

South Brunswick Class Of 1994 Celebrates Commencement With Hugs, Tears And Cheers

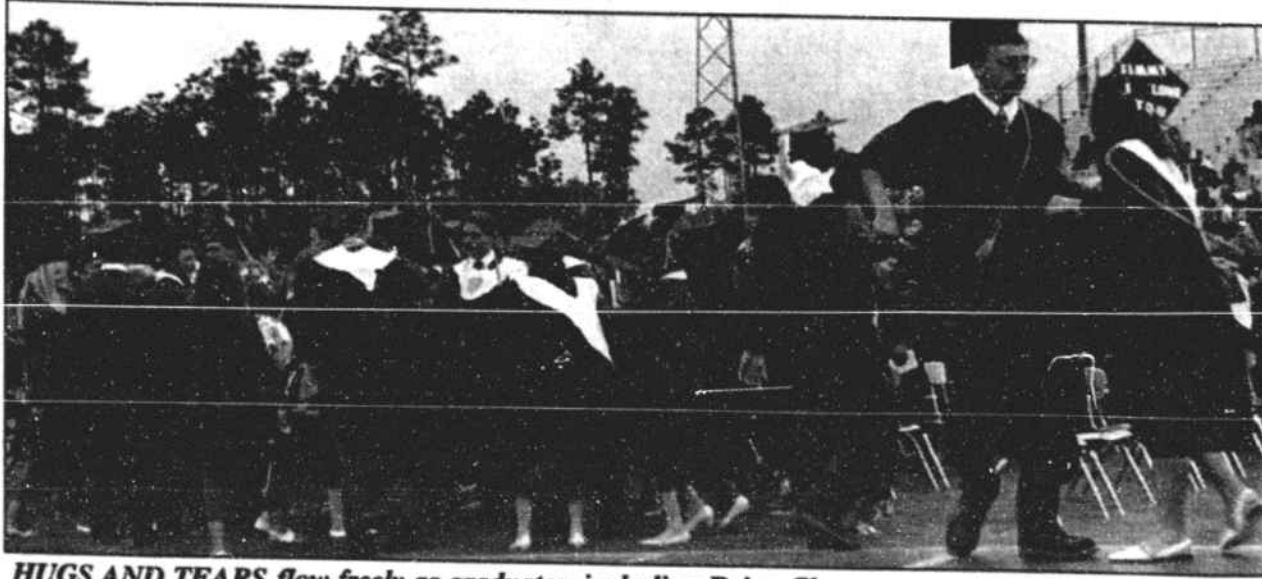
BY SUSAN USHER

With enthusiastic whoops, squeezes and high-fives that would continue throughout the evening, South Brunswick High School's Class of '94 began its graduation celebration in the cafeteria minutes before marching onto the football field.

Thunderheads loomed on the horizon as Chief Marshal Martha Daniels began the procession early, with late arrivals hurrying to find their places in line.

Emotions ran high as the 169 graduates shared their last moments together as a class, seated in rows of folding chairs on the football field, a blur of navy blue caps and gowns and white collars. Family and friends watched from the bleachers or, eager for snapshots, edged into spots along the chain link fence that separated the two groups.

Several senior girls sported personal messages atop their mortarboards, "Jimmy I Love You" and "I Love You Mom and Dad." Others carried armfuls of fragrant roses or foil balloons with congratulatory



HUGS AND TEARS flow freely as graduates, including Brian Clemmons and Senior Class President Tracy Coates at right above, mingle on the football field during a musical tribute selected by the South Brunswick High faculty and staff.

messages. There was even a teddy bear on the commencement field as Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter reminded graduates of their new status as "young adults, making deci-

sions." She urged them to give back to their communities, to pursue life and love, and to remember "when you do the right thing, sometimes you stand alone."

That theme was continued by Superintendent of Schools Ralph Johnston, who urged students to continue pursuing high goals, to respect and love themselves first and then others, "because I believe in so doing you will reap greater measure."

"Everything worthwhile in the end requires hard work, commitment, and yes, even sacrifice," he reminded graduates.

