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PEMBROKE, N.C.

"Building Communicative Bridges In A Tri-Racial Setting"

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DEXTER BROOKS BECOMES FIRST INDIAN SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE IN N.C.

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special to THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

Dexter Brooks has never been one to misdirect his energies. Even as a youngster when he visited in the home of his maternal grandmother, he failed to be idle. "I was prone to wander around her house and find things which struck my fancy," he remembers. The veracious grandchild fancied books. The young Lumbee Indian would usually choose a book from his grandmother's personal library. Thus was the beginning of a passion which has lasted four decades.

His inquisitive mind, as it applied to reading and studying, has paid high yields for Brooks. For on Tuesday, Jan. 3, he became the first Lumbee Indian to be seated as a Superior Court Judge in North Carolina. The courtroom in Robeson County was packed with family, friends and supporters as the Honorable Henry McKinnon, Jr. administered the oath to the quiet unassuming 45-year-old Robeson County native.

Brooks was the sixth of seven children born to John Brooks, a public school teacher, Baptist deacon and part-time farmer, and Lela Hammond Brooks, a homemaker and substitute public school teacher who lived in the Union Chapel community. A month after Brooks' birth, the family left the farm which had been bought by a relative who served in the Continental Army. They settled in the town of Pembroke where, along with his siblings, Brooks attended schools at Pembroke Graded and Pembroke High.

Brooks says until 1961, after he graduated from Pembroke High School, he knew little about what lay beyond Robeson County. He left for Mars Hill College where a sister and cousin had, too, attended. His discipline paid off when he did "very well" during freshman year of studies. The good grades gave him the confidence to transfer to North Carolina State University he says. There he dove into mastering the curriculum which netted him a B.S. in Electrical Engineering in 1965.

After graduation, he signed on as an engineer with Westinghouse Electric Corporation and worked one year before his sights again turned toward returning to college to pursue a masters in mathematics.

But it was the middle of the 60's, and the conflict in Vietnam. He took a three-months teaching assignment at Pembroke High School and volunteered for the military draft. In 1966, he put on his U.S. Army uniform. The next year he reported to Vietnam as a member of the 1st Cavalry Division.

While in the jungle, he dreamed of the classroom. Realizing his tour would soon end, he wrote to a former professor at NCSU and told him of his wishes to attend graduate school there. His earlier scholastic record showed a 4.0 average in mathematics. The school waived his graduate entrance exam. "I couldn't very well take it in the middle of a jungle where I was located," Brooks explains.

Brooks received a graduate teaching assistantship and taught freshman courses in algebra, trigonometry, analytical geometry and calculus while earning a masters in mathematics. His performance earned him a recommendation to the school's doctoral program. He entered the program and chose not to complete it. For two events affected his decision: Student demonstrations which took place when President Nixon invaded Cambodia; and the American Indian Movement which took over Alcatraz Island.

"I became interested in the problems of people—American Indian people in particular and started reading everything I could get my hands on about the subject of Indians, their history and cultural identity," he says. He says during this time he decided his studies in mathematics wouldn't have any affect on Indian people in Robeson County. "I had a complete change of heart about my graduate studies." He returned to his native county so he could get a fix on something he could do more constructive as it pertained to Indian people.

He took a teaching position at Southeastern Community College so as to support himself financially and to be closer to the scene where issues affecting Indian people were developing. Brooks quickly became involved in the area where he grew up. He says before the movement to save Old Main, he had no interest in politics. "Once I got involved with others in fighting to save the historical building on Pembroke State University campus, I saw that one had to learn something about the political process in order to accomplish the goal of saving the landmark."

He became heavily involved in the movement. His primary role was that of writer and strategist. "That's what I first developed a skill for writing because so much of what the supporters were doing was to sell an idea to the public in general." Ultimately the building was saved and restored.

Brooks says after this, he saw the aid the Law had been in saving Old Main, and after much thought, he decided to go into Law. He entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law in 1973, where he perpetuated a friendship with law professor Barry Nakell whom he had met while doing research in the school law library and during earlier visits to the Institute of Government. He began the study of law, all the while keeping an eye on, and hand in, issues in Robeson County.

Along this time focus was shifted to the county school system where the board of education was elected by voters who lived in all six of the then local school systems which were operating to the disadvantage of all the people whom lived within the county system itself. It was a practice called "Double Voting" since residents in the city units could vote for two boards; whereas residents of the county system could only vote for one. The practice was challenged in Federal Court. Brooks became actively involved in research related to the Double Voting situation. He spent his first summer after entering law school in Washington, D.C. where he worked in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Dept. of Justice. His assignment took him to the Indian Rights Office. Once situated, he concentrated on voting rights in



THE HONORABLE JUDGE DEXTER BROOKS

Robeson County. He chose the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 as his guide. His unyielding work, along with others, led to the eventual breaking of Double Voting in Robeson County in 1975.

