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"Building Communicative Bridges
In A Tri-racial Setting."

ROBESON COUNTY

Will Five Go Into One? Merger Possibilities In Robeson County

EDITOR'S NOTE
This is the seventh in a series of articles about school merger possibilities in Robeson County. Will five go into one? History shouts "No!" We hope history will be proven wrong. The series of articles was written by Bruce Barton, editor of this newspaper.

THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE heralded the news, of course, but the matter lay dormant until 1981 when the issue was revived by the North Robeson Concerned Parents-the organization opposed the annexations as they felt that students were being bussed out of their area who could be utilized to support a more comprehensive school in the north. The group contrasted curriculum poor Magnolia with Lumberton Senior High.

The organization solicited and received the assistance of Lumbee River Legal Services and the American Civil Liberties Union in bringing litigation attacking the annexations. Although a strange decision was rendered by the local federal court, consisting of a three-judge panel, including Robeson native Earl Britt, the plaintiffs prevailed in their direct appeal to the United States Supreme Court. Thus, the residents of the annexed areas may no longer serve on the Lumberton School Board or vote in any election for its members. The North Carolina Attorney General subsequently ruled that the county may no longer levy the supplemental school tax upon property within the annexed areas, thus, putting a severe financial strain on the city schools.

Lumberton first tried to resolve the matter politically with the Federal Attorney General; utilizing the services of W. Osborne Lee, Jr., a bombastic, local attorney who ironically represented the residents of these areas when they petitioned for inclusion into the city school district. Although Attorney Lee struggled mightily and stalked the corridors of power in the nation's capitol with various politicians, such as Republican Ed Johnson and Conservative Tom Gibson, the federal authorities declined the invitation offered by the local federal court to rescind their earlier

objection. From what I have been able to gather, the plaintiffs and their legal representatives seemingly overwhelmed "Obbie" Lee and his political allies with masses of data and cogent argument.

Having paid Mr. Lee a small fortune to save the day and seeing him seemingly fail so miserably and ungraciously, the Lumberton school authorities accepted the suggestion of then Senator Sam Noble and others to sit down and talk about resolving what had become a nightmare. From what I have been able to gather, a series of private meetings were held involving the plaintiffs and representatives of the Lumberton and county boards of education. The county schools were represented at the time by Supt. Purnell Swett, the Chairman David Green, and interestingly enough, Dexter Brooks, who was responsible for first exposing the annexations and who then served as attorney for the county school board. The Lumberton Schools were represented by Supt. Gilbert Carroll, then Chairman Al Kahn and regularly-retained counsel John Wishart Campbell. Noticeably absent from the discussions was the apparently now discredited "Obbie" Lee.

At first many suggested that Lumberton attempt to solve its problem by annexing even more county territory. Even Rep. David Parnell (now state senator) pledged his support to such legislation; however, then Senator Sam Noble refused to go along saying that the matter should be resolved through negotiation among all concerned parties.

The county school board also served notice that it would strongly oppose any further annexation of its territory. The threat was given even greater substance by the presence of Dexter Brooks whose legal talent and knowledge of voting law made him a formidable adversary. Interestingly enough, Brooks is also the founding father and chairman of the Board of Lumbee River Legal Services and a member of the Civil Liberties Union.

As I understand it, once the various personalities understood the positions of the other parties, an amicable

able solution was reached. The plaintiffs agreed to not press any further litigation if the Clybourn Pines-Country Club area was de-annexed from the Lumberton City School District. The City Board of Education agreed and, with the approval of the county school board, the compromise was submitted to the local legislators for the introduction of enabling legislation.

Then Senator Noble had the courage not to be swayed initially by the frenzied crowd and insisted that the parties try to resolve the problem through negotiations rather than through biased, one-sided legislation. Indian people were represented by such as Purnell Swett and Dexter Brooks who it seems can hold their own with the best of any race. Although Brooks has his detractors, they cannot validly criticize his abilities or the results of his activities, especially in educational matters. Most progressives were even proud of the Lumberton school authorities who apparently negotiated the issue in good faith.

It seems that Robeson is a better place for the experience. It demonstrates that redskins and palefaces can sit down and reason together. If they would only apply this method to other problems, the elimination of these smaller city school units will finally be realized for all Robesonians.

The Clybourn Pines-Country Club citizens residing in the affected area have been in the public eye since as the matter has moved through the halls of the general assembly in Raleigh, before the County Commissioners, and now the courts again.