In his farewell remarks Valedictorian Justin Wade Rohde invited classmates to rethink their concept of success as something more than financial security or the career of one's choice.

Out in the world of work, "we will under many pressures that will test our character," he said. "Remember that the relationship with oneself will be the most important relationship we have."

Reminding classmates that happiness is what they are striving for, and that each has a purpose for being on this Earth, Rohde said, "We need to seek happiness for ourselves and to create happiness for as many others as possible."

South's commencement program opened with a moment of silence, during which Senior Class President Tracy Coates led fellow students in The Lord's Prayer. Co-salutatorians Jennifer Hardee and Misti LeClerc welcomed students with reminders of the events that had influenced their student years and urged them to hold onto their faith.

Taseda Eagles announced the senior class gift, a Cougar head to be painted on the gymnasium wall, and

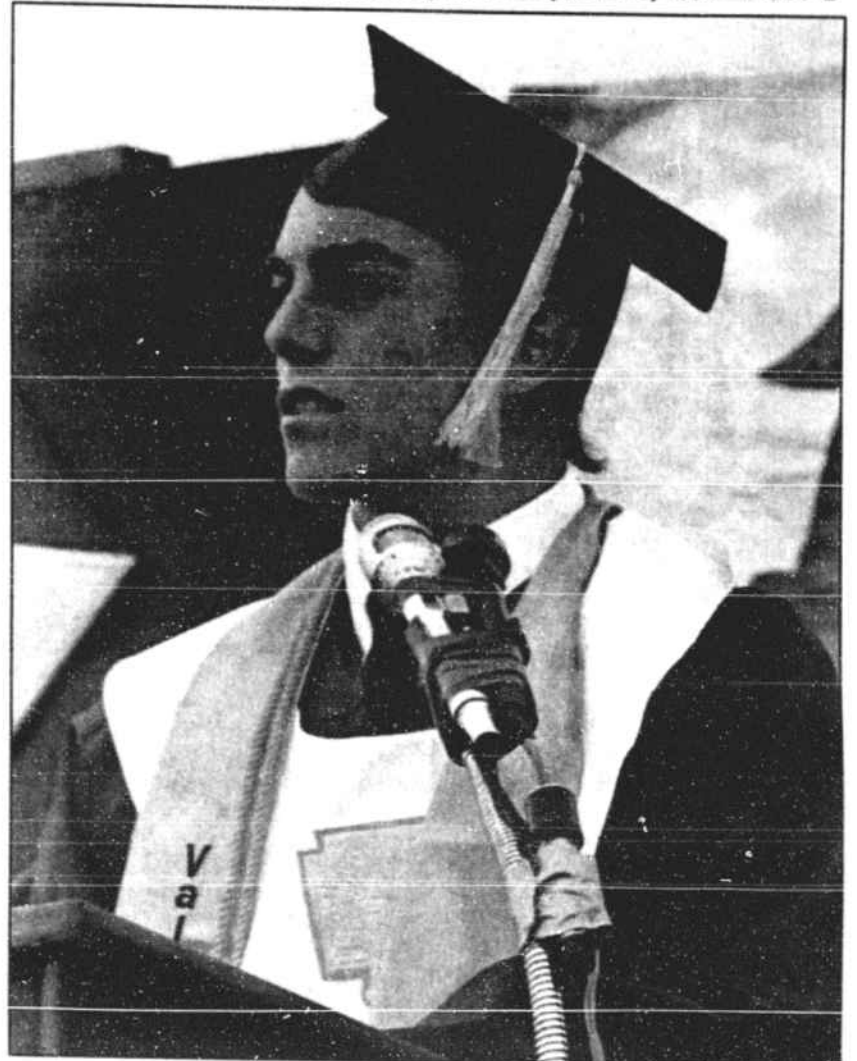
Kimberly Fullwood sang a tribute to her fellow graduates.

Earlier Assistant Principal Eugene Bowden recognized nine graduates as recipients of the Presidential Academic Fitness Award: LeeAnn Eagie, Jennifer Marie Hardee, Amy Jenae Knox, Misty Ann LeClerc, Christine Denise Love, Jonathan Dallas O'Reilly, Mary Suzanne Osborne, Thelma Lorraine Osborne, Justin Wade Rohde. All nine were N.C. Scholars, completing a more rigorous course of study than required for graduation, and honor graduates, finishing at the top of their class.

