

ONE IN 235 TOP U.S. SPELLERS

County Spelling Champion's Back After Competing In National Bee

BY SUSAN USHER

Caroline Sheffield of Tarheeland Acres didn't return from Washington, D.C., as the new national spelling champion, but she still returned a champion and better for the experience.

"We knew 234 people weren't going to get first place," SHEFFIELD said. The 13-year-old Shallotte Middle School eighth grader said Monday. "We considered ourselves winners already, as one of the speakers told

us." And they were winners, considering that the 235 finalists in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee came from a starting lineup of literally several million students in fifth through eighth grades. "First there are several million, then 235, then 1," she said.

Caroline ended her spelling bee career with a stronger vocabulary, a bevy of new friends, a week's worth of Washington, D.C., memories, and greater self-discipline.

In preparing for the nationals she learned a valuable lesson, "how to dedicate yourself to something day and night, if you really want it." She went down last Wednesday,

June 2, on her first word, "debridement," the surgical excision of dead or contaminated tissue from a wound. The second syllable is pronounced "breed," which is the way Caroline spelled it.

Caroline was speller No. 4 and saw the ranks thin quickly in a tough first round. "They knocked out three of the first four contestants with medical and scientific terms," she recalled.

After taking some time away Wednesday, she returned to the auditorium Thursday to watch the final rounds of the bee.

"Most of the words were not difficult if you had studied them," she said.

She noted that her mother reminded her later that she had studied "debridement" early in her preparations and apparently forgotten it. "I just couldn't see it," the visual learner explained.

Caroline didn't let an early finish in her spelling ruin her first trip to the nation's capital. She was accompanied by Debbie Lemon, Brunswick County Spelling Bee director; Marybeth Bianchi, feature editor of The State Port Pilot, a bee sponsor, and her mother. She concentrated on making the most of the week-long trip she'd won, joining four lengthy tours provided bee participants, including visits to the Baltimore Aquarium, the Smithsonian and historical sites. "I really appreciated those."

Accompanied by her mother, Caroline, who hopes to have a career related to the visual arts, also visited several art museums and galleries.

Lemon said the local delegation stood in line three hours and got tickets for the regular White House tour. The VIP tour for spellers was eliminated several years ago.

"We wore jeans and sweatshirts the whole time," said Lemon. "It was a good thing it wasn't 95 de-

grees. We walked about 10 miles a day."

Along with sightseeing and spelling, Caroline made new friends among fellow spellers, collecting autographs and in some cases addresses and telephone numbers of "about 150 or so."

"Everyone's goal was to get all 235 signatures," she said.

She described the spelling competition as "healthy," with the contestants supportive of each other. "I don't recall anyone who was jealous of someone. If you got that far you had done a good job. It was a chance to see what the cream of the cream was like."

Most of the thousands of words Caroline studied in preparing for the bee are real to her now, she said. "They've become a part of my vocabulary."

After a hectic week in Washington, surrounded by crowds of mainly young people, Caroline said she was a little disoriented on her return to the slower pace and quiet of home.

The exhilarating trip to Washington, she said, was a good way to end eighth grade. After a few weeks of summer vacation, Caroline leaves for Winston-Salem and the N.C. School of the Arts, where she has been accepted for a five-week summer session studying the visual arts.

Like the spelling bee, it's another opportunity to challenge herself to personal excellence, and to be encouraged and inspired to greater effort by her peers.

"When you see someone doing well, it makes you want to do that too, to see how well you can do," she said.



CATHERINE SPENCER (left) presents Bonnie Dempsey one of two first prizes in the amateur division of the Waterway Art Association Art Show May 30-31.

Bendin Wins Best In Show

Ramona Bendin won best in show at the Waterway Art Association's Art Show May 30-31 for "Cross Lights," a composition in oil.

She was one of 16 artists to receive awards in three categories in the event judged by Thomas "Rusty" Hughes of Southport.

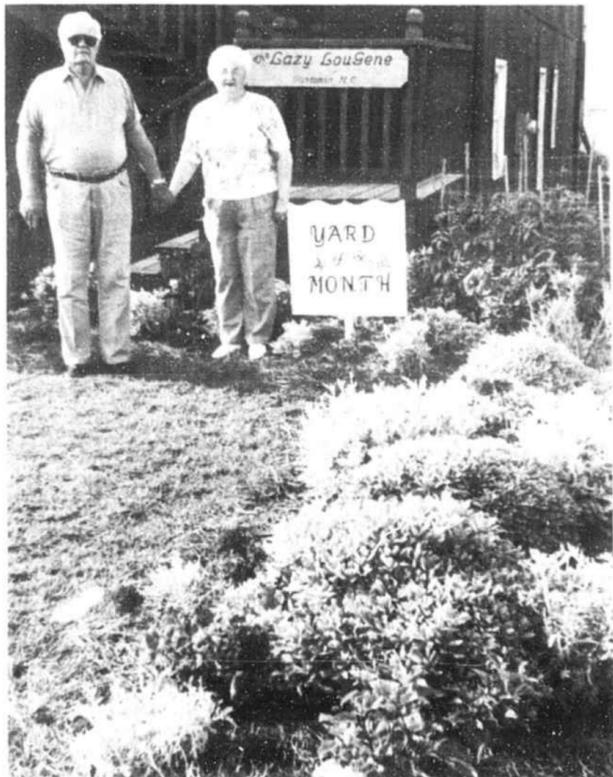
Other winners were as follows, by category:

Amateur: Bonnie Dempsey and Charlotte Maher, first; Nancy Clark and Anne Commerton, second; and Chance Scrantom and Nancy Clark, third (all for oils); Margaret Noland (watercolor) and Marie Munn (oil),

honorable mention.

Advanced: Catherine Spencer and Georgianna Dolan, first, (both oils); Doris Maver (two ribbons, both for oils), second; Georgianna Dolan (watercolor), and Doris Redwine (oil), third; Dorothy Sellers (collage) and Louise Mason (watercolor), honorable mention.

Professional: Ramona Bendin, first (two ribbons, both for oils); Mary Hewett (pastels) and Barbara Fleri (watercolor); Barbara Fleri (two ribbons, both of watercolors), third; Mary Hewett (two ribbons, one for an oil and the second for an acrylic), honorable mention.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

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The Holden Beach Beautification Committee has selected the yard of Gene and Mary Lou Conner of 564 Ocean Blvd. West as yard of the month for June. The yard is landscaped with geraniums, hibiscus, dusty miller and periwinkle.

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