Serving as spokesman, mostly, has been Eric Prevatte. Ironically, Prevatte has a business-Prevatte's Auto Parts in Pembroke. Pembroke is considered by many as the economic and spiritual center of the Indian populace in Robeson County, the dominate race in the county schools.

The irony is, as one Indian political wag put it at the time, "It's o.k. to sell Indians spark plug, as long as one doesn't have to go to school with them." Prevatte is now, of course, eloquently calling for one school system.

Features Three-Race Idea Designs For Bicentennial Medallion Accepted



These are the designs which will be used on the bicentennial medallions of Robeson County. The three faces of this predominately tri-racial county are shown

by Gene Warren

The designs for a commemorative medallion for the Robeson County Bicentennial, whose celebration begins Jan. 6, 1987, were officially adopted by the county's Bicentennial Commission, meeting Tuesday night at the Ramada Inn in Lumberton.

One side of the medallion, which will be brass with gold tones, shows the profiles of the three major races of Robeson County: Indian, white and black. The faces on the medallion are left to right in that order.

On the other side of the medallion is a map of Robeson County.

The design of the three faces will be used on not only the medallions, but also on T-shirts, sweat shirts, jackets, etc., agreed the commission. These will probably be sold first as T-shirts to test their market appeal in the clothing area.

The medallions are being produced by Helen Stone's Trophies and Awards Co. of Lumberton. One thousand are being ordered and will sell for \$20 each. They will be placed on sale just before Christmas of this year. "If necessary, we can order more in January," said Hector MacLean, chairman of the Bicentennial Commission.

Designing the three faces of three different races were members of the medals committee, made up of chairman Frances Dietzel of Lumberton, Pete Cunningham of Red Springs, and Carol Oxendine of Pembroke. "Mr. Cunningham showed the idea to some school children and they had input in the design," said Mrs. Dietzel.

As other fund-raising projects for the Bicentennial, Mr. Dietzel suggested needlepoint with items sold by clubs or scouts plus tote bags with designs on them. It was announced that a special Robeson County Bicentennial Float, built by Robeson Technical College, will be ready by mid-September or mid-October of this year. Riding on it will be three queens, each representing the three main races of Robeson County. The 8x20 float will be entered in every parade in the county plus other major parades like Wilmington's N.C. Azalea Festival, Raleigh, and Charlotte. The Indian queen of Robeson County was present at Tuesday's meeting in the person of the newly crowned Miss Lumbee, Leshia Gail Rogers, a sophomore at PSU.

on the right, depicting [left to right] the Indian, white, and black races. A map of Robeson County, the largest of North Carolina's 100

centennial Float, built by Robeson Technical College, will be ready by mid-September or mid-October of this year. Riding on it will be three queens, each representing the three main races of Robeson County. The 8x20 float will be entered in every parade in the county plus other major parades like Wilmington's N.C. Azalea Festival, Raleigh, and Charlotte. The Indian queen of Robeson County was present at Tuesday's meeting in the person of the newly crowned Miss Lumbee, Leshia Gail Rogers, a sophomore at PSU.

A historical map of Robeson County is being prepared by the Heritage Committee, chaired by Henry McKinnon. "Historical Robeson, Inc., has met with a printer from Fayetteville and discussed having a 19x25 inch map on parchment-type paper done in two colors," said McKinnon. "Only the main historical points will be illustrated." This committee is hoping to find a business sponsor for the maps so they can be given away.

"The Geography Department of PSU is to help with the topography," said McKinnon. "Ellen McLean of Lumberton is assisting with the art work."

McKinnon's committee is also hoping to borrow a portrait of William Tatham to exhibit in 1987 from the North Carolina Museum of History. "He was one of the founders of Lumberton," said McKinnon.

The Cultural Resources Committee has produced a 41-page pamphlet entitled "Cultural Events in Robeson County," announced its chairman Bob Fisher.

"These are being distributed through the library, the welcome wagon, and Evelyn Williamson," said Fisher. One thousand copies have been printed and placed in branches of the Robeson

Council Asks Governor to Appoint Task Force

The North Carolina Human Relations Council, in a report released today, has called for Gov. James G. Martin to appoint a task force on racial, religious and ethnic violence and intimidation in North Carolina.

The final report from four regional public hearings held in March and April 1986 also calls for the establishment of full-time public defender services throughout the state. It also includes other recommendations pertaining to the issues of equal employment, criminal justice and extremist activities.

"There are serious inadequacies in our ability to respond to bigoted violence and intimidation in North Carolina," the report said, and "these inadequacies exist at all levels of government." According to the report, although North Carolina is known for having the most active white supremacist organizations in the country, there is no state wide system for monitoring racially motivated incidents.

