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JULIAN PIERCE,

DATE FOR SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE
ASSASSINATED

A Tribute To

JOHN LANKFORD GODWIN



JULIAN T. PIERCE

From Staff Reports

Julian T. Pierce, a Lumbee Indian in racially troubled Robeson County, was shot and killed in his home early Saturday.

A relative found Pierce in the kitchen of his home about 7:30 a.m., Robert B. Morgan, director of the State Bureau of Investigation, said.

Pierce was an Indian activist running against District Attorney Joe Freeman Britt for judgeship. Pierce was a symbol to many Indian residents who are opposing corruption in the county's criminal justice system.

Pierce's cousin, Charles Locklear, 38, of Scotland County said he arrived at Pierce's home around 7:30 a.m. Saturday to have coffee with him before other political campaign workers were scheduled to arrive after 8 a.m.

Locklear said that when he entered the rear garage he saw glass panes broken in the door leading to the kitchen and wondered if Pierce had forgotten his key when he arrived home the night before and had to break into his house.

Pierce apparently arrived home after 12 a.m. Saturday following a visit Friday night to the Oak Ridge Club in Lumberton where he visited people and discussed his campaign, according to Bobby Thompson, a campaign worker from the Prospect community.

A neighbor of Pierce's reported hearing a popping sound between about 12:30 a.m. and 1 a.m. Saturday and got out of bed to check her house but found nothing, saw nothing and returned to bed, Thompson said.

Pierce's campaign workers had received a warning from

someone in another county that a threat against Pierce existed, particularly if he appeared to be leading in the race against Britt for the judgeship, said Thompson. Neither Pierce nor his aides took the threat seriously, but rather as a nuisance Thompson said.

Campaign supporters who stopped by the Pierce home on NC 71, a rural road near the Wakulla Community, said the recent approval of a joint county school district was a sign that Indian, Black and white people were coming together to provide a better education for their children and that Pierce was also working for such a goal.

Friends and relatives described Pierce as caring, concerned, intelligent, a workaholic.

On Sunday, Pierce's sister, Dale Chavis, stood with a small group behind the bright yellow and orange tape marking off the crime scene. Fighting to hold back tears, she recalled the last time she'd seen her brother alive.

"I talked with him last Sunday," she said. "He came by and ate dinner and watched the ball game."

Mrs. Chavis said her parents, now deceased, were poor and had little education. Their family of 11 grew up on a farm in Hoke county, where Pierce graduated as Valedictorian from an all-Indian Hawkeye High School.

Pierce was the first in his family to go to college, Dr. James B. Chavis, a Pembroke State University administrator, said he recruited Pierce to attend PSU.

Chavis said Pierce was genuinely concerned about improving the quality of life, not just for Indians but for all people.

Pierce graduated from PSU with a degree in Chemistry in 1966 and for the next seven years worked as a chemist at Shipyard in Newport News and Norfolk, Va. at the same time getting in a year of graduate study at Old Dominion University. In 1973, he enrolled in law school at N.C. Central University and graduated at the top 5 percent of his class in 1976. For the next two years, while working as an attorney with Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, he earned a master's degree in tax law from Georgetown University.

In 1978, Pierce became executive director of Lumbee River Legal Services, a position he held until January, when he resigned to campaign for the Superior Court Judgeship.

"He didn't care a whole lot for material things, and he didn't believe in racism," Pierce's sister, Mrs. Chavis, said. "He wanted Indians to be the best they could be."

Law enforcement authorities from the State Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation and local agencies, aided by local informants on Tuesday announced that a Pembroke man had been charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of Pierce and another allegedly the triggerman, was found Tuesday evening, an apparent suicide victim, according to Sheriff Hubert Stone.

Stone said John Anderson "Johnny" Goins, 24, of Route 1

Pembroke shot himself with a shotgun at the home of his father, Ernest Goins.

Arrested and charged with first-degree murder was Sandy Gordon Chavis, 21, of Route 1, Pembroke. Chavis is being held without bond in the county jail.

