



# The NEW BERN MIRROR

ISHED WEEKLY  
OF  
Regional Library  
400 Johnson St.  
New Bern NC 28560  
5¢ per

VOLUME 15

NEW BERN, N. C. 28560, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 1973

NUMBER 45

A few of us here in New Bern, well along in years, shared President Nixon's memories last Saturday night, when he made a brief gesture at dancing to the Inaugural Ball music of Les Brown and his Band of Renown.

Nixon, then a law student at Duke University, met and became a friend of the college maestro at about the time that Les brought his orchestra to our fair city for an engagement at Stanley Hall.

To have labeled the little known group a band of renown would have been ridiculous in those early days. Brown, with no attempt at originality, simply billed them as his Duke Blue Devils.

As best we remember, he jumped at the chance to play here for \$400, under the auspices of the Zulus Cotillion Club. Don't feel badly if you've never heard tell of it, since it was only a front for dance promotions here.

Several young New Bern males, not opposed to some extra money without too much of a gamble, dreamed up the make-believe club. The most popular girls in dozens of eastern North Carolina towns were named "sponsors."

To be chosen as a Dance sponsor, and have her name listed in the society sections of state newspapers, and the paper in her own home town, was enough to get any gal excited. And what boy friend would deny her the joy of being present?

Being a sponsor did offer one distinct advantage. It enabled the fortunate girl to participate with her date in the Grand March. All things considered, the scheme, designed for profit, wasn't too sinful.

No effort was spared by the local "Cotillion Club" to land the best bands available. From time to time it was possible to book a big-name outfit on an off night, as it journeyed north or south for more important appearances.

Everybody for miles around enjoyed coming to New Bern for a dance. The one thing that promoters dreaded was heavy rain. If it started early in the day, and extended into the evening hours, attendance dropped somewhat.

Although his international fame couldn't be foreseen, Les Brown, even at the outset of his career, was no ordinary maestro. He was personable, fraternized with the dancers, and worked hard to give them their money's worth.

Unlike some better known band leaders (Ben Bernie was the worst) he didn't act superior to the cash customers. Struggling to pay his way through college, he realized that dollars didn't come easy for those kids on the dance floor.

The dedication he had for his chosen profession is probably what appealed to Bob Hope, who above all else admires a showman who never lets down a crowd. The two have teamed together for many years, at home and abroad.

At the Inaugural Ball where  
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**JUST LIKE PEOPLE**—Human beings are notorious for ignoring or misreading signs, so who can really find fault with Freddie Squirrel? Pickings were lean during New Bern's recent siege of snow and ice, so when things tapered off, he did what came naturally and invaded this well supplied bird feeder. Of course, he had a guilty feeling, which explains a look in his eye that puts one in mind of a small boy caught raiding the cookie jar. Not every squirrel can read, of course, but Freddie

can, which speaks well for him, since we don't know any humans who are capable of carrying on a conversation in squirrel language. Unfortunately, our bushy tailed friend, in addition to becoming literate, has saddled himself with less commendable human characteristics. As you can see, he is an awful litter bug, and that bay window indicates he pays absolutely no attention to weight control.—Photo by Theodore Baxter.