

Veteran educator bids farewell to 34-year 'enjoyable' career

By TONYA V. SMITH
Chronicle Staff Writer

Because many Afro-American parents show little interest and even less involvement in their children's education, a generation of undedicated and underachieving students has evolved making the jobs of educators all the more difficult, said Benjamin W. Warren, retiring principal at North Forsyth High School.

"I think schools are meeting the needs of young people today, but I don't feel all youngsters are taking

and their parents who, respectively, are dedicated to their education and involved in the local schools, Mr. Warren said it's the parents of honor students who are always in attendance at Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and the parent-teacher conferences.

"Parents need to get to know their children's teachers and know what they stand for," Mr. Warren, 59, said. "Come out to parent-teacher conference days."

The Richmond, Va., native accidentally fell into education. After

coach at his alma mater. Soon after that a friend, coaching in Winston-Salem, asked Mr. Warren if he was interested in a position at Atkins High School. In 1955, he began his career in the local schools, teaching science and coaching football. In 1958 Mr. Warren received a masters degree from the University of Buffalo in New York.

After spending 10 years at Atkins, he moved to then Kennedy Junior High School where he became an assistant principal. After three years there he became assistant principal at

principals. When the school board recently announced that he will be replaced by a white female, some members of the Afro-American community were upset.

There are a number of Afro-American, assistant high school principals but who's to say whether those people are qualified, Mr. Warren said.

"I think we have good black representation," he said. "I can't say whether those people are qualified because I don't work with them. I don't evaluate them."

"I think we need to have more blacks becoming interested in administration. In the past we have not had too many interested in administration. Right now there is a (racial) balance in our schools. I think we need to maintain that balance, but get qualified individuals. This is no easy job."

Schools are often understaffed, Mr. Warren said, pointing to the 102

staff members he supervises with the help of three assistants. Of course, he said, that does not include the 1,600 students who attend North Forsyth.

Mr. Warren does not regret giving up his medical career for one in education.

"I've enjoyed it," said the father of two girls. "I consider myself lucky to have met the goal I set for myself once I got into this field, and that was to be a principal in a senior high school."

His has always been an attitude of helping, Mr. Warren said.

"I've always tried to help every student, regardless of their background, and that's paid off," he said. "I've seen students who were a success in school and went on to be a success in life. I've also seen students who didn't do as well and they'll always come to me and say, 'I should have listened to you.'"

Mr. Warren has seen the schools' curriculum change to meet the needs of young people, he said, adding that the "Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools system, has done a tremendous job in that."

Once his retirement is official, Mr. Warren and his wife Mary plan to do a lot of traveling.

"I want to travel, enjoy myself and relax," Mr. Warren said. "I really want to drive to California. I also plan to golf, do some fishing and camping."

When asked what he'd miss most about education, Mr. Warren answered, "The day-to-day contact with people - students and staff members - that's what I think I will miss the most. I've had 34 enjoyable years in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County system, and I just hope the system continues to grow under the new leadership of Dr. Coble."

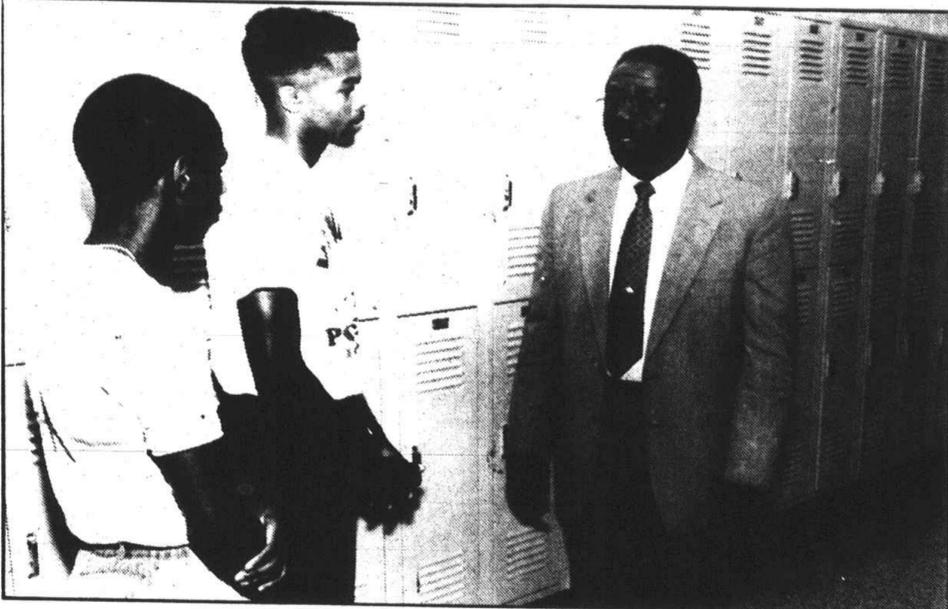


Photo by Mike Cunningham

Tomorris Horne and Rickie Miller take a moment out to chat with Benjamin Warren.

