



# THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

PEMBROKE, N.C.

PUBLISHED EACH THURSDAY

"Building Communicative Bridges  
In A Tri-racial Setting."

ROBESON COUNTY

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 40

25 CENTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1987

Navajo Comm. Coll., Library  
Tuttle Branch Post Office  
Tuttle, AZ 86556

## REV. ELIAS ROGERS IS STILL CHOICE FOR LREMC BOARD



Rev. Elias Rogers

A News analysis: This article contains opinions of the writer.

by Bruce Barton

I don't get as fired up as I used to about a lot of things...but Rev. Elias Rogers is still my choice for a seat on the LREMC Board of Directors. He's up for re-election again next Tuesday night, Oct. 6, at the electric cooperative's annual meeting which will be held at PSU's Performing Arts Center. And, as usual, Rev. Rogers has stiff competition. No doubt about it...people still get riled up about him. He's one of those people that we find it awfully tough to be neutral about. And, like everybody else, I have an opinion about him.

I hold Rev. Elias Rogers in high regard. As a matter of fact I consider him a hero of mine, as well as probably one of my best friends ever. He's dependable, and his word is his bond.

Too many of us would like to forget the past. The only problem is that we will repeat history if we do not tell the story truthfully. For those of you who might have forgotten, let me tell the story of Rev. Elias Rogers and the time he kicked the door down at Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation so that the rest of us might walk in without reprisals.

### SOME BACKGROUND PRIOR TO THE OCT. 6 ELECTION

Lumbee River electric Membership Corporation was chartered in June, 1940, but minorities really became interested in the rural electric co-op at the advent of Elias Rogers who was the first minority ever elected to the board of directors of the approximately 16,000 membership co-op in 1967.

Rogers, an Indian from the Red Springs area, was elected at the annual meeting in 1967. Rogers noted in a recent interview, "One day in 1967, out of the blue I received an anonymous letter...I have never found out who sent the letter...telling me exactly what to do in order to be elected to the board of directors of Lumbee River EMC. I followed the instructions of the letter exactly...and I was elected."

Rogers' election was the beginning of one of the cruelest episodes in the history of racial relations in Robeson and adjoining counties. Said Rogers, "The president of the board of directors (then Cecil Dunn of Lumber Bridge) went two and one-half years without ever speaking to me." Rogers was shunned. And he spent two and one-half years in isolation. He was ignored by the other members of the board.

In 1970 Rogers ran for re-election. After seemingly having won the election, it was announced after the balloting that he had lost. Rogers challenged the board of directors. The department of agriculture, which is the sponsoring agency of all electric membership co-ops, investigated and found that illegal proxies had been prepared and voted in the election.

But the investigation by the department of agriculture did not clear the way for Rogers to take his seat until April of 1972. Rogers, through his attorney Phil Diehl of Raeford, filed a suit against the Lumbee River EMC in August of 1972 under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, contending that the defendants, employees of the co-op, conspired to deny him a seat on the board of directors because of his race. Rogers charged he was defeated for election to the board by the irregular use of proxy votes. He was running for re-election at the time (November, 1970).

Rogers contended in his suit that Cecil Dunn, then president of the co-op, engineered an effort whereby hundreds of phony proxy votes were printed to insure he would not be re-elected to the board.

He further contended that employees of the co-op were threatened with dismissal if they did not go along with the scheme. The employees were given the phony ballots and told to obtain signatures from individual subscribers of the co-op. Rogers contended in his damage suit.

The suit further charged that, on election day, persons who were not members of the co-op were recruited by Dunn, given membership and five proxy votes to cast. Rogers was defeated in the election by one of the defendants named in the suit. W.B. McDiarmid.

Rogers also alleged that the defendants conspired to defeat a black candidate for the board, Thomas W. Betha.

Defendants in the suit were the corporation itself, Dunn, McDiarmid, Neil A. Watson, D.J. Dalton, then general manager of the co-op, Robert W. Currie, Irwin Currie, Gail

Boyles, and Genevieve Edens.

