

EDITORIAL AND OPINION PAGE



We Cannot Know Where We Are Going If We Don't Know Where We've Been...

So fittingly we honor our Pioneer Fathers



by Bruce Barton

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH SPIRITUAL EYES

Life. A brief interlude, a bubble, a vapor upon the water. And we are no more. What is behind the Eternal door? Is judgment awaiting us? Will sheiks and industrialists and kings and bankers and money manipulators and sundry evil doers face the same Judge as the kind, gentle ones who have trusted God down through the ages? And will we recognize our loved ones who have gone on before us when we join them on the other side of the Eternal Wall? And when we see them will small talk fill the heavens? Will we say, "How are you?" Or will we simply continue our relationship as before... before death, the Grim Reaper, struck down our loved ones and took them on that last mysterious journey? It seems to me that more people than usual are dying and going away where those of us who remain have never been. But we -- all of us -- must go.

Did Mr. John L. Carter live simply to die? Or is there more awaiting his unflinching, ramrod, no nonsense self? Is he facing God as we write -- and you read -- this questioning piece? 76 years he lived...developing character, morals, a life style that encompassed godly goodly virtues. Surely a good life lives on. Somewhere. In the heavens? In the presence of God? For this life to have meaning the next one must continue.

John L. Carter. Dead! And some of us shrug and continue on as if his death did not foretell our own. Yet some of us turn our faces to reality's wall and say, with an arched, incredulous brow, I care... but I don't care. Or do we say, I recognize his death but not my own pending date with the Unknown One who will strike me down too? Eternal questions. Fateful ones.

WALKING ON THE DARK SIDE OF 40

Death. The Dark One, oppressive and life robbing, calls us all out. And I walk toward the Dark Stranger fearfully, fitfully. Nights caress me, undefinable fears come at inopportune times. And I know the presence -- Death! I am walking on the dark side of 40. When I was young and foolish, death always struck

others. And I barely noticed because I was caught up in my youth, my frivolous self. But death, in time, came to my door too. A sister, Ruth, a maturing, growing 39, dark and handsome, found herself alone. Death, just like that, without warning, struck her down as she began to understand herself, and others in her wake in February, 1979.

A drunk barreled through a stoplight, oblivious to others, and struck down the lawful one (my sister) as she waited for the light to change. The lawbreaker received nary a scratch. Oh, the injustice of it all. Sometimes anger overwhelms me; a sadness grips me, and, for a moment, I believe in nothing. Why? Mary Ruth Barton (Watkins) was always wounded, but healing, growing out of her psychological scars; almost whole, almost healed. And, after a lifetime of pain and abandonment, she was struck down wantonly without justice, without logic, without a sense of propriety.

Without warning, riding along in my car, laughing at a joke, just before sleeping, in the midst of a joyful moment, I'll think about her and, just for a little while, I'll believe in nothing. And an ache envelops me, makes me cranky, unapproachable. And, just for a moment, I'll quit trying, hoping, believing. But yet we live... until we die.

And I remember her now. February 11, 1979. Death came to reside with me and I await the evil one standing off a bit eyeing me with a baleful stare. I stare back but I now blink from time to time.

Mary Ruth Barton (Watkins) never discovered a far land for a queen, never wrote a book to touch others and make them sit up with a start. But she lived and discovered herself. That, too, is a far away land for all of us -- inside and deep down where we all live alone and afraid.

God, she lived. And she died. And I am dying too. All of us are...

And hope ties itself yonder, yonder, the poet says. And many of us bear the pain of separation and injustice in this life by looking to the next one...through Spiritual eyes.

So, goodbye to Mr. John L. Carter, my sister Ruth, and all our loved ones... we shall meet again. And we cry aloud, "Lord, receive me unto thyself..."

"BUILDING COMMUNICATIVE BRIDGES IN A TRI-RACIAL SETTING"

The Carolina Indian Hoice

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The Dream is Taking Shape...

Over 40 families participated in the community garden project last year on an allimted 8 acre site. Each of the families grew enough food for five months on their co-operatively gardened plots. Vegetables grown varied from peas, beans, and corn to tomatoes, cucumbers, and collards. Ninety percent of these families would not have had a garden of any kind if it had not been for the Pembroke Nutrition Program. About three-quarters of the participants required major technical assistance in just learning good gardening techniques once again.

Co-ordinating the gardens and the farmers market is Lawrence Locklear who is a native of the Prospect community near Pembroke and who holds a two-year associate degree in Agriculture from N.C. State University. When asked what he expects for the new year Locklear replied, "We expect to plant 20 acres of gardens this spring which will serve more than 100 families. In addition we are hoping to expand the Farmers Market to two days a week. Now that people know we will be back at our old location, we expect better sales at the market."