advantage of the opportunities opened for them in the schools," said Mr. Warren, who on Sept. 1 will end his 34-year-long career as an educator in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County system. "We all know that in order to be a success you have to work hard. Many young people aren't wanting to do that."

Acknowledging the many students

receiving a bachelor of science degree in biology, the pre-med tract, Mr. Warren worked with the federal government for a year and then spent two years in the Army.

"My plan was to attend medical school after I got out of the service," he said.

But before pursuing those plans he took a job as an assistant football

North Forsyth High School. During the 1972-73 academic year, Mr. Warren was promoted to principal and assigned to what was then Walkertown Junior High School. He also was principal at Kennedy before returning to North Forsyth as principal.

Presently, Mr. Warren is one of only four Afro-American, high school

Abortion ruling will limit options for poor

By ROBIN BARKSDALE
Chronicle Staff Writer

The recent Supreme Court ruling allowing states to restrict abortions is expected to have an especially heavy impact on poor and minority women.

The decision, handed down July 3, did not overturn the Roe vs. Wade decision, but the court did rule that states may prohibit public hospitals and clinics from performing or taking any part in abortions.

A. Smith Reid, director of the family planning unit at Reynolds Heath Center, said his department is not speculating on the impact the ruling will have on poor and Afro-American women. But Marian Franklin, president of the local chapter of the National Organization for Women, said that the court's ruling has turned the pages back on women's rights and could have deep and far-reaching effects on the area's lower-income women. While women of higher economic means will still be able to secure abortions if they choose, Ms. Franklin said, the options for poor women will be severely limited.

"Our organization is pro-choice. We don't comment one way or the other on whether abortion is right or wrong. We simply argue for the woman's right to be able to make her own decision," she said. "If the North Carolina Legislature accepts this legislation, poor women and young women will be most directly affected. It's still difficult to decipher the true ramifications of the decision, but we feel that the war on women has begun. Leaving the decision to individual states has opened 50 battle fronts. And we feel that the poor women are the women who will suffer the most."

Laura Smith-Martin, public affairs coordinator at Planned Parenthood, said that the stage is set for the North Carolina lawmakers to restrict the choices of women with respect to abortions. Funds allocated for state-funded abortions were cut last year by more than \$500,000 and Ms. Smith-Martin said she expects the reserves to be depleted by the next fiscal year. Should that happen, she said, Afro-American women will find themselves faced with new crises.

"There is absolutely no question that it's poor women, who are disproportionately black, that will feel the effects," she said. "Already, the poorest of the poor are being serviced with state money and that's running out."

She said that if the state agrees to restrict the availability of abortions, it should also be prepared to make provisions for the consequences of their actions.

"These women will need more money for social services, more money for AFDC," she said. "Women who have money will be able to have options and they will be able to travel to obtain abortions if necessary. A new ruling could create situations where women will be taking on children they cannot afford and that they did not plan for. I think the fact is that you will end up with folks needing social services and the services of agencies that already are stretched to the limit."

In 1969, when abortions were illegal, 75 percent of the women dying from illegal abortions were minorities. Brenda Williamson, president of the Women of Color Abortion Rights Project, is afraid that the Court's decision could again result in the same kind of consequences for the poorer Afro-American women.

"Primarily, even in the past, when abortion was illegal, women who had money and economic power, were able to receive safe abortions," she said. "With the onset of restrictions, it limits access to poor women, rural women who use public facilities because of their economic status. This will have an adverse affect on Afro-American women."

Mrs. Williamson, whose organization is a branch of the state's Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, said that women who want abortions and are not able to obtain them will find themselves overwhelmed with responsibilities.

"The woman who now is poor and struggling will have it double hard," she said. "I hope the state does not go back to the times when the death rate from illegal abortions was so high among women of color. I hope it does not repeat that."

Attorney Brinton Wright, the president of the N.C. Right to Life group, was unavailable for comment on the issue.

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