Stone said Goins had been dating Shannon Bullard, the 16-year-old daughter of Pierce's girlfriend, Ruth Locklear. "They had been going together more than a year and broke up about two months ago," Stone said.

Stone said Ms. Locklear had taken out two trespassing warrants against Goins and Goins thought Pierce had something to do with it.

"According to our information, Goins was a triggerman," Stone said. "We have a signed confession from Chavis."

Pierce is survived by his three children: two sons, Avery Wayne and Julian Thomas Pierce, Jr.; one daughter, Julia Ann Pierce of Claremont, Va.; five brothers: Phil Pierce of Aberdeen, Ezra Pierce of Lumber Bridge, John Pierce of Tucson, Arizona, Ray Pierce of Wichita, Kansas and Lennis Pierce of Chicago, Ill.; five sisters: Josephine Parks of Raeford, Delia Pierce and Peggy Lowery of Aberdeen, Connie Oxendine of Pembroke and Dale Chavis of Red Springs.

Pierce was eulogized at 1 p.m. Wednesday at the Performing Arts Center on the PSU campus.

A 3:30 p.m. funeral service was held on Wednesday in Sycamore Hill Holiness Church in Aberdeen. Burial followed in the Church of God Cemetery, Aberdeen.

By Barbara Brayboy-Locklear

"I think of all people as being first class citizens until they prove otherwise. I don't like to think of people as being members of the white race, or black race, or Indian race. We're all members of the human race, and if we can't accept that fact, then we're not progressing; we're regressing."

John Lankford Godwin

The sanctuary in First Baptist Church in Pembroke was packed last Saturday afternoon as hundreds came to say farewell to John Lankford Godwin. The Lumbee Indian died on Tuesday from injuries received in an automobile accident on March 10.

In a eulogy, Rev. Mac Legerton said Godwin was a leader who obtained leadership not because of some job or appointment or some worldly system identifying him a leader of his people... That he was a leader who came up from the grassroots; that over time, became accepted and respected as a leader of his people who were first unwilling to recognize him.

In 1947, Godwin, struggling to support a growing family on a small farm outside Pembroke, heard of a better future for him and his family in Virginia. He had become tired of spending half his time wishing for things he could have if he didn't spend half his time wishing.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

Lonnie Gaston Revels



Lonnie Revels works in his vineyard at his rural Pembroke home.

by Barbara Brayboy-Locklear
Special To The Carolina Indian Voice

The morning sun rarely catches Lonnie Revels lying in bed. After more than seven decades, the 82-year-old retired farmer can't seem to kick the habit of getting up and out at early day. He likes it that way, for it's the only life he's ever known.

At age 11, the Lumbee Indian was taken out of school by his father to care for his ill mother, Della Hardin Revels, who was confined to bed. For months Revels attended to the needs of a dying mother who gingerly rang a handbell when she needed her third-born son's attention. It seemed he was the only one she depended on to take care of her.

The death of his mother struck a double blow to young Revels. He lost a loved one and an opportunity to return to the one-room school at Magnolia School when his father, William, hired him out to do daily farmwork.

"I was hired by the month and my father collected the wages to help support the family until I was almost 21 years old. I decided I'd better begin looking out for myself," Revels remembers. He left home and lived with a brother and his family for six months on a farm assignment.

When he heard a local farmer needed a farm helper, Revels "traded" for the job which paid ten dollars a month and offered room and board. After three years of working the fields, he says he decided he wanted to do better than that. A friend told him of a job opportunity offering three dollars a day in Enfield, NC. He left on a train from Pembroke shortly thereafter. He stayed until the highway construction job was completed and returned to his former job on the William Henry Godwin farm outside Pembroke.

There he rekindled a secret courtship with the farm owner's daughter, Rosa Dimple, a school teacher at Fairmont Indian School. The couple didn't want anybody to know they were courting. "She had a spirit about her that she didn't want anyone to know she was courting me," Revels smiles. He says they courted on the sly in the fields and around the house when there was nobody to hear them talk.

"It wasn't love at first sight. It just kept building up," he says. It wasn't long before the family caught on to the courtship, and it wasn't long after, on a rainy day, the two Lumbee Indians rode in a relative's touring car to Dillon, SC to get married.