In addition, law enforcement agencies and public officials have failed to take hate/violence activity seriously, the report said, and many are unaware of the danger and extent of such activity. "Radical racists here are like obnoxious relatives: we don't like them, we're embarrassed by them, but we'd sooner turn our heads than take the trouble to turn them out," the report said.

The report listed 10 objectives of the proposed task force, including the establishment of a statewide system to collect and share information on hate/violence activities; mandatory uniform reporting standards for law enforcement; re-evaluation of current legislation pertaining to hate groups; training for law enforcement officers and educators in dealing with hate activity; the establishment of a victims' support network; state wide; and ongoing research, public education and community assistance efforts.

"By appointing a task force, the governor would be demonstrating beyond doubt that the highest officials of the state are opposed to bigoted extremism and are willing to take initiatives to address the problem," the report said.

On the issue of criminal justice for minorities and the poor, the council's report said, "The single greatest handicap that poor people face in court...is the systematic violation of their constitutional guarantee to the 'effective assistance of counsel.'" Citing studies which concluded that indigent criminal defendants receive better legal services from public defenders than from court-appointed counsel, the report recommended that public defender services be extended to all 30 judicial districts of the state. (Presently, only seven districts have public defenders.)

Court-appointed attorneys as opposed to public defenders, typically do not have the expertise, the resources or the incentive to provide the best legal services to indigent criminal defendants, the report said. While cost has been the focus of some objections to a statewide public defender system, the report said the current system has not been proven to be more cost-effective. Another objection is that the court-appointed system provides young lawyers with valuable trial experience, a practice which shows a prejudice against poor defendants, the report said.

In recommending a statewide public defender system the council said, "Our constitutional obligations and the demonstrable inadequacies of the current system require that reforms be urgently pursued."

The report was compiled from the testimony of the four hearings, held in Rocky Mount, Statesville, Fayetteville and New Bern by the Human Relations Council, as well as 140 interviews and extensive research.

WINNERS OF GIFT CERTIFICATES AT HILL'S FOOD STORE, PEMBROKE



Shown are recent winners of gift certificates at Hill's Food Store in Pembroke: Penny Oxendine (\$25.00 certificate); Peggy Oxendine (\$50.00); and Patsy B. Baker (\$100.00).

The ladies were winners of the special promotion [one of many throughout the year] by Hill's. They are shown with store manager,

Harvey Godwin, Jr. For the second year in a row, Godwin is doubling as "Henry Berry Lowrie" in the popular outdoor drama, "Strikes at the Wind" now in progress.

While awaiting new quarters in the new shopping center being developed by local entrepreneur, Adolph Dial, Hill's is located on Union Chapel Road.

Delegation to the State 4-H Electric Congress



Robeson County's delegation to the State 4-H Electric Congress

Congress included (from left) Cathy M. Lowery, Bert

Bernhardt and Doug Bernhardt with Aundria Hyer.

A Robeson County 4-H member was named second-place territorial winner at the 39th annual State 4-H Electric Congress July 7-9 at Chowan College, Murfreesboro.

Doug Bernhardt, 106 W. 15th St., Lumberton, won the award in Carolina Power

and Light Company's territorial district. He received a portable AM-FM stereo with cassette recorder.

Others attending the congress from Robeson County included Doug's brother Bert Bernhardt and Cathy M. Lowery, assistant extension agent, 4-H.

They were accompanied by Aundria Hyer, customer service representative for CP&L.

CP&L provided the trips and the award and helped sponsor the congress. The event was conducted by the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service.

Cooper Elected Secretary- Treasurer of Progressive Savings and Loan

At their July 8 Board Meeting, the Board of Directors of Progressive Savings & Loan Ltd. elected Howard M. Cooper Corporate Secretary-Treasurer.

Mr. Cooper is one of the founders of the Corporation and serves as a director.

Cooper of Lumberton. He is a member of Chestnut Street United Methodist Church, where he serves as District Trustee for the Rockingham District of United Methodist Churches. He is a 32nd Degree Mason and Shriner, a former member of the City Council, Lumberton Board of Education, and Chairman of the County Commissioners.

He is presently President of Southern Marble Works, Inc. of Lumberton, Vice-President of Gardens of Faith Cemetery & President of Lumbee Memorial Gardens, Lumberton.

He is married to the former Eva Wise of Latta, SC and they have one daughter, Sylvia Harries of Rocky Mount, NC.