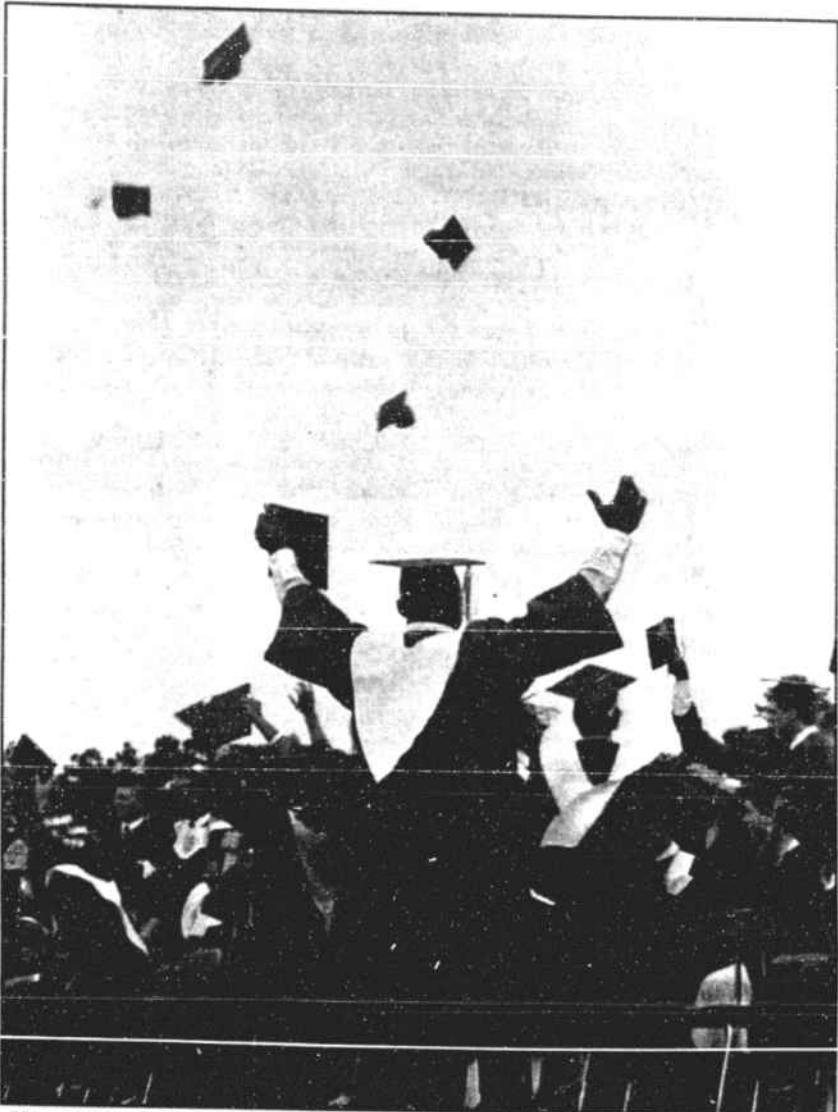
Members of the Class of 1994 walked across a platform with a Cougar head backdrop to receive their diplomas from Principal Sue Sellers, shaking hands with a series of school officials amid the flash bursts of "official" graduation photographs and whoops and cheers from classmates.

Commencement closed on the same emotional high on which it had begun. As a musical tribute from the school's staff and faculty played before diplomas were officially conferred, seniors left their seats on the football field. They mingled, hugging, crying and laughing during their last time together as a class.

When Principal Sue Sellers pronounced them graduates, it prompted one last round of cheering as mortarboards soared skyward.



VALEDICTORIAN Justin Rohde urges classmates to seek happiness for themselves, and to create happiness for "as many others as possible" in his farewell address.



WITH A WORD of conferral from Principal Sue Sellers the celebration begins: the SBHS Class of '94 has graduated.

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