They took up housekeeping in a rented two-room house. Furnishings included a bedstead and a "four-eyed" woodburning cook stove. A month later, they moved after discovering a bootlegger kept his whiskey stored under the house.

"He told me he'd hidden it there, and I had been sleeping over it, so I didn't like that. I was afraid the law would find it and say it was mine," Revels says.

The young couple had hardly paid rent on, and settled in another rented house before a truck pulled up one day and the driver announced that the bride's father had built the couple a house near the bride's homeplace, and that he had come to move their belongings.

Once moved again, Mrs. Revels continued teaching while her husband farmed. The first of six children was born, and Mrs. Revels retired from teaching to become a full-time homemaker and mother. The family soon outgrew the house and moved a half mile west. There Revels, a widower, lives today.

After the move, the couple worked the earth hard to scratch out a living for their five daughters and one son. After two years of "third" farming where the landowner received two loads of corn and the tenant got one, Revels decided he couldn't see it that way. And he bought his first mule and wagon and started farming on "havles."

An opportunity arose for Revels to purchase his own farm. A deal was struck with a local lender. "When I was trying to pay for my farm, I'd rise early and take my mule and drag across the swamp to the fields," he says. Arriving before daybreak, he'd wait until he could see to begin plowing his mule. Later on in the morning he could see his wife with a child by one hand and a food sack in another, walking the mile to bring a breakfast to the young farm husband. He says he would sit himself on the plow and eat with dirty hands. "And it didn't kill me to do it."

He says he was a good farmer. "If I hadn't been, I couldn't have paid for the farm and educated my children." He says he worked hard to send his children to school, often selling livestock to afford books and tuition. "I didn't want them to have to do like their daddy in not getting a formal education."

Retirement for Revels came about ten years ago after a horse-riding accident. He has since fully recovered from injuries received in a fall from a horse he has since sold. A six-weeks stay in hospitals convinced him to hang up the stirrups for good.

Today he rents out the 80-acres of the 2 farms he owns. His wife of 52 years died in 1980. A daughter, too, is deceased.

He still rises around 6 a.m. with a good appetite which he usually appeases with his own homecooked breakfast. Other meals are usually taken at nearby restaurants or in private homes.

He spends hours just sitting around his home on Union Chapel Road outside Pembroke. Much time and care are given to a vineyard he established years ago in an area on the property where his house is situated.

He can still use a shovel and rake. He can swing a bushaxe in a fashion that puts younger men to shame.

He loves people and enjoys visits from his children and grandchildren. His only son is the family politician. "One politician in the family is enough, especially if he can talk as much as my boy," Revels laughs. "I never was a politician. I just sit back and listen to him talk."

The great-grandfather is a loyal and longtime member of First Baptist Church in Pembroke. There he has served as a trustee for more than 40 years and has served as treasurer of the building fund.

He attributes his good health and long life to a long practice of serving God. He's been a Christian for more than four decades. Revels says treating his fellowman right and paying his "just and honest" debts have allowed him a peaceful life.

He has plowed well, the rows of his life. He has produced a yield, if measured, would equal bushels and bushels-full of deserved praise.

JOHN L. GODWIN
MEMORIAL FUND
ESTABLISHED

In response to community interest, the First Baptist Church of Pembroke has established a John L. Godwin Memorial Fund to be used for the purchase of a piano as a tribute to his many years of

He moved his family to a farm outside Richmond and tilled the soil for two years before he moved to Pennsylvania. The 1949 farm season had not been a good one for the young man who had grown up working in the fields of his native Robeson County. He saw his last hope of making any profit that year go up in smoke when his tobacco barn filled with tobacco burned.

Relocating brought no immediate financial relief to Godwin. For six months he sought employment with a national chemical corporation. His perseverance paid off one day when the personnel manager said, "Your sitting in my office every day for the past half year is driving me crazy." Godwin's son, Tony, says the man gave his father the job to get Godwin off his back.

