

Shallotte Middle 8th Grader Claims Brunswick County Spelling Bee Title

BY SUSAN USHER

Competition in the Brunswick County Spelling Bee last Thursday narrowed quickly to a Round 15 contest between past champion and two-time runner-up Leslie Myrie Jr. of Southport and county bee newcomer Caroline Sheffield of Ocean Isle Beach.

Like a championship tennis match with long volleys interrupted by only an occasional lost service, the two took turns spelling at the microphone in the theaterette of Supply Elementary School. Tension was evident in the hushed audience of family members and spellers seated in a semicircle before them.

"After the first couple of rounds it became automatic," said 14-year-old Caroline, who coolly and correctly spelled, in Round 41, "friable" and then, to clinch the championship, "sighingly."

"At the moment I was just focusing on what I was doing," she said in an interview. "I was almost in a trance. When I made a mistake it didn't really matter." Because of that, it took a few moments for the news that she had won to sink in.

The county championship was a goal Caroline worked hard to achieve, she said. She had competed in the school bee only once before, as a fifth grader, and was making her first appearance in the county championship bee.

"This was my last year of eligibility for this opportunity, so I thought I should go through with it and do the best I could," she said.

Sheffield's message to other would-be bee contestants is simple: "Anybody can do this if they try. You should never say you can't do something. You have to believe in yourself. That's part of the solution to getting where you want to go."

Using an unabridged dictionary and a pronunciation guide, she studied approximately 45 minutes a day most days starting last October, with the assistance of her mother. To pre-



FLANKING SECOND PLACE finisher Leslie Myrie Jr. are (left) fourth place winner Desiree Russ and (right) third place winner Andrew Novotny.

pare for national she plans to keep working, she said. "I'll study longer and be sure to study every day, not just most days."

Sheffield credited her parents, James and Carolyn Sheffield of Tarheel Acres, as role models who nurtured her interest in learning from an early age. "That's probably why I was interested in this in the first place," she said, noting that many of her peers don't share that interest.

Persistence and hard work paid off. She bested a tough competitor, 1992 county champion and fellow Shallotte Middle student Heather Heavener, to win the eighth grade bee and a berth at the county bee. Her key competition there, Myrie, a South Brunswick Middle School eighth grader, was the 1991 county champion and 1990 and 1992 first

runner-up. The opening that counted Thursday night came when Myrie misspelled "sashay" as "sachet" in Round 40 after Sheffield had misspelled "mandatory." With both misspelling their words, each stayed in the bee for what proved to be the final round.

The two had spelled flawlessly through 26 turns before each had several opportunities to move in for the finish. Both choked several times on intermediate level words such as "mawkishly" and "thoracic."

Sheffield, who is enrolled in academically gifted classes in language arts and algebra at Shallotte Middle, is also a member of the handbell choir, the regional championship History Bowl team and the school's first Scientific Olympiad team. She is taking her eighth year of jazz and ballet dance instruction, and said that previous experience on stage helped her maintain composure during the bee. She would like a career either in the arts or in a field that utilizes her abilities in the arts.

Accompanied by Bee Director Debbie Lemon and her mother, she will travel to Washington, D.C., May 30-June 5 to compete in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee.

"We're very pleased Caroline will be representing us at the national spelling bee," said Janice Gore, a Shallotte Middle School teacher of the academically gifted. "She has wonderful visual memory and besides that, she'll study."

The all-expenses-paid trip was part of a championship prize package that also included a 32-volume set of Encyclopedia Britannica, a Franklin Electronic Wordmaster and a 1993 World Almanac.

For his second-place finish, Myrie received a Smith-Corona word processor and a trophy. He was representing South Brunswick Middle School.

Third place winner Andrew Novotny, a fifth grade student at South-

port Elementary School, received a Random House dictionary. The son of Dennis and Patricia Novotny, he spelled "embellish" with one "l" in Round 14.

Also in Round 14, fourth place finisher Desiree Russ sat down on the word "skittish." A seventh grade student at Leland Middle School, she is the daughter of David and Carolyn Russ. Her prizes included a trophy and a Merriam Webster desktop reference set.

All 15 bee participants received trophies from the Shallotte Junior Woman's Club, which co-sponsors the bee with The State Port Pilot of Southport.

Grade-level champions competing at the county bee included these students in addition to the finalists: Tia Marie Corbett, fifth grade, Bolivia Elementary, daughter of James and Eva Corbett; Jake Beabe, fifth grade, Supply Elementary, son of Davis and Barbara Beabe; Chris Morris, eighth grade, Leland Middle, son of Charles and Phoebe Morris; Lee Ann Stevens, fifth grade, Shallotte Middle, daughter of David and Sonia Stevens; Rachel Wheatley, sixth grade, Shallotte, daughter of Robert and Margaret Wheatley;

Also, Christina Hewett, seventh grade, Shallotte, daughter of Debbie Lemmon and Jimmy Hewett; Belinda Simmons, fifth grade, Waccamaw Elementary, daughter of Linda Simmons; Chris Russ, sixth grade, Waccamaw, son of C.C. and Connie Russ; Erica Minton, seventh grade, Waccamaw, daughter of Donald and Denise Minton; Elizabeth Martin, sixth grade, South Brunswick Middle, Nancy and Harry Martin; and Billy James, seventh grade, South Brunswick, son of William and C. J. James.

Pilot Feature Editor Marybeth Bianchi presented Bee Director Debbie Lemon with a plaque of appreciation for her 10 years with the bee, followed by Lemon's announcement that she plans to retire from the volunteer post this year.



CHAMPION CAROLINE SHEFFIELD (right) accepts her trophy from Spelling Bee Director Debbie Lemon.

Bruce Piephoff Has New Album Out

Bruce Piephoff of Greensboro, a former Visiting Artist at Brunswick Community College and Southeastern Community College, has recently released *South*, his fourth album on the Flyin' Cloud Records label.

South features 20 original folk tunes and poems written by Piephoff, including "Greetings From Holden Beach," "In My Time," "Greensboro Rounder," and "Don't Like No Poultry." Liner notes are by

Piephoff's mentor Fred Chappell, a noted poet and UNC-Greensboro faculty member.

Produced by Doug Rorrer and Piephoff, performers on *South* include the author on acoustic guitar, harmonica and vocals; Scott Manning on mandocello, acoustic lead guitar, dobro and National Steel Guitar; Arnie Solomon on mandolin; Rorrer on bass and acoustic lead guitar; Tamas Marius on bass, soprano sax, alto sax and flute.

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BEE DIRECTOR LEMON is on the receiving end this time, with a plaque of appreciation from bee co-sponsor The State Port Pilot presented by Feature Editor Marybeth Bianchi.

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