



West Craven Highlights

News From Along The Banks Of The Neuse



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SIX PAGES

Barbecue 'experts' journey to purveyor of Southern delicacy

(Editor's note: When People magazine gave Ayden's Skylight Inn its four-rib rating as best barbecue in the nation after visiting 80 barbecue joints in 19 states, a group of journalists dispatched its own expedition to check it out. This is the panel's report.)

By Mike Voss
Editor

AYDEN — It was a tough job, but somebody had to do it. When the assignment came to find out about the barbecue at the Skylight Inn in Ayden, rated best in the nation by People Magazine, four of us headed toward Ayden. We found it and began our tedious work.

Right off, we learned that People magazine is a lately-come. In the early 1980s, the Skylight Inn barbecue was rated best in the world in the Barbecue Bowl competition in Washington, D.C. The austere National Geographic Society, which knows something about the world, agreed.

Co-owners Walter B. "Pete" Jones and Jeff Jones trace their beginnings back to 1830 when Pete's great-grandfather sold barbecue from a covered wagon.



After establishing the background, BBQ "too wet" we dug in. This is what the journalistic panel had to say about the barbecue:

— Lisa Krochmal, who rates pizza and chocolate as the best foods in the world. — "Not the best barbecue I've ever had — too wet, and I prefer more of a vinegar taste. The cole slaw was very good. Also, the cornbread was tasty. And a 10-ounce bottled Pepsi for only 30 cents was great!

"The best barbecue I recall ever having was served at a pig pickin' at the home of Bill Smith of Bill Smith Ford, Southern Pines. The pig pickin' was given in honor of Bill Elliott, the race car driver, who did attend."

— Mike Voss, who just loves to eat. — "It's in the top three in my book. I would suggest serving the barbecue on a steamed bun. It was a little too moist, but I understand they didn't let the grease run off as much as they usually do."

"I also enjoyed the crunchy pieces of skin they included in the barbecue. It was something unique and adds to the flavor. All in all, I could become addicted to the stuff. And I wish all soft drinks were as cold as the ones they had."

"I enjoyed the way the mild sauce allowed the smoked flavor to tempt the taste buds. That's what makes this barbecue special in my book. I think the creamy, sweet slaw and cornbread



compliment the meal well. I'll go back, that's for sure."

"Trying to decide who has the best barbecue is like deciding what your favorite movie is. Until something better comes along, your last favorite will still be the best. Of course, there will also be the classic movies — Gone With the Wind, Casablanca — and there will always be favorite restaurants. The Skylight Inn is and will remain a classic."

— John Burnell, a Yankee. — "I'm from Cleveland, and proud of it, and my role on the panel was to provide a (damn) Yankee's point of view of eastern North Carolina barbecue."

"Cleveland is a meat-and-potatoes town and that's how we like our barbecue — big, meaty ribs. I'm not accustomed to this pork pudding y'all call barbecue, but I do like it."

"Skylight's barbecue has a flavor all its own. After one bite, I could feel the smoky, menthol taste whisk through my mouth and chest. The mild smoky flavor was very good and made for a pleasant meal. I don't have a lifetime of experience with North Carolina barbecue to make a comparison, but Skylight's was the best I've had so far. I think I can be happy here."

"Now, will someone please tell me what a collar is?" — Mo Krochmal, self-proclaimed barbecue and sports expert — "On first bite, the barbecue at the Skylight Inn was salty and a bit wetter than I would have liked. The buns were cold and there were bone chips in the nicely shredded meat. But after a bite or two, the smoky flavor danced across my taste buds."

"I had ordered a sandwich because that is what I normally eat when I go for barbecue. I didn't adulterate the taste with Texas Pete or vinegar. I was looking for the real stuff."

"The sandwich was satisfying. Creamy cole slaw heaped on the meat complemented the delightfully smoky flavor. A little Texas Pete sprinkled on top raised the temperature to where I liked it. And a long draw on the ice-cold long-necked Pepsi got all the flavors percolating in a symphony of satisfaction."

"After eating the sandwich, I got a small tray of barbecue with a side dish of cole slaw and a piece of cornbread and was a bit more careful in making an analysis."

"In the end, I liked it. It's worth driving 50 miles for. "Whether it's the best in North Carolina or the best in the world, I don't know."

"I've eaten and enjoyed barbecue in Wilson, Raleigh, Halifax, Salisbury, Garner and Kansas City. The barbecue in each



"Pork pudding"



"Satisfying"

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John Burnell 'hams' it up in cooler with soon-to-be barbecue.

Regular customers think barbecue joint just a 'capital' idea

By Mike Voss
Editor

AYDEN — The rotunda on the Skylight Inn lets you know how people in this town feel about barbecue.

