

MIRROR

WEEKLY
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 CAROLINA
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VOLUME 6

NEW BERN, N. C., FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 1964

NUMBER 39

Several weeks ago, Dr. Pierce Harris of Atlanta was in the pulpit for a series of evangelistic services at New Bern's Centenary Methodist church. To say that he was a disappointment is putting it mildly.

Except for a few loyal members, who can be counted on any time the church opens its doors, the Georgia minister preached to empty pews. If you had the misfortune to attend one of his services, you can readily understand why.

Perhaps the Centenary flock had been spoiled a few years earlier by Dr. Charles Allen, also of Atlanta, who preached far better when he held similar services here. Dr. Allen not only preached better, but has a personality that put his grumpy fellow Atlantan to shame.

Peeved, and pouting like a child, Dr. Harris returned home, and wrote a newspaper column belittling New Bern. It was supposed, we gather, to be humorous, but the venom oozed through. One thing at least can be said. The provoked parson got more pay for his trip here than he deserved.

Among the comments in his column was this remark: "I asked a member of that Centenary where they got the name. He said, 'Well, it's been about a hundred years since anybody was converted here, so we just call it Centenary.'"

Apparently, Dr. Harris, who displayed more interest in golf than salvation while he was in New Bern, didn't bother to investigate Centenary's record. Not only does it have an abundance of members and a thriving youth program, but has helped tremendously in the establishment of other Methodist churches.

Dr. Harris did admit that "Not everything here is antique. Cherry Point, the largest Marine Corps Air Station in the world is located in Craven County of which New Bern is the county seat, and Camp Lejeune, also a large Marine base, is located not far away."

Concluding his column, Dr. Harris said, "Haven't had time to go fishing, but it's all around us and if you like golf or water skiing there's plenty of that too. And as I say, they have churches and attend them once in awhile."

You're so right, Dr. Harris, our churches are attended once in awhile. In fact, on Sunday morning you'll find plenty of large congregations, not only at Methodist churches but at churches of other denominations as well.

Standing on Centenary's steps, if you took the trouble to observe, you were only a few feet from North Carolina's oldest Catholic church, North Carolina's oldest Jewish synagogue, and the First Presbyterian church you were kind enough to compliment.

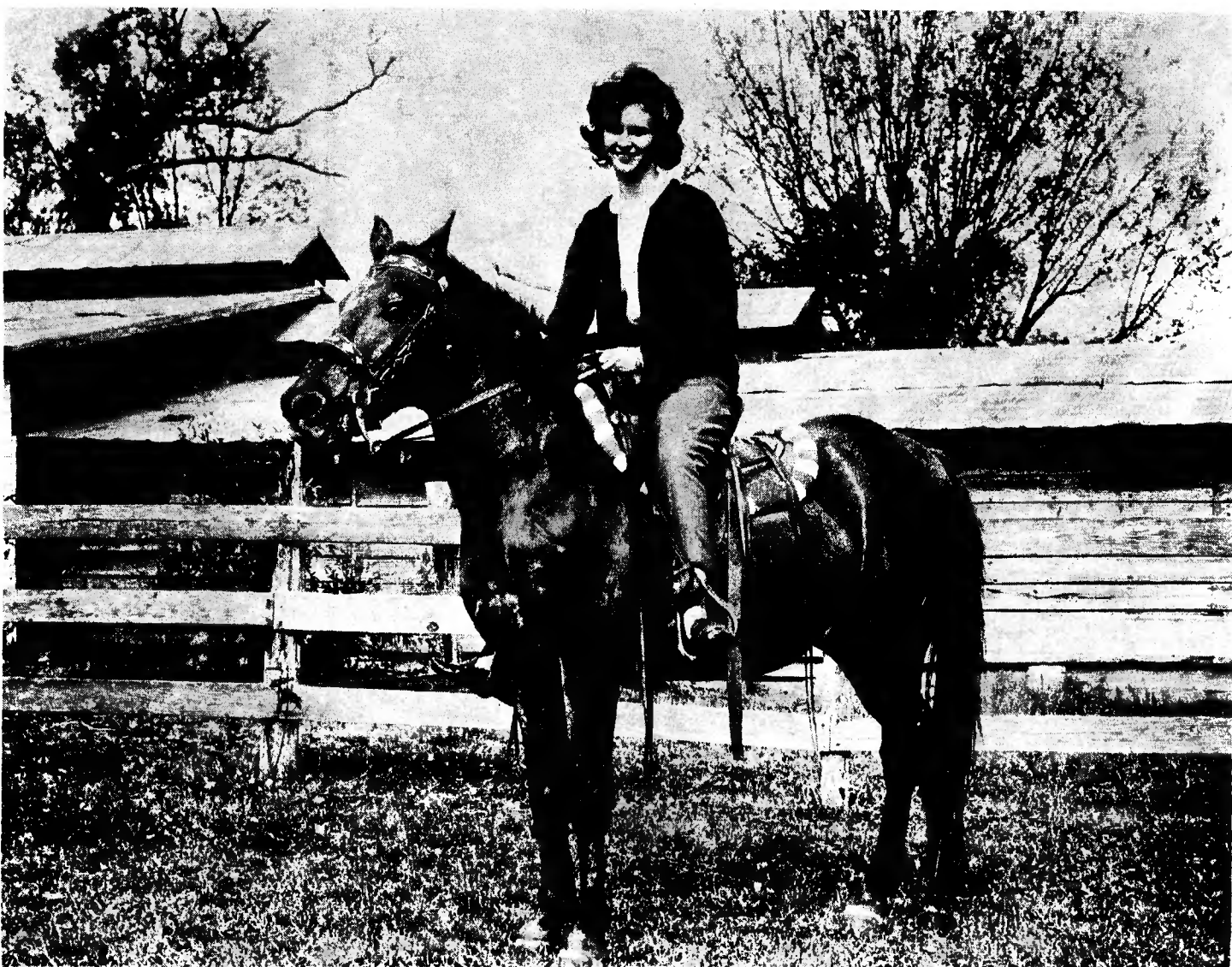
Not only do New Bernians attend church once in awhile. Collectively, they have invested huge sums in edifices and educational buildings. Fortunately, we have some pretty fair preachers too, some dedicated and energetic priests, and a rabbi who is highly respected--and justly so--by countless Christians.

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HE CELEBRATED—Francois Silver Satan, just eleven months old, had good reason to hoist a champagne toast in observance of his first New Year's Eve. Owned by Florence Hanff and Fran Fulford of New Bern, the toy poodle has won many ribbons at shows in North

and South Carolina. You would expect so distinguished a gent to maintain his dignity, instead of waving boisterous. This picture proves he did.—Photo by Wooten-Moulton.



ROYALTY RIDES—Pollie McDaniel (no kin to The Mirror's editor) is the reigning queen at Jones Central high school. A senior, she prefers a saddle to the throne reserved for queens. We're not too fond of

westerns on TV, but a few gals like Pollie riding the range could make a fellow turn into a fan in the twinkling of an eye.—Photo by Billy Benners.