

Officers of the graduating class at West Brunswick High School occupy a place of honor during commencement exercises at M.H. Rourke Stadium Saturday. They are (from left) Class Secretary Lamar Hardy, Treasurer Monekia Gause, Vice President Wayne Branch and President Daniel Martin.



WBHS Chorus members entertain parents and classmates during commencement ceremonies Saturday evening. Shown in the front row (from left) are graduating seniors Tina Bowden Tripp, Shameka Hankins, Jennifer Smith, Melissa Robinson and junior marshal Marietta Heustess.

West Brunswick's '94 Graduates March Into The Future

BY ERIC CARLSON

"We must not think of this as an end, but as a beginning," said West Brunswick High School senior class Treasurer Monekia Gause, setting the tone for the school's 1994 commencement exercises Saturday evening.

"This is the beginning of our adulthood, the beginning of our futures," she told the crowd of 186 graduating seniors and their families who packed the bleachers at M.H. Rourke Stadium.

Rolled umbrellas were in abundance as gray skies threatened to unload on the standing-room-only crowd. But the rain held off, as fleeting bands of sunlight occasionally broke through the clouds to illuminate a flower-decked stage where senior class officers sat patiently behind a table piled high with long-awaited diplomas.

Larry Wayne Branch, the senior class vice president, recalled for his

classmates the initial fears they felt on their first day of school. He reminded them of how their confidence increased day after day; how each one's individual personality flourished as they advanced through the grades to take their turn as school leaders.

"Special times and special places, special friends together; the moments pass so quickly, but the memories last forever," he said, reciting the school motto to conclude his reflections.

In her brief address to the students, class valedictorian Mary Rachel Pearce exhorted fellow graduates to have "pride in ourselves, in our classmates and in our school, pride in our achievements both academic and athletic."

She urged students to accept themselves and to recognize their own unique abilities.

"That which we are, we are," Pearce said, quoting Alfred Lord

Tennyson.

Expanding on the theme set by Gause, senior class president Daniel Martin remarked that graduation is "a time for new beginnings, for new friendships, for new horizons; a time to fly on our own with no one else to guide us; a time to show America what we are made of."

Martin urged fellow seniors to "believe in yourselves" and to set goals for future accomplishments.

"As Zig Ziegler once asked: If you don't have a dream, how can you make a dream come true?" Martin said. He reminded classmates that graduation "is not a goodbye but merely a farewell."

Before passing out diplomas, West Brunswick Principal Ed Lemon introduced special guests at the commencement ceremonies, including PTA president Moses Stanley, assistant superintendents William Turner and Oscar Blanks and Brunswick County Board of Education

member Polly Russ.

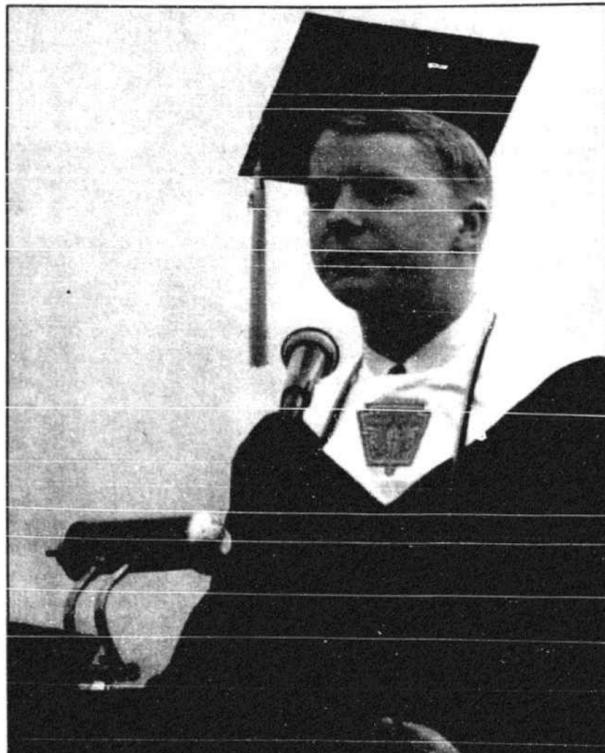
Finally the moment came. The long procession of green-robed graduates marched across the stage to accept their reward for years of hard work. Some waved the leather-bound documents in the air to show parents. Others flipped their tassels from one side of their caps to the other in the traditional acknowledgment of graduation.

But there wasn't one who didn't walk down the ramp with an ear-to-ear smile that proclaimed to the world, "I did it!"

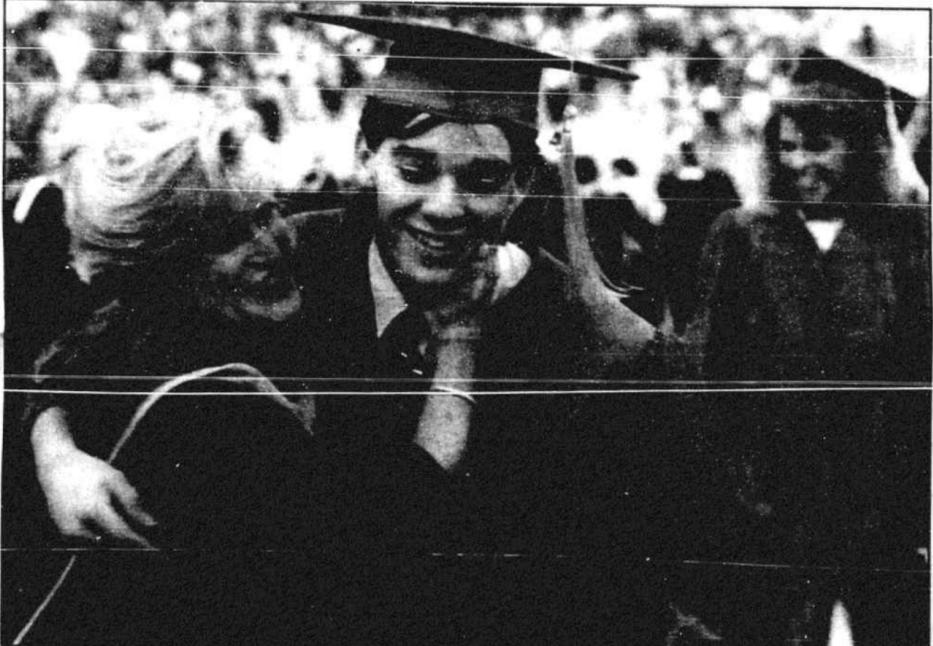
As the seniors made their way back to the bleachers and took their seats, they heard Lemon introduce them at last to the crowd as "the graduating class of 1994!" Caught in the enthusiasm of the moment, dozens of students tossed their mortarboard caps high into the air, then scurried about to retrieve them as treasured mementos.

Then came time for a final march across the grassy field where this class seniors watched three successive West Brunswick Trojans football teams fight their way to state championship games and saw two return victorious.

Gathered together in the gym, the happy graduates hugged relatives, hugged each other, shook hands, showed off diplomas and paused for family photos. Time and time again the words were repeated by parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and friends. "We're so proud of you."



Senior Class President Daniel Martin delivers the farewell address to gathered classmates and relatives during West Brunswick High School's graduation ceremony Saturday.



Noel Richard gets a congratulatory hug from guidance counselor Wendy Milligan after graduation ceremonies at West Brunswick High School Saturday.

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