Ayden considers itself the barbecue capital of the world and the rotunda, modeled after the one on the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. adds authority to the town's claim.

And the elder statesmen of the barbecue places in and around Ayden, and eastern North Carolina for that matter, is the Skylight Inn. Walter B. "Pete" Jones and Jeff Jones, co-owners, can trace the beginnings of their empire to 1830, when Pete's great-grandfather sold barbecue from a covered wagon.

Other than the traditional slaw and cornbread on the side, barbecue is the only thing on the menu at the Skylight Inn. And barbecue is defined as pork cooked over oak and hickory wood, chopped and with a hint of vinegar, Texas Pete hot sauce, salt and pepper. Forget the other pretenders to the throne — western North Carolina's pork with a tomato-base sauce and Texas' beef with its tomato-base sauce.

While People magazine and others have named the Skylight Inn the best barbecue joint in the world, the townfolk of Ayden can't even agree on who has the best barbecue in town. In downtown Ayden, Bum's Barbecue sits as a threat to the Skylight.

"Even among families there is disagreement as to who has the best," said Washington's Mrs. Zeno (Robin) Edwards III, who grew up in

Ayden. "My father and I probably have the longest disagreement going. I think Bum's is the best and he thinks Pete Jones has the best," she said.

"The people there are probably split right down the middle on who has the best barbecue," said Mrs. Edwards.

In the Aug. 28 edition of People, Skylight Inn received the highest rating possible — four ribs. The magazine ranked 10 barbecue joints around the nation, with one rib on the low end and four ribs as "hog heaven." The only four-rib designation was the Skylight Inn.

Well, Pete and Jeff are getting used to another round of publicity. They said newspapers, television stations and magazines have been dropping in almost daily to see what all the commotion is about.

Ten years ago their establishment was rated the best barbecue joint in the world in "Back Roads of America," a publication of the National Geographic Society. And the publicity has continued since.

"When you make a living selling barbecue, who would want to sell anything else," said Pete when asked about the simple menu. Perhaps the most shocking discovery, at least to Southerners, is noiced tea is sold. Why?

"It slows us down and would probably cost us about a third of our business," said Pete. Having to get out a cup, fill it with ice and pour in the tea wastes too much time — time better used selling barbecue. Expect to wash down the barbecue with ice-cold soft drinks that are whipped

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Martin backs plan to create 7 ORW areas

Gov. Jim Martin is backing the plan before the Environmental Management Commission to create seven areas of "outstanding resource waters" on the North Carolina coast, including protection for three waterways in this area, a spokesman said last week.

Martin announced his backing for the ORW designation in a memorandum to Charles L. Baker of Charlotte, chairman of the Environmental Management Commission, according to Debbie Crane, spokesman for the Division of Environmental Management.

"I support your efforts to move forward to designate outstanding resource waters," Martin said in the memo. "I believe this will provide greater protection to our important coastal resources."

The commission is expected to take action on the recommendation at its next meeting Sept. 14 in Raleigh.

"In addition, I will encourage other regulatory commissions to follow management strategies that provide the protection and priority given to coastal ORWs," Martin said in the memo.

The memo was released last week by the Division of Environmental Management and supports a report on the ORWs submitted earlier last week.

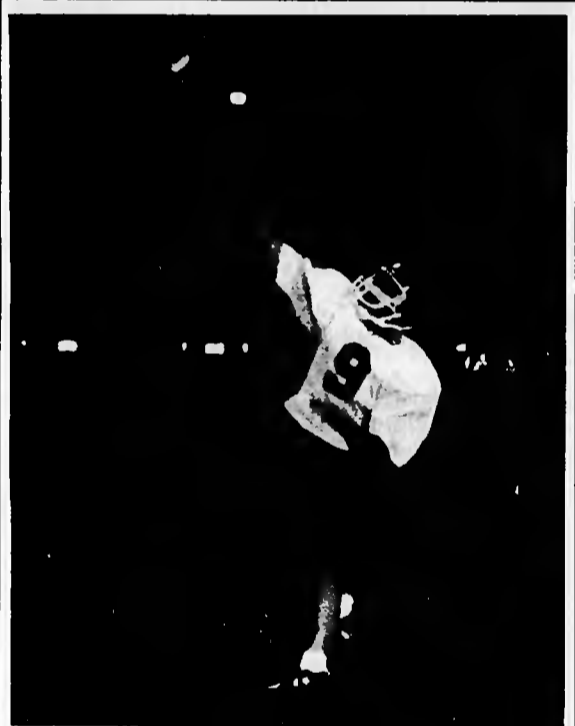
In the report, part of the Pamlico Sound near the mouth of the Neuse River, Swan Quarter and Juniper bays in Hyde County and most of the Alligator River between Tyrrell and Dare Counties were recommended for protection by an ORW classification.

