



THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

PEMBROKE, N. C.

"Building Communicative Bridges
In A Tri-Racial Setting"

ROBESON COUNTY

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 28

25¢

THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1988

LREMC Voters Fill 4 Board Seats

Conrad Oxendine defeated 20-year incumbent Elias Rogers in a bid for one of four seats on the Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation board of directors in a special election Tuesday night after results of an election last fall were thrown out.

In Tuesday's balloting, Oxendine had 468 votes to 305 for Rogers.

Other election returns were as follows: District 3 - Bradford Oxendine 546, Brawleigh J. Graham 207 and Carl D. Stevenson 16; District 7 - Herbert E. Edwards 332, James A. Hunt 271 and Harold Dean Brewer 170; District 9 - Herbert Clark 489 and Frank Jacobs 284.

While votes were being tallied, members unanimously passed a motion by Earl H. Oxendine of Pembroke calling for the resignation or expulsion of any board member who claims bankruptcy or is con-

victed of "mishandling of funds."

"I have nothing personal," said Oxendine, a retired Hoke County school administrator. "These guys are friends of mine, but serving on a board of this magnitude... You heard it. It was unanimous. That should be a mandate to the board."

Several members questioned the necessity of the new election and complained of the expense.

Bill Brewington of Pembroke, quoting figures on a letter from the LREMC General Manager Ronnie Hunt, said the lawsuit and election is costing members up to \$100,000, money that should be spent on deferring electricity rate increases.

"What is the board going to do to keep us consumers from having to pay \$100,000 that could be used toward deferring a rate increase?" Brewington asked Hunt.

Community Art Gallery Opens With Focus On The Work Of Gene Locklear

By Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special To The Carolina Indian Voice

Accolades for artist Gene Locklear were given throughout last Thursday and then again on Sunday afternoon as art collectors, area artists and supporters wandered through the Gene Locklear Art Gallery in Pembroke.

The San Diego-based Lumbee Indian artist was in his native Robeson County to see a dream come true. The idea of opening a gallery was conceived two years ago. Actual work began five months ago when a large section adjacent to Southern Interiors was renovated and furnished and artwork placed inside.

"This is not just my art gallery. It was established for the community," said Locklear. The former sports star said he feels as others do, that the existence of the gallery will inspire young people to pursue the visual arts.

The official grand opening of the gallery was held Thursday after Locklear's mother cut the ribbon at a 10 a.m. ceremony attended by town officials, members of the news media and supporters.

In recognizing the new business, Pembroke Chamber of Commerce president Greg Cummings said, "In the past when Pembroke's citizens, particularly young people, wanted to see fine art, they had to go to Lumberton, Fayetteville or Raleigh. Now they can see art right in their own town."

"By carrying his name and the Lumbee tribe, Gene is doing much for this area," said Helen M. Sheirbeck, director of the NC Indian Culture Center located two miles west of Pembroke. "Gene's style and color which are involving in his work is very exciting," she added.

Locklear's seventh grade school teacher, the Rev. C. W. Maynor, was present during Open House to see his former student recognized. "I taught him at Union Chapel Elementary School and he didn't want to do anything but draw. And during recess period, it was baseball he wanted to play," Maynor recalled.

"I've always appreciated art, but not with the Indian people here because we never had professional artists among our people until recent years. The gallery allows me to appreciate art more," the retired Lumbee teacher said.

Locklear formally recognized the Rev. Maynor and the late Mrs. Ruby C. Dial as two teachers who gave him encouragement to pursue art in early childhood.

Gallery operators Charles Alton Maynor and wife, Shelia says the total effort at the gallery is dedicated to an art scholarship established in Locklear's name at Pembroke State University. They said a percentage of sales from the artist's work goes into the scholarship.

"Everytime a person buys a piece of Locklear's work from the gallery, that person automatically helps an aspiring artist," Mr. Maynor commented.

The first scholarship award will be given a P.S.U. junior or senior art student this 1988-89 academic year. Maynor stated that the art gallery exists for the people of Robeson and adjoining counties. Plans are in-



Gene Locklear

cluded to allow area artists to exhibit and sale their work.

Locklear's artwork will be exhibited for several weeks before invitations are extended to other interested art participants. During the Grand Opening, 28 pieces of Locklear's work were exhibited. Among them were four recent sketchings of children. The gallery also offers for sale to the public, a line of note cards designed by Locklear.

Tom Lee of Fayetteville, won a framed Gene Locklear print when his name was drawn as part of the Grand Opening promotional activities.

