

Koonce takes acting to Raleigh theatre

In the next couple of weeks, Ken Koonce is probably going to wish he had a private jet, or one of Europe's super fast trains which could transport him to Raleigh.

Currently starring in "I Do, I Do", at Mannie's in Southern Pines, Koonce, a Hoke County native, and his co-star, Jeanne Adams, will soon be taking that show to the Raleigh Inn Dinner Theatre.

Show times there will be Thursday, Friday, Saturday nights and Sunday matinees. For Koonce, this will mean leaving Burlington Industries immediately after work and hitting the road for Raleigh.

Koonce grins when he talks of the harried pattern this will create in his lifestyle. He knows that this dramatic commitment will mean "a lot of hopping into the car and driving to Raleigh," but the drama bug bit long ago. He's not ready to let a few miles keep him from performing.

"I really like to entertain people, to see them laugh and enjoy themselves," says Koonce.

A tall, slender dark-haired man, Koonce and his rich, pure tenor are well known to most local people. He admits that it was his vocal ability that landed him his first acting role, that of Lieutenant Cable in "South Pacific."

He explains he simply accompanied a girl friend to auditions for "South Pacific", which was being staged to open the Fine Arts Center at Pembroke State University.

"I was just sitting in the au-

Hoke Arts Scene

By Sonya Falls



dience, and they needed someone who could sing. My girl friend told them I could sing, which was true, but I didn't know anything about acting!" Koonce remembers.

Later, when Raeford Junior Woman's Club produced two dramas in '79 and '80, Koonce was a natural and rather seasoned member of the cast.

From his performances in these two plays, Koonce became rather well known to those in the surrounding drama community. He has since, performed in many productions in Fayetteville and Southern Pines. Much of his acting technique has therefore, been learned "on the job".

He credits much of his singing ability to the teachings of Mary Archie McNeill. An early pupil of hers from elementary school through high school, he, like many Hoke Countians, has nothing but praise for Mrs. McNeill's expertise and devotion to the arts.

"I've been in contact with various people in other parts of the state, and many of these people know Mary Archie and the work that she has done," Koonce states.

Although he has been rather successful locally, Ken doesn't long

for a career of serious acting. He knows how competitive that world is. Besides, making acting a career would spoil his hobby. He enjoys acting too much to make it a job. Fortunate people around the area who have witnessed Koonce's "hobby" know that Raleigh folks have a treat in store when "I Do, I Do" opens there.

"I Do, I Do" is a play that will allow Koonce full rein with his talents. Starring only he and Miss Adams, the play follows the lives of a married couple over a period of 40 or 50 years.

Plan to catch this native son at Mannie's through August 3, or later in Raleigh.



Relaxing
Ken Koonce relaxes before resuming a hectic acting schedule in Raleigh.

Workshop attendees

Hoke Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored two students to attend the Resource Conservation Workshop on June 23-28 at N.C. State University. Robert Strother (right) of Rt. 3 Raeford and Steven Vanhoy of Rt. 1 Aberdeen attended classes and field trips on Soil and Water Conservation, Wildlife Management, Forestry Management and other related subjects.

Beach receives Peace College grant

Robann Ross Beach of Springfield, Va. has been awarded a second scholarship at Peace College. She was recently awarded a \$600 Valedictorian Scholarship for being number one in her high school class.

Miss Beach is the daughter of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Martin H. Beach of 6153 Green Hollow Court in Springfield, Va.

She is the granddaughter of Robert Gatlin of Raeford and Mrs.

Van G. Beach of Fayetteville.

Miss Beach's mother is the former Ann Gatlin of Raeford.

Earlier this year she was awarded an Honors Scholarship. Honors Scholarships are among the top academic awards at Peace, going only to students in the top 10 percent of their high school classes.

Peace College is a two-year women's college offering associate degrees in liberal arts, music and business.



Miss North Carolina Joni Parker during a recent interview.

Life changing for new Miss North Carolina

By Ed Miller

Although Joni Parker, the recently crowned new Miss North Carolina, has had a year to get used to the idea of being famous, "it takes some adjustment."

"People expect winning to change you, but it's a humbling experience. But it's different to go somewhere and be recognized," Parker said.

The newly crowned queen said the job of being Miss North Carolina takes some of one's private life away.

"You can't let it control your life," she said.

"It's your decision to distinguish where the public life ends and the private life takes over," she said.

According to Parker, a Miss North Carolina cannot let the job

consume her life, rather "become a part of it."

There have been some changes in the 24-year-old woman's life, but the year she spent as Miss Fayetteville, as "a preliminary queen," prepared her for some of what she will live with for the next 11 months.

Hoke County has never parented a Miss North Carolina, but came close when Joni Bennett Parker was crowned.

She and her family live about two miles across the line separating Cumberland from Hoke.

The family has lived in the house, built by her grandfather, since early 1975 when her father, originally from Raeford, was transferred to Fort Bragg.

D.B. Parker is a retired officer in the United States Air Force.

Joni has a B.A. in English from Meredith College and plans to attend the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University for their four year graduate program in international affairs.

Her current education had a lot to do with her winning the Miss North Carolina Pageant.

Parker said the pageant is not a beauty contest, but a scholarship competition.

"When you go to the Miss North Carolina Pageant, there are many things you have to prepare for," she said.

Preparation is the key, she said. "You cannot be a perfect human being, but you can make yourself better," said Parker.

"When you make the final 10 (in the competition), you get a sense of relief because you finally did something right," said Parker.

"If you win, it's like they're tell-

ing you you did something right and they're rewarding you."

Although very busy now, Parker expects her life to return to normal soon.

The life of a pageant queen is much like that of other people.

"My first love is reading," she said, adding that she has just started a book by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

She also water skis, enjoys needlework and, like the rest of her family, is a travel buff.

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