The Lumbee Indian worked hard to become the best tow-loader operator in the plant. His attitude became such that if he worked hard enough, the people around him would stand aside to let him pass because he knew where he was going up. And he did. He aimed for a top position and was awarded accordingly with the title of assistant chemical engineer. He was later to become teacher in two of the corporation plants. His job was to teach college graduates the chemical process used by the plants.

Godwin never was named top chemical engineer in the plant where he worked because he lacked a college degree. He had graduated from the Indian Normal School in Pembroke, and had gone on to study music for six months before meeting his wife.

"He used to say he could have been another Frank Sinatra or Bing Crosby if he had not met Mama, fell in love and married her," says his son, Tony.

In 1968, Godwin began to think of returning to his beloved Robeson County to retire. He had, over the years, kept in touch with family and friends through visits and telephone calls. He longed to be home among his people. In 1970, he sold the house he bought in 1955 and moved to another in the Whispering Pines area outside Pembroke.

Few expected the energetic Godwin to rest. Many knew he wouldn't. He didn't. He took a job in a failing hardware section of a business in Pembroke and made it money. When the senior business owner died, and a relative took over management, a management meeting was called. When the floor was opened to suggestions of how the business could best be operated, Godwin spoke up.

"And that was the first time my father's mouth got him in trouble," Tony Godwin says.

Not one to sit still long, Godwin signed on as a quality control employee at Croft Metal in Lumber Bridge. He left the job for another which lent itself to more personal contact with people.

"Dad always tried to meet people. He loved to discuss politics, and he was most happy in a setting where he could meet people coming in off the street to discuss ideas, views and social issues which affected them," Godwin says. He says his father's convictions and principles were as unbending as an oak tree. He adds that his father was a perfectionist and saw things in black and white-right and wrong. He'd tell his father that one had to sometimes bend like a weeping willow. The comment was unheard. For Godwin was a mighty oak who was merely yesterday's little nut that managed to hold its ground. Godwin believed an aim in life was the only fortune worth finding.

He listened to and observed the social injustices of Indians, blacks and low-income whites in Robeson County which quietly fed his aim to help fight for change in a system nurtured on corruption.

And when in 1986, a Lumbee Indian was shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy, who never received criminal charges, Godwin founded Concerned Citizens for Better Government, a tri-racial coalition formed in December 1986. He served as chairman of the group until December 1987. Godwin said the organization was founded to dispel the belief that: "It's always been like that. There's something you can do about any situation."

Godwin wanted people to understand that just because it's well-beaten road is no sign it is the right one, and that the road of injustice had been traveled too long by Indian, blacks and poor whites in Robeson County.

And just when Godwin thought he could get some rest, his phone would start ringing-something else was happening and he knew it was time to move on in listening to the cries of Robeson's oppressed.

He suppressed his despair well, for he fully understood there were two things on the side of the people: "Time" and "Truth." And in the words of Rev. Legerton last Saturday, "He knew every child in Robeson County would have an equal education... In due time he knew every black, Indian and low-income white would have respect in the workplace, a decent job and would have a decent house to live in."

Godwin also knew when one is being kicked from the rear, it may mean that one is up front. He, too, knew that action makes more fortunes than caution. His action was not without scorn even among his people. He became a successful man who laid a firm foundation with the bricks that others threw at him.

A man of great wisdom, Godwin clearly saw the trouble with being a leader is that one can't be sure whether the people are following or chasing one.

Of Godwin, his pastor, Rev. Charles Locklear said, "He was a man of strong convictions with the courage to stand up for what he believed in, even if rebuked or scorned by people in his community."

"Godwin returned from the North to face them that was not consistent with his own principles and convictions on what was right and wrong. A purpose was born in his heart. And the purpose was so fixed and so sound that to simply accept the system and encourage it was, to him, an impossibility."

Godwin always went out on a limb. He knew that when the fruit was, he constantly built dishes of courage to hold back the forces of evil which often times overtook them.

He was a non-violent man. He loved mankind. What he did, joy was always what came through. And in spite of all the problems in Robeson County, he looked at them. And if he dwelt on the injustice, the corruption very long with his words,