The Gene Locklear Art Gallery is located in the Southern Interiors building north of Pembroke on Union Chapel Road. Gallery hours are 9-5 p.m. Monday - Friday, 9-1 p.m. Saturday. After hours are available by appointment. Telephone: During regular hours 521-8331. Evenings: 521-9894.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

Earl Hughes Oxendine

By Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special To The Carolina Indian Voice

Life has tossed a few lemons to Earl Hughes Oxendine during his 56 years of life. He was continually told by his mother, Georgie Rae Oxendine, that if he worked at anything hard enough, he'd be successful. He caught the lemons and turned them into lemonade.

He was an eight-year-old Lumbee Indian growing up on his family-owned farm outside Pembroke. One day while "hanging around" in the yard of his home which he shared with seven siblings and his parents, he was asked by a young neighbor friend, "Want to see how Indians kill chickens?" "Yeah," said Oxendine with an eternal curiosity. Suddenly a spear constructed from a reed was thrown towards him. It struck his left eye. Seriously wounded, the youngster was rushed to Duke Medical Center where he underwent eye surgery.

He lost the eye to the accident. Though sight was lost, psychological strength was gained through the love and support of his extended family. His parents, Tom and Georgie Rae Oxendine became especially interested in their son's welfare.

Oxendine went on to successfully complete his early education at Pembroke Graded School, graduated from Pembroke High School in 1949 and enrolled at Pembroke State College the following year. Two sessions of study and sports participation were not enough to keep the curious 18-year-old in school. He dropped out because he was not interested in college at that period in his life. Yearning for travel and adventure, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and laughed when people told him he wouldn't be accepted because he had only one eye. Oxendine says the real test came in the form of a physical examination when he reported for military processing. "The eye examiner allowed me to hold a paper card over my eye. They asked me to cover my left eye and read a test chart," he recalls. "I did, and read with my right eye. And then instead of changing the card over to cover the right eye, I simply changed hands and left the left eye covered." He got the last laugh. He passed the physical.

For an entire year he was haunted by thoughts that he entered military service under fraudulent conditions. When overseas orders came for him, he really became concerned because there were severe penalties for doing what he'd done.

"I loved the military, but I wanted my superiors to know what I'd done because I clearly knew if I got out of service and was found out, they'd still penalize me," he says. It didn't matter that he had been the only one out of 300 military men to fire expert with the .45. It further didn't matter that he had passed a physical for military police and received a military driver's license.

At no time was his impaired sight recognized, until he was to be shipped overseas. His guilt feelings lessened when he bravely removed his left eye, hid it in a laundry bag and reported to authority.

"They couldn't believe I'd gotten into the military and gone through all their training with one eye," he laughs. After three round-trip visits to a hospital in Ft. Dix, New Jersey, an investigation was ordered in his fraudulent case. He was called up for preliminary process for court martial.

When asked why he enlisted under the conditions he did, the "risk taker" answered, "Sir, it's always been my life-long ambition to be in the U.S. Air Force." A reply came from the fellow in charge, "By God, we need more men like you." The Air Force Headquarters in Washington, DC granted Oxendine an honorable medical discharge shortly thereafter.

Knowing there were no jobs available to minorities in his native Robeson County in the early 50's, Oxendine went to Detroit to be near his two brothers and a job. Once there he applied for a job with Cadillac Motor Car Company as a packer. To qualify for placement, he had to first undergo a physical examination and interview.

This time, rather than with a simple manual paper card, a machine was used for the eye examination. "I knew I could never come up with a way to beat the machine," Oxendine slyly grins. "I became keenly aware that I had to be a little sharper than the average individual just to get by, because of my physical disability."

The job interview went well. But there were two parts to the process - the interview plus a physical. The smart-thinking applicant asked that the physical be delayed until the afternoon. Once the delay was granted, he went in

search of a fellow Lumbee to stand in for him. Once accomplished, Oxendine began work the next day and was to work himself up to become a shipping clerk before the overwhelming desire to return to college lured him back to his native land in the spring of 1954. "I returned with a new commitment to education."

He re-enrolled at Pembroke State College, and during his senior year, he married Betty Rae Hammonds. Four daughters and one son were born to the couple. In 1957, Oxendine received his B.S. from the college. He returned to Michigan and taught seventh grade students. He also coached junior and high school football and baseball. While living in Michigan, he returned to North Carolina to study at Appalachian State College where he earned a Masters Degree in Administration Education in 1961. After teaching five years in the North, he returned South in 1962, to head Hawk Eye, an all-Indian school in Hoke County, North Carolina.

"The years I spent at Hawk Eye as principal were the most rewarding days I had in education, because I felt that I was making a great contribution to my Indian people in that area," he comments. During his six-year tenure at the school with grades one through twelve, the administrator was to see his faculty staff grow from ten to 33 members. And even though strides were made in the area of growth, Oxendine says he understood the curriculum situation was not in the best interest of the students.

