

Yeopim Ruritans now have a place of their own to call 'home'

BY LAURIE HUFFORD
Staff Writer

Morris Small, representing the disbanded local JC organization, officially handed the lease to the JC Building, Soundside Road, to Yeopim Ruritan Club President, Robert Halsey, at the Yeopim Ruritan Club's 12th anniversary banquet June 15. It is the first time the Yeopims have had their own meeting place since they, sponsored by the Bethel Ruritan Chapter, became an official group on June 16, 1987.

A verbal agreement between the JCs and the Ruritans was reached several months ago. Since then, the Ruritans, with help from several contractors and businesses (e.g., Ellis Carpet and Tile, M G Brown) have done over 300 hours of renovation work on the building, and have taken over the maintenance of both the building and its grounds. In exchange for the property's maintenance and upkeep, and keeping insurance current, the Ruritans get free rent. The lease runs for a year at a time.

"It's been a long time since

this building's even been able to have a banquet of any sort," said Morris Small.

He recalled working on property maintenance, and said he had hated to see the building's condition deteriorate with time and disuse. He also said he was "hoping that one day the JCs could get back together and start another group, or reorganize."

After Halsey had initially approached Small with the idea of leasing the building, Small contacted fellow JCs. They formed a committee and agreed to lease the building to the Ruritans.

"It does my heart good coming to this facility tonight to see how well it looks and how good a job you all have done. I rode by... I saw the great things that were happening outside and I could only imagine what was happening inside," continued Small. "What better service could we (JCs) give the community than let this Ruritan Club be part of this facility?"

Other observations matched Small's assessment.

Danny Privott, Growth and Development Chairman, said,

"Well, I was here last month, and this building looks a lot different tonight than it did last month!"

He especially praised the Yeopim group for adding eight new members already this year, a fact also mentioned by Leslie Ray Nixon, Zone 4 Governor.

Frank Guthrie, 1995 National President, said, "It speaks well of your leadership. The facts of what you've accomplished says a great deal... You've learned from the past, you're living in the present, and with this building, you're planning for the future... The problem is never how to get new innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get the old ones out... Thank God for Yeopim, that they're willing to look to the future... How many clubs can say they've gained eight members this year?"

He continued, "In the presence of trouble, some people grow wings. Others buy crutches. You people have wings. You definitely don't have crutches, and you should be congratulated for it!"

Foster Parrish, Albemarle District Governor, com-



Morris Small, left, representing the local Jaycees, presents the lease to the former Jaycee building to Yeopim Ruritan Club President Robert Halsey (at right) during the Ruritans' 12th anniversary banquet held June 15.

mended the group for all that they've done to help the community throughout the years, and for their membership growth.

"You all are doing everything right," he said.

Donise Ayers, 1999 District National Director, said that although almost all national organizations are dropping in membership ("Volunteerism"

is down.), the Ruritans have seen a recent upswing.

"We're not in competition with other organizations," he said, referencing the JCs. "We're both serving our community... sharing ideas, sharing programs that work, and... tonight... giving... the opportunity to utilize a building."

Before the banquet, Ray Briley led the invocation.

Charlie Brohawn led the group in song ("America"). Several members of the original charter group were present, including the charter President, Steve Biggs, as well as present members, and guests.

The meeting closed with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Jim Ward, Vice President.

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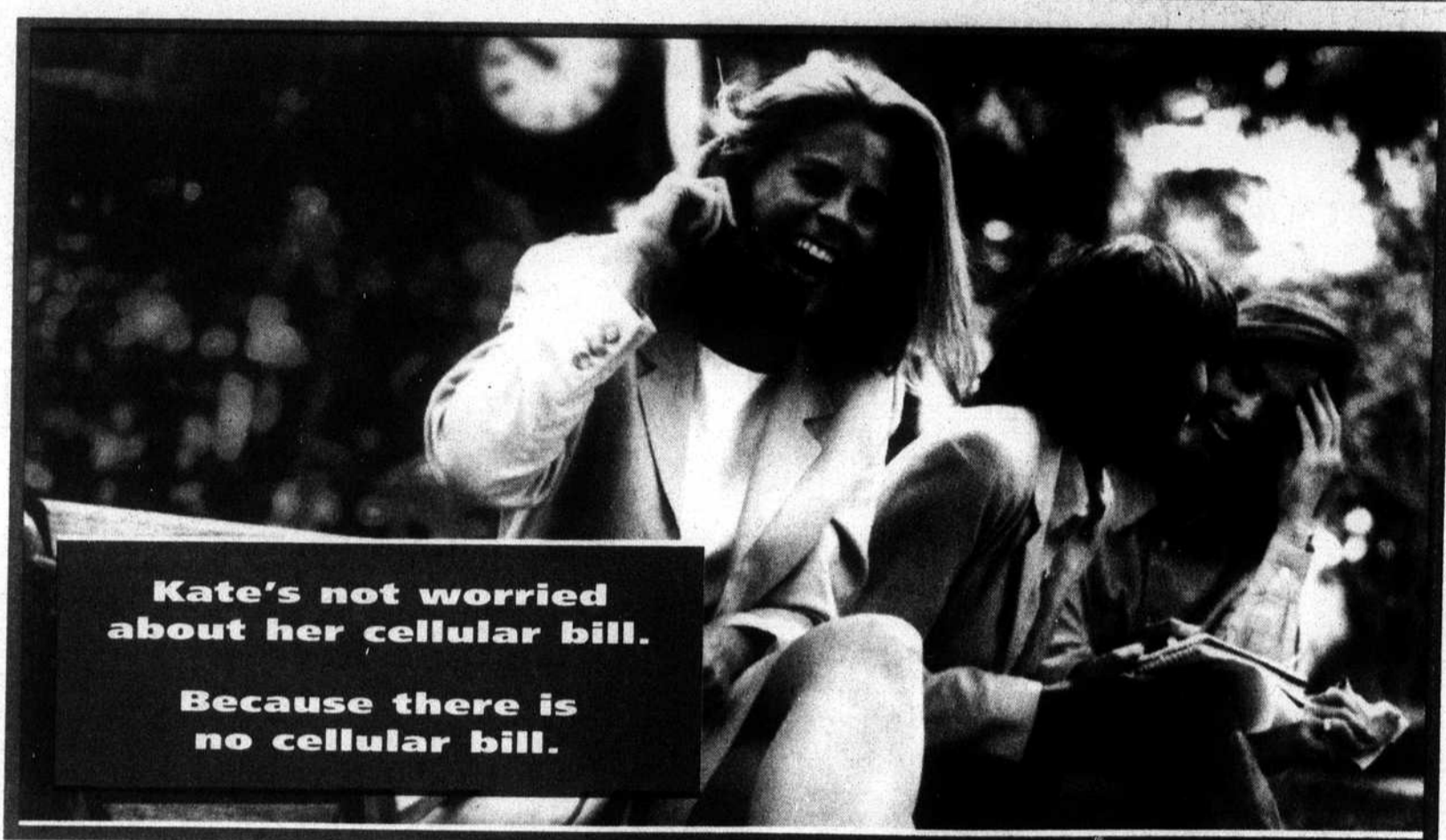
The 20th annual Nixon Family Reunion will be held on Sunday, June 27, 1999. This year the many descendants of Robert and Francis Ventura Nixon will gather at the Chowan Middle School. Registration will be from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m., followed by a covered dish dinner, entertainment and group photos of the descendants. For further information please contact Joe Silva at 482-7981.

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