

# Community News B1

## Greeks entertain at national competition

### Alphas & Deltas champs as top Steppers

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING  
Community News Editor

Five of the eastern region's best steptams had a chance to strut their stuff before approximately 1,200 energetic fans Saturday, March 23, at Reynolds Auditorium for the National Stepshow Association's 1991 Championships. Stepping away with the top honors were the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority from North Carolina State University and the Iota Beta Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity from the University of Virginia.

The crowd reacted with intense pleasure — clapping and cheering for their favorite sorority or fraternity. The event was held by the Zeta Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., of Wake Forest University

and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Forsyth County. According to Keith Belton, president of the National Stepshow Association, approximately \$1,000 was raised for scholarships to be awarded by Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Participating in the competition were: the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority from Virginia State University; the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority from North Carolina State University; the Gamma Epsilon Chapter of Omega Psi Phi from Hampton University — the national step champs for that fraternity; Phi Beta Sigma's Eta Chapter from North Carolina A&T State University, the defending champions from last year; and the Iota Beta Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity at the University of Virginia.

Commenting on the performances, Belton said

with more than a little prejudice and pride, "I've been to stepshows quite frequently in the past five years... and I must say the Alpha show is probably the second best show I've seen ever." Led by stepmaster Len Spady, the Alphas put on a show that attested to their long hours of practice.

Belton feels that the success of the competition is also a testimony to the success of the National Stepshow Association and its goal of turning such performances into fundraising opportunities for the students who participate. "Next year, instead of it being people from Greensboro and Charlotte coming, people from Nashville, Tennessee will be driving or from Washington, D.C. because they know we have the top steptams who are putting in and dedicating the time," he said. He likens the competition and the interest the association is trying to generate to sports competitions such as basketball.

The resulting two scholarships will be awarded this fall, he added. One will be given to an African-American male to attend Wake Forest University. "We're trying to get more black males in," Belton explained.

Given the success of the latest stepshow, the NSA is considering becoming a fulltime operation with a director, Belton said.

The future goal is threefold: providing technical assistance to other groups and organizations who want to put on stepshow competitions; to attract better steptams to those areas that already hold shows, and to enhance the existing stepshows through association with major corporate sponsors.

"We have to be able to market ourselves," Belton said. The bottom line is to make money and put the