Nobody welcomed Hoke County's school consolidation in 1969 more than the school principal. What was once a facility housing grades 1-12, Hawk Eye became a junior school under the name change to South Hoke Elementary. Oxendine remained there until 1973, at which time he became principal at South Hoke Junior High, the county's only high school. In 1977, he took over the reins of Hoke County High School in Raeford, where he remained for two years.

His last education assignment was in heading up Hoke County's Federal Programs. There he remained until 1983 at which time he took a disability retirement. He had spent almost 28 years in helping young people through education.

Throughout his education career, Oxendine says he maintained the attitude, "Give me my position with responsibilities. Let me do my job." Through his years in education, the grandfather was recognized as outstanding in his field. In 1973, Governor Holshouser appointed him to an eight-year term on the N.C. State Board of Education. He became the first Lumbee Indian to serve in that position.

In 1976, President Ford named him to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, and the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs recognized him as outstanding N.C. Indian Educator.

In 1983, Oxendine was tossed another of life's lemons when he was diagnosed as having a rare form of cancer. He caught the lemon tossed him and is dealing with it like he did all the ones thrown him before it. He's making lemonade. The drink is going farther than, and lasting longer than, medical experts predicted. Perhaps the tests didn't count on the "juicer" being a risk taker still full of curiosity, love of family and the human race, especially the Indian one.

Since retirement, Oxendine has personally driven out West three times. But probably the thing that has most-consumed his time since 1983, has been meeting and visiting with people.

"I love people. I'm very people oriented," he says. And when the retired educator needs his battery recharged, he travels back to his old stomping ground in Hoke County. There he visits with school students and former students. He expresses a sincere interest in their lives, and they sense it to be so.

"These are the best of times and the worst of times for young people. For those who are taking advantage of the opportunities of today, this is the best time they could possibly live," he says. "The opportunities are unlimited for the qualified people. For those who don't take advantage of the opportunities, these are tough times for them."

A staunch social rights advocate, Oxendine worked tirelessly in a recent campaign to merge the five-school systems in Robeson County. On a hot, humid day last spring, he labored in getting voters to the polling places. He offered personal transportation to loads of people with



EARL HUGHES OXENDINE

little encouragement that opposing forces could be defeated. He put up posters in adjoining towns only to see their placement questioned by town police and anti-merger forces.

He talked with voters outside polling places. He says the emotional and physical strain became so heavy that he became physically ill and knew he was in trouble as a result of it. Rather than giving up the personal struggle, he drove himself from Red Springs to Lumberton for medical treatment. After receiving treatment a strong-willed former educator returned to the town. There he continued to campaign until the polls closed.

Three hours later at Robeson County's Board of Elections, Oxendine, suffering from extreme fatigue leaned on his walking cane. There with a broad grin upon hearing the victory of merger, he said, "This is why I worked so hard and am so elated. Only now will minorities be offered an opportunity for educational improvement."

The lemonade keeps getting sweeter and sweeter for Earl Hughes Oxendine.

BILL FOR LUMBEE RECOGNITION INTRODUCED

Today Congressman Charlie Rose introduced a bill for the recognition of the Lumbee Indians in the U.S. House of Representatives. According to tribal representatives, the bill will extend immediate recognition to the Lumbee Indians once enacted into law. The bill has the active support of several congressmen and senators as well as others.

The bill while recognizing the tribe delays benefits to individual tribal members until such time as Congress provides appropriations.

Additionally, the bill provides civil and criminal jurisdictional powers will remain with the State of North Carolina.

The tribal governing body approved endorsement of the bill, based upon a lengthy process involved in the review of the Petition filed in Interior on December 27, 1987.



Gene Locklear is shown with local Lumbee artist Delora Cummings discussing art at the Gene Locklear Art Gallery.



Shown left to right at the ribbon cutting ceremony for Gene Locklear's Art Gallery are: Rev. Mike Cummings, pastor of Mt. Airy Baptist Church who offered the invocation; the new Miss Lumbee Angelina Moore; Pembroke Town Manager McDuffie Cummings; Pembroke Mayor Milton Hunt; Mrs. Catherine Locklear, Gene Locklear's mother who cut the ribbon; and Gene Locklear.

According to tribal officials, the Interior has a backlog of petitions in various stages of review and consideration and review of the Lumbee petition will take as much as eight to ten years.

The bill, on the other hand, would eliminate many years of review over at Interior and accomplish the same, the recognition of the Lumbee Indians.

The tribe urges all those who have not enrolled as tribal members to do so as soon as possible as the bill will close the Rolls on date of its enactment. Additionally, the tribe is considering closing the rolls in the very near future due to limited financial resources to keep the rolls

open for those who have not applied for tribal membership.

The bill is expected to be introduced in the U.S. Senate in the very near future.

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