The waterways are among seven areas along the coast that merit the designation, according to the report released Wednesday in Raleigh by EMC Vice Chairman Virgil L. McBride. He heads the commission's water quality committee and presided over a series of public hearings on the topic in June.

The report also recommends that the lower Lockwoods Folly River in Brunswick County not be designated ORW. Instead, it calls for a water quality management strategy for the waterway.

In his memo, Martin supported this strategy for the Lockwoods

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Holzworth unleashes pass against Rams.

Quarterback's passing earns gridiron award

Junior quarterback Kevin Holzworth fired up the "Air Jordan" passing attack for the West Craven Eagles last Friday night for 216 yards in the air and three touchdown strikes.

For his efforts, Holzworth is the second recipient this football season of the Flying Eagle Award. Holzworth's performance in the Eagles' 26-7 win over

Greene Central's Rams helped pace the Eagles to 403 yards on offense.

Holzworth hit Kip Bryan on scoring strikes of nine and 65 yards and later teamed up with Adrian Cameron on a 31-yard touchdown pass. He completed 10 of his 22 attempts, for an aver-

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Holzworth tosses Eagles over Rams

By Greg Stroud
Special to Sports

SNOW HILL — Junior quarterback Kevin Holzworth threw for three touchdowns and 216 yards Friday night to lead the West Craven Eagles to a 26-7 non-conference win over Class 2-A Greene Central.

The Class 3-A Eagles showed their offensive strength with both the run and pass. The "Air Jordan" attack combined with the ground game gave the Eagles 403 total offensive yards. The Eagles also turned two Ram miscues into scores after the defense handed the offense the ball.

West Craven missed the chance to score first when a field goal attempt went errant on a bad snap.

The Rams, however, started the scoring with a 78-yard scoring jaunt by senior John Dixon, who lead all rushers with 122 yards on 11 rushes. The PAT was kicked by Jimmy Hardy for the Rams' only lead at 7-0.

The Eagles took control in the second quarter, scoring on a nine-yard toss from Holzworth to Kip Bryan with 7:48 left in the second period. Chris Stillely added the PAT to knot the score at 7-7. Facing a second and 10 from his own 35, Holzworth again found Bryan, this time with a 65-yard TD toss, giving the Eagles a 13-7 lead. The PAT was blocked.

The score entering halftime was 13-7 in favor of the Eagles.

While the third quarter was uneventful pointwise, West Craven padded its lead in the fourth quarter, using interceptions and fumble recoveries to set up scoring plays.

West Craven, threatening again with a first-and-10, was flogged for holding in the fourth quarter, just one of 13 penalties for 125 yards, but scored on the next play as Holzworth hit Adrian Cameron with a 31-yard strike on a first-and-20 situation with 9:32 left in the game. Holzworth stumbled on the two-point conversion attempt and was tackled, leaving the score at 19-7.

With the Rams in possession at their own 49, Cameron intercepted Rick Corbett's pass in the flat at the Eagle 40 and returned the ball 30 yards to the Rams' 30. On the next play, Cameron broke off tackle and raced to the end zone with 6:33 left in the game. Stillely added the PAT for the final 26-7 margin.

The Rams could only get to the Eagles' 38-yard line in the second half as the Eagles' defense sparkled. When the Rams threatened from the 38, West Craven's Ray Hardy picked off Corbett's errant toss, killing a drive that started at the Rams' 35.

The leading rusher for the Eagles was tailback Lee Becton. Becton, who rushed 225 yards for two touchdowns last week, gained 120 yards in 23 carries. Becton, a junior, was named the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's 3-A player of the week for the first week of the season.

West Craven claimed its second victory with no losses while Greene

Central was opening its season. West Craven visits intracounty rival New Bern in New Bern tomorrow night.

Eagle coach Clay Jordan cited Cameron's play.

"He was the player for us tonight," Jordan said.

"I liked our passing game. Kevin showed what he can do. Greene Central was taking away Becton and Kevin hurt them with his passing," said Jordan.

Jordan said he was displeased with the penalties his charges were hit with. "We had three ridiculous penalties but a lot of it was aggressiveness. We just have to learn to play aggressive and smart," he said.

Jordan said his defense "shut down" the Rams. "Other than that long run for the touchdown, we stopped them pretty much."

Ram coach Spencer Grantham agreed. "They just wore us down. Becton just wore us down. We hit

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photo courtesy Cabaret Players

Show opens

'Seascape with Sharks and Dancers' begins its run tomorrow night at Dominic's Italian Restaurant, five miles south of Vanceboro on U.S. 17. The comedy stars Emily Litchfield and Michael Glachett. Tickets for the play and dinner, beginning at 6:30 p.m., are \$25 a person.