When asked about the new year, Nutritionist Alice Jacobs Cummings responded, "It all just seems so overwhelming. We plan to get the cannery going first, and be sure we know what we are doing there before we try anything else. But I hope by the fall we will be working more with the kinds of foods that our people eat, and know how they prepare them. This kind of information will be very helpful in our cooking clubs. Surprisingly enough, several men have asked to help can food and supervise our cooking clubs that we are, in the process of organizing."

Letters To The Editor

Laments the passing of Mr. John L. Carter

To the Editor:

During the past three months, I can hardly remember a time when I have heard of more deaths from Robeson County, and particularly from my home community of Union Chapel and Mt. Airy. It seems that every week my mother calls or writes to tell Lonnie and me of someone close to us who has died. All of this has saddened us and really made us aware of how quickly time is passing and how much our friends and families mean to us.

This past week I was especially saddened to hear of the death of Mr. John L. Carter of the Mt. Airy community. Mr. John L., as his students always knew him, was my 7th grade teacher at Union Chapel School. He was one of the best teachers I had throughout my 16 years of public school and college. He cared about his students, about our families, our future, our total well-being. In his classroom, you knew he had the final say; yet, you were allowed at the proper time and in the proper manner to have yours. He encouraged creativity. He demanded respect. He made it a point to get to know the parents in the community and to try to involve them in the children's school work.

Mr. John L. had several children in school at Union Chapel and even they became role models for other students. We admired them because he encouraged them to set high standards.

Mr. John L. was a success in many ways-as a father and

husband, as a teacher, as registrar at PSU, as an active member of Mt. Airy Baptist Church and the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association and in numerous other activities in which he was involved throughout his lifetime- but most of all, he was a success because he worked, achieved and won honors and recognition in a quiet and unassuming way. He never demanded or sought recognition. He never quit because he couldn't have his way. He never complained about his problems so that others would feel sorry for him. He was modest to the end.

Mr. John L. was an Indian father, community leader, Christian, teacher, orator, businessman. He was kind and gentle. He was the kind of man that made America great; that made Mt. Airy and Union Chapel communities great. He was the kind of man the Indian communities should pay honor and tribute. He was the kind of man that Indian teachers and leaders should tell their students about and use as a role model.

To the family, friends and other relatives of Mr. John L. I extend my sympathy as you mourn his loss. You are fortunate, however, that you were part of the world that this humble, but outstanding man created and left for us all. I am proud to have known him. I owe part of any successes I have achieved to his positive influence.

May we all aspire to be a little like Mr. John L.
Ruth Locklear Revels
Greensboro, NC

MEANDERINGS OF A HAPPY MAN...

by Garry "Gub" Barton

Note: The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of The Carolina Indian Voice, or IRDA.

Ever since I can remember, it has bothered me somewhat that Lumbee River has had its name changed to Lumber River, seemingly to accommodate the fair (no pun intended) whites in Lumberton (Lumber-town). I can sympathize a little with the Lumbertonians for the name change; afterall, who wants to be named after a tree and thereby forever be subjected to jokes about being knots on a log. Despite the fact I sympathize a little bit with my white neighbors in Lumberton I still feel it would be no more than poetic justice, in my eyes at least, for the white-controlled county seat of government in Lumberton (Lumber-town) to be called 'Lumbeeton' (Lumbee-town).

True, it would be justice (sometimes interpreted as 'just-us'), but, alas, it would not be a fair representation of the way things really are. The Robeson County population is almost equally divided among the three races-about 30,000 Indians, about 30,000 Blacks and about 30,000 Whites. And if there is, or ever was, a 'Lumbee-town' it would have to be the budding Town of Pembroke, the economic and social capitol of the Robeson County Indian Community.

Think about this: Legislation was passed in 1953 whereby Robeson County Indians were recognized as Lumbee Indians, so named after the Lumbee River that snakes its way through the heart of the Lumbee Indian Country. Changing the name does not change this fact. I choose to be affiliated with, and enrolled as a Lumbee Indian solely because I ascribe to the personal contention that without unity and consistency nothing (including the Lumbee Indian Nation) is perpetual.

However, I was born in 1951. What

was I the two years from 1951 until 1953? Surely I did not float around these two years in a sociological void as a nobody. No way! I am somebody. I was a Native American at birth. And I will be a Native American when I die. And I say this without reservation (pun intended if you can find any).

So, like the song says and the river does: "I keep going with the flow." Age has not doubt mellowed me. And the hard knocks of life have thickened my dark skin and desensitized me somewhat. Things that once were important to me oftentimes no longer hold that dubious distinction. In other words, I no longer care about the name of a muddy river. My Indian pride and heritage are not muddled or marred in the least by a mere name change. What is important is that each individual know who he is and from whence he came. If the rest of the world don't, let the rest of the world worry about it.

Perhaps, in retrospect, the name of the river should never have been changed from the days when it was called "Drowning Creek." Could you imagine us being known as the "Drowning Indians?" Don't laugh prematurely; considering the fact there is a gradual decline in the upholding of our traditional ways and culture, "Drowning Indians" might be a more appropriate tag.

