

Duplin Personalities

By Emily Killete

Educate as well as entertain is the function of art and a goal Merle Creech, director of the Duplin County Arts Council, is working toward within public schools and the local community.



Merle Creech

"Through our programming at the Duplin County Arts Council, we are trying to educate all the young children," Merle Creech, director of the Duplin Arts Council said. "We touch all our future citizens because the Arts Council sponsors so many programs within the Duplin schools. And, I think it is very important to offer a large variety of programs in order for the children to develop their tastes within the arts. Some programs will be liked and some disliked." Merle has served as the director of the Duplin Arts Council for one year. She came to the position with a background in education, teaching three years in the elementary grades of the Hyde County Public School on Ocracoke Island.

"When my family moved to Duplin there were no jobs in teaching available," the Arts Director said. "So, my interest and willingness led me into work with the Arts Council. And, the opportunity to become director of the Arts Council came at a good point in my life, because I had come from a small school with classrooms of only 14-15 students to a county with 40-50 students in the new type open classrooms." While living on Ocracoke Island, Merle helped coordinate a program in creative arts for the island. She also developed programs utilizing creative art for children's religious education at the Edenton Street United Methodist Church in Raleigh during 1970-72. Working in the Chapel Hill Public Schools during 1967-70, Merle taught first grade.

"What I would like to see the Arts Council become is an ever-opening process," Merle said. "I don't think a rigid long-range plan can be developed for the arts; within each county or area the arts evolve over a period of time. "There is a lot of talent and interest the Arts Council could meet locally, but it also takes a lot of penetration within county people and organizations to know what the interests are and then try to meet them. Within the past year community programming has tripled. These programs are aimed toward touching different groups of people, new groups of local citizens never served by the Arts Council, such as quilting exhibits at the county fair and cooking schools," Merle said. Another opportunity the Arts Council has offered is seed money for local organizations to use in developing a drama program, especially local schools. Merle pointed out. Three plays were in part sponsored by the Arts Council in Duplin schools.

"At least one of the plays was used as an instructive device," Merle said. "Each part of the production was carefully examined and students judged on their work whether it be dance, set design, music or dramatic acting." The Arts Council programming is often hard work, but I can easily say we'll keep participating in the life and events within the county. And, we'll be taking a good look at the life within our county to see what does lighten and brighten the lives of Duplin citizens because the Arts Council wants to contribute to a better life through the beauty that art brings," Merle said. Merle is married to Jimmy Creech of Warsaw, pastor of the Warsaw United Methodist Church; they have one child, a son Patrick. She is a native of Chapel Hill and a graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill with a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education. Through the Institute of Mediterranean Studies in Berkley, California, Merle has done graduate studies in art and archeology in the Middle East and Greece while participating in a travel-study seminar. And, Merle attended Wake Forest University and the Reynolda House in Winston-Salem participating in a travel-study course of early American art and history. Merle has attended school for a private aviator's license and the Gritti Palace Cooking School in Venice, Italy. Recently Merle participated in the emergency medical technician school at Beaufort County Community College.

Tour Historic Kenansville

Visit historic Kenansville on the LIBERTY CART Tour and finish your summer evening with a performance of the outdoor drama THE LIBERTY CART or GODSPELL. The tours are arranged by the staff of THE LIBERTY CART through the July 8 - August 21 season of the outdoor drama.

The tour consists of visits to over 15 historic homes and sites in Kenansville, a trip to a working winery in Rose Hill with an opportunity to taste the native Duplin wines, a visit to Liberty Hall, the historic plantation home, a journey through the past in the Cowan Museum, and dinner at either the Graham House, Country Squire or Elli's General Store.

The tour concludes with a performance of THE LIBERTY CART or GODSPELL in the William R. Kenan Memorial Amphitheatre in Kenansville. THE LIBERTY CART, Randolph

Umberger's outdoor drama about the development of eastern North Carolina during colonial and Civil War times will open its eighth season July 8.

In addition to weekly performances of THE LIBERTY CART this summer, the professional cast of the outdoor drama will perform GODSPELL.

The tour package is available to groups of 15 or more at a cost of \$15 per individual. According to the staff, tours book well in advance because only three groups can be accommodated in any single day. Groups traveling by chartered bus, van or private autos can be accommodated on the LIBERTY CART tour. To book a tour, or for additional information, contact Ann Farrior, public relations director at THE LIBERTY CART, P.O. Box 470, Kenansville, NC 28349 or phone (919) 296-0721.

"A decision is what a man makes when he can't find anyone to serve on a committee." Fletcher Knebel

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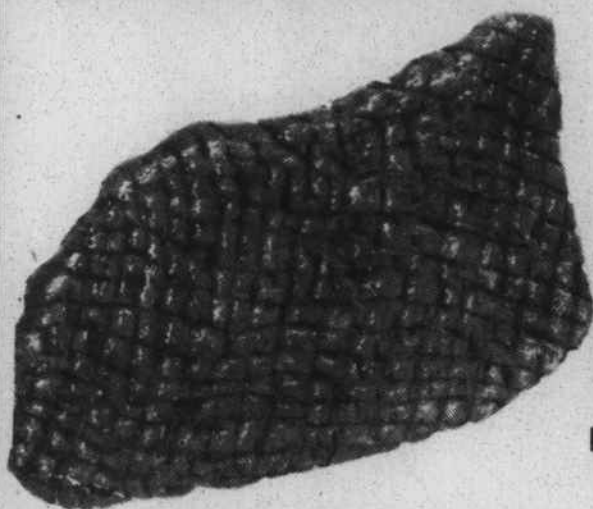
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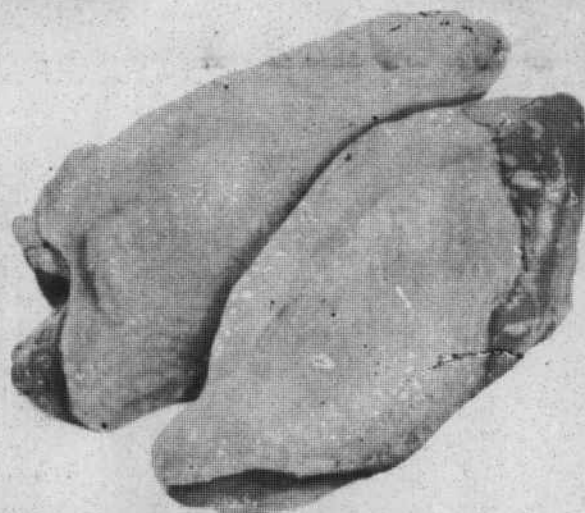
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