The Agriculture Department, after investigation of the case,

ordered that the by-laws of the corporation be amended to increase the size of the board from nine to 12 members. Rogers' term expired in 1974, after which the seats were filled by elections established on staggered terms.

In 1974, Rogers was elected to a one year term.

In figuring the actual damages, Rogers estimated he had spent 356 man hours investigating his case and gathering evidence.

After a long and acrimonious struggle, Rogers won a sizable monetary settlement from Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation. More importantly, he wrung an admission from LREMC that there had been gross inequities in hiring minorities by the co-op.

Part of the settlement out of court was that the LREMC would adopt and implement an affirmative action plan in accordance with Executive Order #11246, and the rules and regulations of the Rural Electrification Administration and the office of Federal Contract Compliance.

As noted earlier, the corporation also agreed to amend its by-laws by adding three at large directors.

The corporation also was directed by the settlement to amend its by-laws so that any member of the corporation could inspect proxy lists at least two days before an annual meeting. (This has since been amended further to do away with proxy votes entirely.)

### WHO IS ON THE BOARD NOW

Prior to the federal suit that seated Elias Rogers on the board, the board was composed of all white members. The general manager was white, as well as the employees, with the exception of one Indian who was working on the grounds.

The present board of directors is composed of 11 members (12 is the official number, but the death of Director Martin Clark left a vacancy which will be filled Oct. 6 at the annual meeting). There is now 10 Indians serving and one black. The general manager is now Indian and the employees are composed of whites, blacks and Indians.

### THINGS CHANGE AND STAY THE SAME

Although Rev. Elias Rogers fought a long hard and many times lonely battle to obtain representation for minorities. It seems that it is always Indians who seek to defeat him. Almost every opponent he has had has been an Indian. It seems that although he made it possible for Indians to serve, the whites still use the old "divide and conquer" philosophy. The Rev. Rogers carries the scars of many years of fighting and being attacked by his own. Let's cease and desist and declare today that we will re-elect Rev. Elias Rogers to the LREMC Board of Directors. Not only because he opened the doors for us all, but because he is the most knowledgeable one serving. Let's keep experience working for us. Join me at the PSU Performing Arts Center on Oct. 6 and show our appreciation to Rev. Rogers and thank him by voting to re-elect him to represent us all.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO... PHODA J. GODWIN

by Barbara Brayboy-Locklear  
Special to The Carolina Indian Voice

Last year Phoda Jacobs Godwin left her chalk and eraser on a shelf in her classroom and shut the door to a 36-year teaching career. She has no plans for entering the classroom again-even for a day of substitute work.

"I've never wanted to start something worthwhile and then give up before it was completed," Godwin said recently as she swayed in a swing outside her home in the Moss Neck community.

"When I began my teaching career in 1948, at Eastern Carolina Indian School in Clinton, NC, I committed myself to doing the very best job I could," she added. "I attempted to provide my students with daily experiences and opportunities which would help them achieve maximum development," the mother of four said. Godwin said her classroom philosophy of being firm and at the same time being fair with children afforded her "good discipline" in the classroom. Only once in her teaching career did she send a child to the principal's office for misbehaving.

In 1984, Godwin's excellent teaching methods were recognized when her colleagues at Prospect School voted her "Teacher of the Year."

The year since retirement has been filled with various kinds of activities for the 61-year-old grandmother. Much time is spent with her family and daily contact is made with her three sisters living in Robeson County. They are often seen in the New Hope community visiting people who are ill and unable leave their homes.

One of 13 children, Godwin says she treasures childhood memories growing up on a farm in the New Hope community two miles west of Pembroke. "Growing up on a farm was plenty of hard work. Pop always went into the fields and showed us what he wanted us to do," she remembered. The Lumbee Indian children were rewarded with swimming and fishing trips and an annual visit to the local fair for their months of hard work on the farm. "There were so many of us that we didn't have to leave home often to have someone to socialize with," she laughed.