The summer of '75 took him to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where he had friends. A "wanderlust" took him to New Mexico the same summer and he spent weeks seeing the southwest as opposed to doing any formal work. "That became the last free summer of my life," he laughs. His final year in the study of law saw him coming to Robeson County during week-ends. He says the visits home allowed him to stay abreast of issues affecting citizens in the county. They also allowed him the opportunity to closet himself in his mobile home where he could read without end.

Brooks joined Pembroke Attorney Arnold Locklear in the practice of law in 1976. There he concentrated on anything but criminal law. He says he left that to his partner. The junior partner leaned towards real estate law. Later on he shifted to civil litigation, and most-recently to personal injury cases.

Brooks says his trial experience has made him comfortable in courtroom situations. "I have a fairly analytical mind. I studied math and science for a number of years and feel like I'm an objective person," he says. "I try to divorce emotion from my mental process so I can make a decision based on reason as opposed to emotion."

He says when he came back to Robeson County to practice law, he found that a great number of people had a deep-seeded mistrust of the system of justice—also of the profession of law as well. "If I could accomplish anything as a judge, it would be that people could feel comfortable in my courtroom. I would hope that people would perceive me as being fair, and I want it to be based upon my record as a judge."

Brooks admits that the one thing he learned in seeking the judgeship is that it made him more open to people. "I keep my innermost thoughts to myself. I've been overwhelmed by the support I've received from this position." He says his appointment to the bench has brought a greater appreciation of people-friends in particular. "It's made me more congenial than in years past."

In 1981, after the death of a beloved brother, Brooks went through a religious conversion. Since then he has been an active member of Harper's Ferry Baptist Church where he has taught Sunday School four years. As a gesture of their pride and affection for him, his class purchased a judicial robe for their teacher who has resigned his teaching duties because his judicial duties will take him away from the classroom.

As to the image the judge wishes to project to his constituency: "I want people to look upon me as one who is competent in the law and one who will administer the law fairly regardless of the race, economic or social status of people in the courtroom. I will always make people in general feel comfortable; yet be firm when the occasion demands it, but also be compassionate when circumstances warrant it."

And what does cupid hold in the future for the bachelor judge? "The nice thing about judges is they don't have to work nearly as hard as attorneys, since attorneys are supposed to do most of the research for them. I'll be more visible in the community than in years past. And I'm not against the institution of marriage," he laughs.

NEW BUSINESS IN TOWN!

The Pembroke Business Community acknowledges the establishment of the Pembroke Farm, Home and Garden Supply, Inc. (formerly Southern States) located on Third Street here in Pembroke. According to Roy L. Cummings, Owner and Manager, the business establishment will be operated as a dealer agent and will continue to carry the Southern States name brand products. Mr. Cummings and his employees look forward to providing quality farm and garden products for all its valued customers. The general public is cordially invited to visit this business and should feel free to contact them at 521-2801 or 521-2802 for all your farm and garden needs.

LOCAL FAMILIES NEEDED FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS

ASSE International Student Exchange Programs (ASSE) is seeking local families to host boys and girls from Scandinavia, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland, Great Britain, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, 15 to 18 years of age, coming to this area for the upcoming high school year. These personable and academically select exchange students are bright, curious, and anxious to learn about this country through living as part of a family, attending high school and sharing their own culture and language with their newly adopted host family.

The students are fluent in English and are sponsored by ASSE, a non-profit, public benefit organization, affiliated with the Swedish and Finnish Departments of Education. ASSE also cooperates with the Canadian Provincial Ministries of Education and is approved by the Australian and New Zealand Departments of Education.

The exchange students arrive from their home country shortly before school begins and return at the end of the school year. Each ASSE student is fully insured, brings his or her own personal spending money and expects to bear his or her share of household responsibilities, as well as being included in normal family activities and lifestyle.

The students are well screened and qualified by ASSE. Families may select the youngster of their choice from extensive student applications, family photos, and biographical essays. Students and families are encouraged to begin corresponding prior to the student's arrival.

ASSE is also seeking local high school students to become ASSE exchange students abroad. Students should be between 15 to 18 years old and interested in living with a host family, attending school, and learning about the lands and people of Scandinavia, France, Spain, Germany, Holland, Britain, Switzerland, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Students should have a good academic record and desire to experience another culture and language through living with a warm and giving volunteer family. Academic year and shorter term summer vacation programs are available.

Persons interested in obtaining information about becoming a host family or becoming a student abroad should contact ASSE's local representative: Karen Alsop, 1372 W. Nancy Creek Dr., Atlanta, GA or call toll free to (800)333-3802.

JENKINS URGES FARMERS TO VOTE

W.B. Jenkins, president of the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, has strongly urged eligible flue-cured tobacco farmers to cast a favorable vote in the upcoming referendum that will determine if quotas and price supports will remain in effect for 1989, 1990, and 1991.

