravat and



Decree photo by Campbell

PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON INTERVIEWED BY EDITOR KEN RIPLEY.

leather shoes, all made on the grounds of Colonial Williamsburg. His verbal inflections copy as much as possible the speech of an educated late-eighteenth-century Virginia planter and the slightly mocking, often humorous, sometimes severe, sometimes equivocating, but always very

human tone of Jefferson in his writings.

On the evening of March 7 in Minges Auditorium, nothing seemed to embarrass Mr. Jefferson. In answer to Ripley's question whether he "had added a family to your family tree," he responded, "I have never made any comment on my relationship with Hemings" and "do not engage in discussions of such puerile concerns."

On the general nature of politics and character, Mr. Jefferson was asked, "Do you believe an immoral man can be a good president?" His answer: "If immoral in actions, then may be; if immoral in character, then no, most certainly not." In response to a question on the nature of the presidency in a democracy, he answered, "We elect to office those whose prior actions we approve."

On Dr. Watson's question as to the relationship between press freedom, press responsibility, and the role of government in rela-

tion to the press: "I am against misinformation and untruth, but newspapers are our only defense" against an irresponsible or too-powerful government; and the people themselves are and should be "the judges of the newspapers."

On the apparent difference between the words and intent of the Declaration of Independence and his own continued ownership of slaves, Mr. Jefferson answered that he struck an anti-slavery clause from the Declaration in order to "procure agreement on the whole, especially from South Carolina" [the first state, in fact, to secede from the Union, after Jefferson's death] and reminded the questioner and audience that in his day in Virginia, only one to two slaves could legally be freed each year, that they must be literate before their manumission, and that they must move outside the state after obtaining their legal freedom.

On Ms. Wilson's question
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Carneal wins hoop honors

N.C. Wesleyan's Misty Carneal has nabbed two big basketball honors.

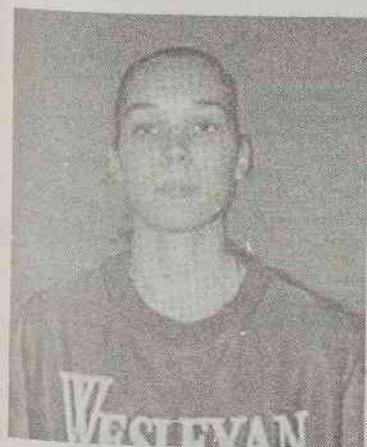
First she was named First Team All-Region in the South by D3Hoops. She was the only guard listed on the First Team. The D3Hoops team is selected by Directors of Sports Information in each region.

Later in the same week, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and Kodak named her Honorable Mention Kodak Women's All-America. Coaches

in each region select the Kodak team.

Carneal, a senior from Bumpass, Va., (Louisa H.S.) led the Dixie Conference in scoring this year with 21.5 points per game and was named the Dixie Player of the Year for the second consecutive year.

She finished her career as the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,661 points. She led the Bishops this season to a 16-9 record, 11-3 in the Dixie, which was good for second place.



MISTY CARNEAL