Godwin's domestic talents shine clearly in the house she shares with a son. Her husband, Harvey, died in 1983. Displays of homecanned fruits and vegetables stare from treasured antique tables in her kitchen. The vegetables and fruits came from the Godwin farm which has been in that family for almost a century.

An old family quilt reminds her that she must contact a friend and get the schedule on when her quilting club is to gather this fall. And the Lumbee Indian is counting on an early fall so she can visit a sister near the beach who has promised her fishing lessons.

An avid reader, Godwin spends much time with her "face in books." "I don't watch much television because it takes up too much time," the bashful retired educator commented. "But I do enjoy listening to country and gospel music on the radio."

she said. "I like it so much I even have a radio in my kitchen and one in the bathroom," she confessed. She is a member of New Hope Church where she has served as Sunday School Secretary and class teacher.

"I'm too occupied with life right now to be bored and lonely. I love life, and appreciate the freedom of time retirement is affording me," Godwin concluded.

She is no longer among those for whom the school bell tolls, and she is quite content with that situation.



Shown left to right are: Phoda Godwin, grandson Cody, and son, Harvey Godwin, Jr.

## Countdown To 5,000

Our countdown to 5,000 subscribers continues. This week we heard from:

170. Herley Harris, OH  
171. Harley Phillyaw, MD  
172. Adelaide Boughman, Morganton, NC  
173. Joseph T. Bell, Greensboro, NC  
174. Clement Bullard, Maxton

## Spotlight on CALLIE LOCKLEAR LOCAL BUSINESS PERSONS

by Barbara Brayboy-Locklear

"Put together a female workaholic, a thick bologna sandwich and a cold 'belly washer,'" and what do you have? A partnership bound to succeed.

Such a partnership lies just three miles northwest of Pembroke State University. The partners can be found at Callie's Convenience Store located in the Bear Swamp Church community outside Pembroke.

Callie Locklear opened the doors of her business in mid-spring this year. "I could have opened three years ago, but the time wasn't right," said the 45-year-old owner and manager. "I decided to wait and watch the traffic along the road before making my decision," she said.

Traffic continued steady along the rural Robeson County road, and she worked steadily at a convenience store in neighboring Pembroke. "I was working 80-90 hours a week for someone else, and I figured if I could do that, I could build my own place and work for myself," the Lumbee Indian commented.

Locklear drew on the carpentry skills of neighbors and family members in order to construct the store which is located just yards from her residence. "Business has been very good. It's been busier than I ever expected," she said.

Customers recently discovered the new grill added inside the store and have been coming in droves. "They start coming in as soon as we open in the morning," she smiled. The "regulars" flock in around noon to munch on sandwiches and plate dinners. Locklear pays close attention to the preparation of the food served from the grill. "All ingredients are fresh that go into my sandwiches and plate dinners," she boasted. "My customers are special, and I want them to be happy when they leave," she said. The petite owner works a 16-hour day to make sure they return. Three part-time employees have been hired to help in the store and grill. Locklear engages her husband, 11-year-old daughter, and PSU student-son to help when their schedules allow.

"People ask me do I ever get tired of working such long hours. I tell them I'd never really thought about being tired," the energetic owner laughed. Hard work is no stranger to Locklear, the former Callie Pavia of Buie. "I was the second oldest of 14 children growing up on a farm, and remember handling tobacco at age five," she remembered. She worked in textile factories for 12 years and learned "first hand" the business of food handling and convenience stores from previous places of employment.

Once very bashful, Locklear is now comfortable greeting and serving her customers. She fully understood the recent request for a "belly washer" from an elderly customer who entered her store. Locklear "moseyed" over to the refrigerated drink box and handed the gentleman a bottle of cola.



Callie Locklear

To locate Callie's Convenience Store, travel west from Pembroke on the Red Springs Road; turn right on Euclid Road at St. Annah Church. Take the first left onto Philadelphia Road. Travel approximately one mile. See Callie's on left.

Business hours are Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m. til 11 p.m. Grill seating capacity is 25. Reservations are required for large groups who plan to use the dining area.

To Subscribe to the Carolina  
Indian Voice Call 521-2886