The referendum is being conducted by mail ballot January 9-12.

Jenkins said continuation of marketing quotas will insure a price support program that provides "stability and predictability" of farm income from tobacco. "It will help maintain stable prices throughout the marketing season, as well as provide stability for farm credit institutions so that farmers can get the credit they need."

"Farmers also need to consider that without a tobacco program, there would probably be a drastic drop in land values," Jenkins added.

The Farm Bureau president indicated that an affirmative vote will help strengthen the competitive position of U.S. tobacco in foreign markets by encouraging the production of quality tobacco.

Because of president anti-tobacco sentiment, Jenkins said it is "urgent that flue-cured growers demonstrate their interest and unity by overwhelmingly endorsing their program."

Ballots must be postmarked or returned to the county ASCS office no later than Thursday, January 12.

ROBESON'S FIRST PUBLIC DEFENDER: ANGUS B. THOMPSON II



ANGUS B. THOMPSON, II

Dexter Brooks, newly appointed Superior Court Judge, announced today that Angus B. Thompson, II will be the Public Defender for this judicial district. This appointment is Brooks' first official act as judge. In making his announcement, Brooks released the following statement:

"After long and thoughtful consideration, I have decided to appoint Angus B. Thompson, II, as Public Defender for Judicial District 16B. This decision was made after receiving input from various groups and individuals throughout Robeson County. The vast majority of the people with whom I consulted, especially Indians, felt that the new public defender should be Black. This respects an earlier agreement that the new superior court judge would be Indian and the new district attorney would be white. A substantial majority of such people felt that since the new District Attorney is from that office the new public defender should not also come from that office. The concern was expressed that the two offices be independent and adverse to each other."

"Mr. Thompson is a black attorney engaged in the private practice of law in Lumberton. He enjoys the support of the local bar and the endorsement of several prominent fellow attorneys. He is firmly committed to the principle of equal justice under law for all persons, regardless of race or economic status. In this regard he has committed to employ a competent staff so as to assure effective representation for indigent persons charged with crimes. With the elevation of Mr. Joe Freeman Britt to the superior court bench, the staff of the public defender should be fairly equal in trial ability to that of the district attorney."

"Mr. Thompson also enjoys the support of a clear majority of the people who supported the creation of the public defender office. This support is critical if the office is to accomplish its primary objective. All of us must work together to reduce discord and to promote harmony in our county. Mr. Thompson has informed me that it is his intention to meet concerning the operation of the office on a regular basis with representatives of the Robeson County Black Caucus, North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs, Friend in Court, Center for Community Action and the Robeson County Bar Association."

"Finally, Mr. Thompson has a proven track record in community involvement. As an attorney with the NAACP he has litigated throughout the state to protect the voting rights of racial minorities. This demonstrated commitment to the principle of equal justice under law makes him a good choice for the new post of public defender. I hope that all Robesonians will support him in this most important position. The eyes of the state are upon all of us."

PEMBROKE KIWANIS

BY KEN JOHNSON

Program Chairman Garth Locklear presented Mrs. Deborah L. Huggins Coordinator of Project FACE, a very outstanding program of crime prevention put on by Robeson Community College together with the local justice system. Mr. Tony Brewington and a former sheriff's deputy developed the program after they noticed a definite lack of education for the adults in criminal environments. (FACE means "For Adults in Criminal Environments.")

The cost-free education has 62 people enrolled taking courses in vocations including typing, computer literacy, woodworking, mechanics, basic education leading to a high school diploma. The program is a pilot project specially funded put on by the three county institutions: the judicial system, the law enforcement and the Robeson Community Col-

lege. FACE is important as the county unemployment level is 3 percent higher than the state level and over 3,000 cases brought before Robeson County courts each year. FACE will enrich current parolees, persons out on bail with trial pending and those in need of basic skills training. Superior Court Judge Robert H. Hobgood said if the program works in Robeson County it should be expanded statewide. So sentencing criminals to school is a real alternate to incarceration as prison in many cases is not the answer.

Program Chairman Frank Daugherty has worked out the individual listings for the year's programs. Mitchel Lowry presided. Ed Teets led the invocation. Ray Lowry led the singing. Garth Locklear, the program, and Ken Johnson did the reporting.

Karim Certified By Anesthesiology Board

Zaheer S. Karim, M.D., has been named a Diplomate of the American Board of Anesthesiology. Dr. Karim earned his board certification in anesthesiology by meeting all requirements of the national board including written and oral examinations.

Dr. Karim received his undergraduate degree in electrical engineer-

ing at Swarthmore College and his medical degree from Cornell University. He joined the medical staff at Southeastern General Hospital in 1983 after completing his residency in anesthesiology at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center.

Dr. Karim and his wife, Anne, are parents of one son, Matthew.

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