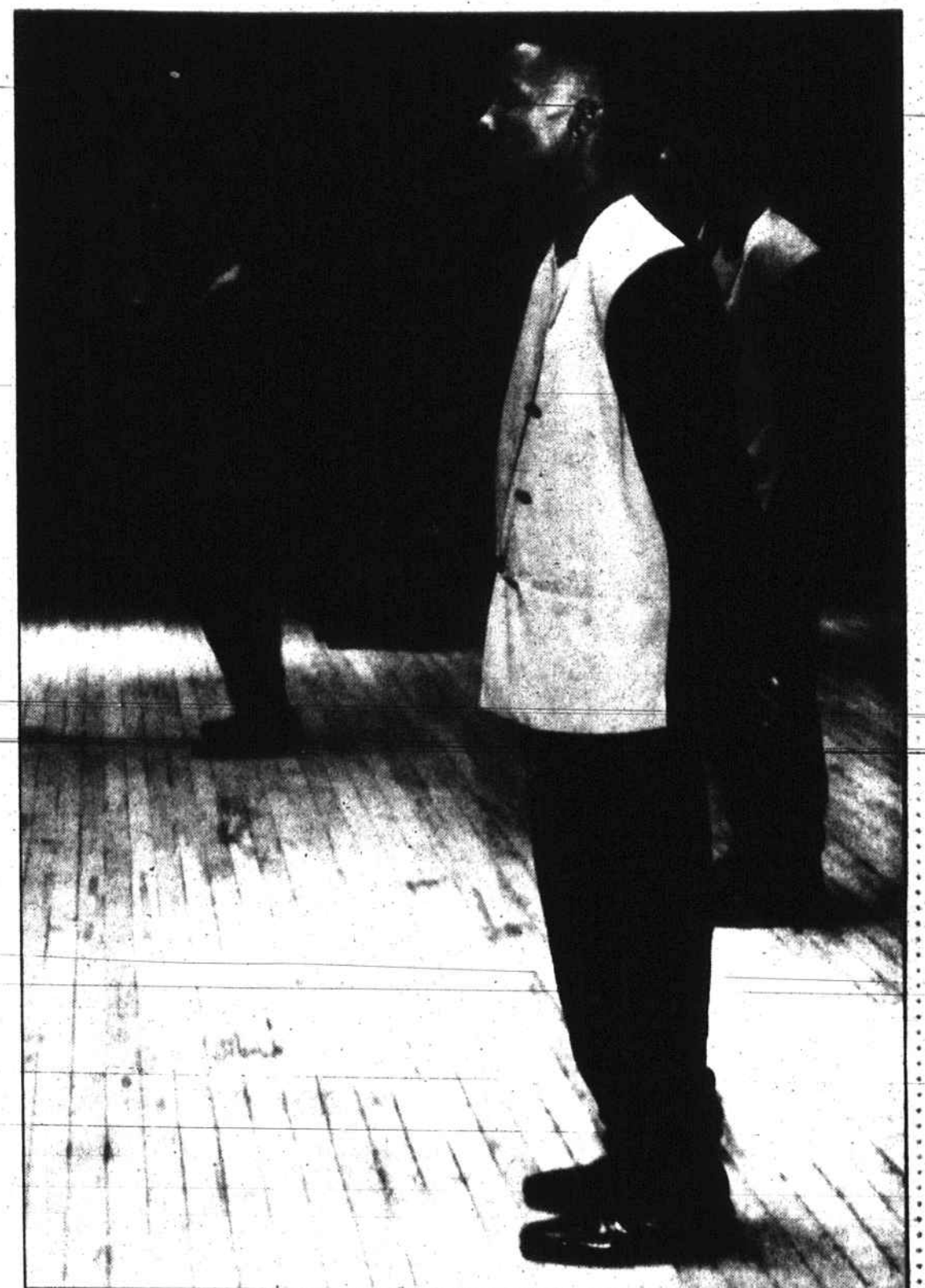


Photo by Keith Belton  
Alphas from University of Virginia were crowdpleasers with their precision routines.



Photo by Keith Belton  
Delta Sigma Chapter of University of Virginia's Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity took top honors in recent National Stepshow Association Competition.

## OUR FOLKS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING  
Community News Editor

It's not often that childhood friends can take their relationship right on through an experience that makes the two of them

we were going to kill some people," he said in describing his reaction to the fighting. But, he had a job to do and he did it, he added.

Like so many others in the war, Lester Speas and Chuck Speas both matured as a result of their experience. Of the time from August 7 until his ship pulled into port at Norfolk on March 29, Seaman Speas said, "I just grew up... I learned how to cope with different situations." Being away from home with nothing but letters and a few phone calls for comfort taught him a lot, he feels. He also became aware of the power of the news media and its impact on the troops. "They

the money is." He is also keenly aware that education is critical for African-Americans. And he believes his own education was enhanced by his time in the Persian Gulf, especially what he learned about the history of his own people and himself. He said, "You learn a lot... It's been good. I can go through anything."

At the same time that Seaman Speas was landing at the port in Norfolk, his cousin Chuck was pulling into port in Florida on the U.S.S. Saratoga. As the two, who had "been friends and rogues in high school, recounted their battle stories in the Persian Gulf, they both laughed at one thing they

