

# West Honored By Veterans Celebration

The 1983 Veterans Day celebration will honor World War II veteran Colonel Robert L. West, a Warsaw attorney who was active in the town Chamber of Commerce during depression years.

Surrounded by items from the past and situated in an office built before the Civil War, Robert West said the Chamber of Commerce felt Warsaw had growth potential due to its location on three well-traveled railroads and two main hard surfaced roads during the depression years. According to West, the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce worked on several projects which could have been of great benefit to area citizens by easing the hard times.

"Warsaw had a truck market," Attorney and retired Air Force Col. Robert L. West said. "And, so much of the produce couldn't be sold. Everyone in the area had all the beans and cabbage and vegetables they could use, so the Chamber of Commerce worked to get the Surplus Commodities Corporation to set up a cannery in Warsaw to preserve the surplus. The government would be preserving the surplus products and the local farmers would have been getting a little pay for their produce." According to West, the truck market served local growers but due to the abundance of produce within the area, many farmers were unable to sell all their products. The Chamber also made efforts to extend the Kenansville Railroad, the Atlantic and Carolina, into Beulaville and Jacksonville when the announcement of the new military base in Holly Ridge was released, West said. Efforts were also made by the Chamber to persuade the Quartermaster Corps to locate a supply warehouse at Warsaw, he added.

"We were able to lay the groundwork for a Jaycees club, National Guard and library," West said. "The library at that time was different than we know it today. Then it was a facility to repair and rebind books, which furnished employment for a few people under the WPA. The Chamber coordinated the business hours through the county and brought about the Wednesday afternoon closing of all the stores."

West was a resident of Warsaw working as county solicitor when he enlisted in the Air Force at the beginning of World War II. In the Air Force, West moved quickly through the ranks during his more than eight

years of active duty. And, he continued to serve his country with more than 18 years of duty in the Air Force Reserve. West retired from the Reserve in 1968. Returning to Duplin County after serving active duty in the Air Force, West was appointed to the position of Judge of General County Court in Duplin four years. West was a 1935 graduate of Wake Forest University law school. After passing the North Carolina bar exam in 1935, he established a law practice in Warsaw.

"I like to help people," West explained. "I believe the philosophy that the only true measure of a person's worth is by what he is able to do for his fellowman." In service of Duplin, West has been chairman of the Duplin County Red Cross and worked as a member and officer of the Young Democratic Club. According to West, the Duplin Young Democratic Club helped organize every eastern North Carolina county Young Democratic Club. Today, West remains in command after 12 years of service as Commander of the Charles Gavin Post 127 of the American Legion. And, he has a solo law practice in one of the county's oldest buildings.

"This building has served as a barber shop, two doctors' offices, library, post office, and I have been told it was even once a bar and tavern," West said about his office building. "I have always loved history and I appreciate old things. When my brothers were out playing baseball, I'd be reading a history book." The building was constructed prior to the Civil War in Kenansville and was located on property owned by the Farrior family near Liberty Hall, West said. West purchased the building and moved it to Warsaw for his law office in the early 1970s.

West is married to former Kinston native Ann Pollock. The couple married in 1937 and worked together in projects for the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce.

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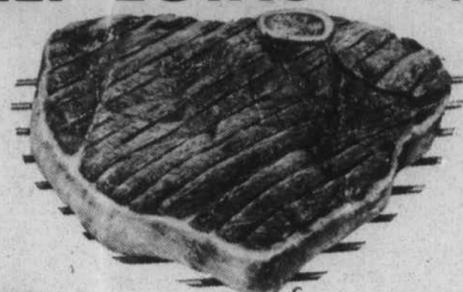
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