Afterall, if we don't hold our heads high above the water, and open our eyes to the need for unity, we as a people might possibly drown. We (and I include myself in this group) have a tendency to gag at gnats and swallow camels whole; then we moan and groan and wonder why we can't get over the hump.

If you can find no rhyme or reason to this column, don't worry about it; there probably is none. It's simply the meanderings of a happy man forced by circumstances beyond his control to live in a sad world.

An Editorial Expression Pembroke State University ought to develop a model school for teaching

Pembroke State University is known generally as a school for teachers. The schools in Robeson County are peopled mostly by teachers who received their education at PSU.

But there is an elitist problem inherent at PSU that is well-understood but little talked about.

Most faculty members at Pembroke State do not trust their own children to the schools in the Pembroke area and specifically within the Robeson County Schools Administrative Unit. It is a case of muted racism, double standards and sociological nonsense. The faculty says, by their actions, "We will prepare teachers for your schools but we will not trust our own children to the teaching methods we have taught you."

Most faculty members live in Lumberton where a special school tax is extolled from the citizens...presumably to buy a better school system.

There are five separate school systems in Robeson County; there were six until Maxton recently merged with the Robeson County Administrative School Unit. Two systems-Red Springs and Lumberton charge their citizens a special school tax. Interestingly enough, most PSU faculty members [predominately white, of course] gravitate to these two areas when they decide where they wish to live while teaching at PSU.

When a faculty member arrives at PSU he (or she) is faced with the problem-where will I live? And the answer to that problem prompts another question: where will my children attend school? Approximately 80 percent of the Pembroke State faculty and administration answers, "Lumberton...or Red Springs."

A university is supposed to make the immediate area around it a better place

to live. The majority of the Indian population, especially in the Pembroke area, would say that PSU has failed miserably in this area of concern.

By their actions, the PSU faculty states emphatically that the Pembroke schools are not good enough for their own children because most of them live in Lumberton and elsewhere.

In one sense of the word, they [PSU faculty] have produced teachers that they are not satisfied with. What is the answer to this problem?

Why not establish a model teaching center there and teach their own children and other children from the Pembroke area?

Then they could say by their actions, "We are not afraid to teach our own children." If PSU faculty taught their own children their instruction of other citizens' children would improve dramatically.

Since PSU concentrates on teaching elementary education a model school of K-7 would be ideal.

Until the PSU faculty truly becomes part of the system many of us will continue to treat them with scorn and disdain.

How can the people trust our children to teachers who do not subject their own children to their instruction?

The university has all the tools at hand to improve the quality of life around them but the faculty will not trust their own children to their own instruction. It is a double standard and evil in what it implies.

Yes, Pembroke State University should develop a model school for teaching. But will they? Probably not. They will not invest the minds of their own to such a noble experiment.



Commissioner Wyvis Oxendine

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Oxendine's short career as an educator has been centralized in the Maxton Schools. He served as assistant principal of Townsend Middle School for three years. He served Maxton High School for one year as assistant principal.

Presently he is employed as attendance counselor with the Robeson County School System. In this position he serves the three schools in Maxton-R.B. Dean, Townsend Middle and Maxton High-in addition to Union Elementary, Southside/Ashpole and Rowland Middle School. His office is located in Maxton High School. Other duties include

responsibility for the bus transportation for the Maxton School District. Oxendine is serving his second year in this capacity.

The new commissioner spoke at length about other goals he had for the county. "Taxes concern me," he said. "I want to make sure we are getting what we should for our tax dollar."

He expounded on the high unemployment rate in the county and explored avenues for lowering the rate. "We need to recruit quality industry which will pay good wages," he said. "This would broaden our tax base and provide more

jobs. It is also a way of maintaining the tax rate." It is the responsibility of the Industrial Commission to recruit new industry into the area, he explained.

Oxendine has some definite ideas about the progress he wants to be a part of in the county. He is extremely conscious of the constituents in his District. "I wish to increase the communication between the voters and myself." One way he plans to reach this goal is through community meetings. "The voters need to know how I vote and why I voted that way," he continued. "It is my responsibility to inform people...I

am exploring other avenues in addition to community meetings for the purpose of getting information to the people... People have a right to know what I'm doing."

Not the kind of politician Robeson County is accustomed to, Wyvis Oxendine is quiet, somewhat shy and reserved, self-assured and most times positive and thoughtful when he speaks. Perhaps the voters of Robeson County are looking for a new breed of politician. It would appear so, at least, in the Pembroke-Maxton-Smiths District where the general election in November

produced three new members of the Robeson County Board of Education, a new county commissioner, and aided in the changing of senator and members of the house of representatives.

The change apparently voted for sounds like awesome responsibility, but Wyvis Oxendine appears to be equal to the challenge. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to watch for changes in the coming years. Will we see positive change? Or will things change on the surface and remain the same underneath? The new county commissioner exudes optimistic vibrations giving one the sense that change might just be around the corner...