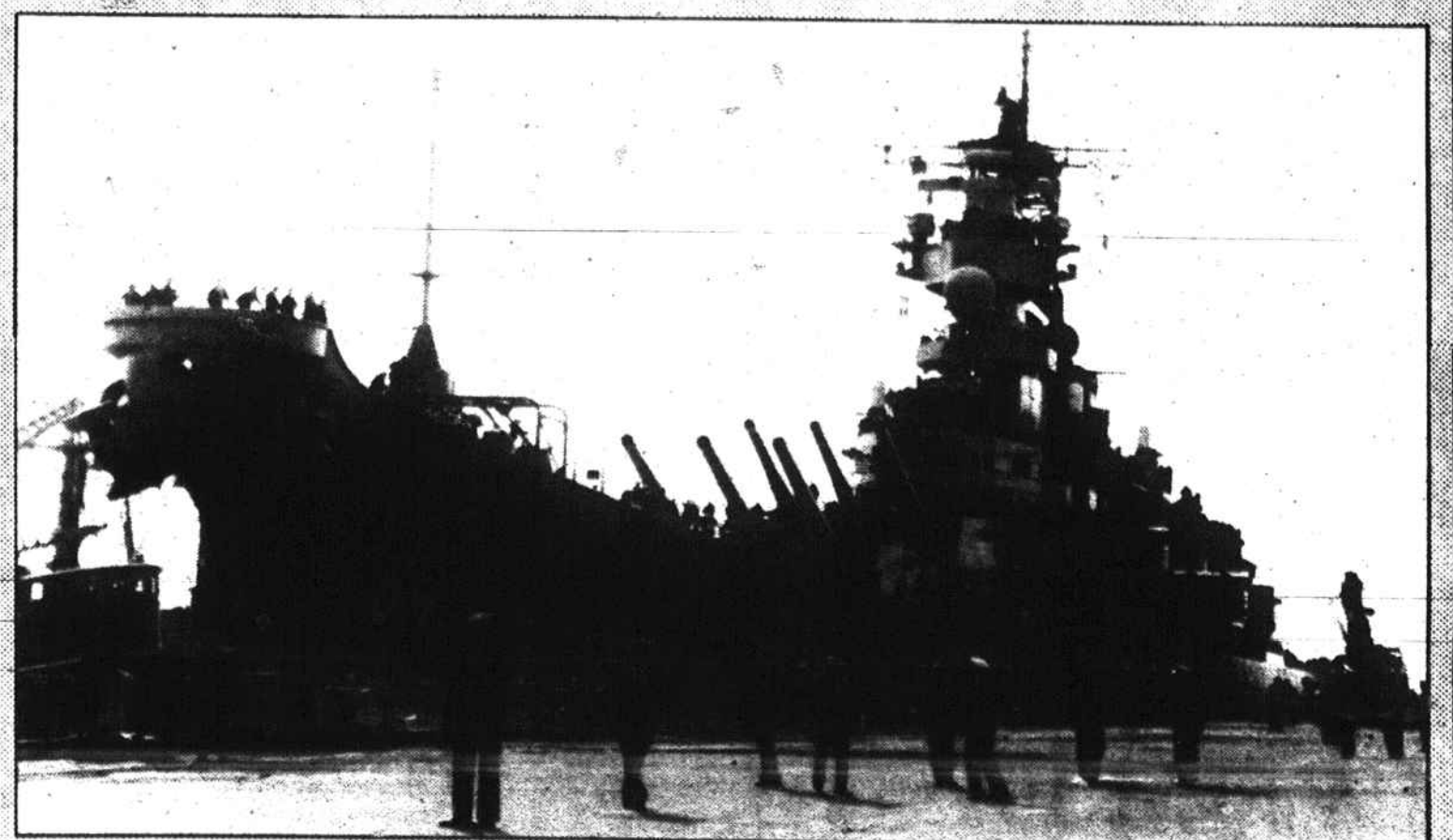


Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.  
The U.S.S. Wisconsin pulls into port in Norfolk, Va. for the last time before it's retired from service.



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.  
Lester B. Speas III (right), who was on the U.S.S. Wisconsin, and his cousin, Chuck Renard Speas, from the U.S.S. Saratoga, look forward to some time off now that they're back from the Persian Gulf.

mature adults. But, that is what happened to Seaman Lester B. Speas III and Chuck Renard Speas, two cousins who just arrived back on shore from the Persian Gulf.

Seaman Speas feels like so many others who have returned to the United States. "I feel great to be home, to be alive because I didn't even think I'd be home alive," he said. Stationed just off the coast of Iraq on board the battleship U.S.S. Wisconsin, he was one of those who prepared the military armament when the ground war began.

"I felt kind of strange because I knew

gave them (CNN) too much leeway," he said, adding, "If the people in the United States were seeing it, you know Iraq was seeing it."

Since he's been back, Seaman Speas said he has had difficulty sleeping and eating and getting his body readjusted to the time zone here. He said the feeling of power that he and his fellow servicemen and women had is something he also has to deal with, being in a position that gave them such an advantage over the Iraqi forces. Now he plans on concentrating on furthering his education. He plans on being an electrical engineer saying, "That's where



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.  
Coming ashore from the Persian Gulf, Seaman Lester B. Speas III greets family members (l-r): Charlise Miller, Christina Miller, Lillian Speas, Eliza-beth Speas, and Doris Eldridge.

shared since the time they both shipped out to war: "We thought we were going on a six-month cruise and it turned out to be an eight-month war," they said.

One of the most critical things they learned as they both agreed is that African-Americans can benefit from the experience they both had in terms of what blacks have contributed to mankind. Seaman Speas said, "Black kids today don't know anything about their black history. I learned a lot about my own people."

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[Editor's Note: Although the war has been officially declared ended, we are acutely aware that the Persian Gulf remains an imminent concern until the last servicemen and women are back home with their loved ones. Their families continue to need the support and prayers of the community.

This column will be devoted weekly to their individual stories as each returns home. Please let us know your story, (919) 723-8428.]