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Whatever Happened to ... Abner Nash Locklear

By Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
SPECIAL TO THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

Dare Abner Nash Locklear to stop anything he's doing in midstream and he'll show you how to put his formal education on hold; change careers; even stop a train. He's done them all.

Mr. Locklear was born the son of Cathen Locklear and Lettie B. Jones Locklear of the Prospect community in Robeson County. He, along with his five brothers and three sisters, attended Prospect School.

"I always loved school and got there so early each school day that they thought I was the janitor," he chuckles. "I'd cry to go to school."

Among his early grade teachers were Clement Bullard, Lacy Maynor and Rose Locklear Carter.

Mr. Locklear says he was a young teen-ager when his father died and he was determined to complete school after his death. "I went to Pembroke to live with my cousin, Marvin Carter and his wife, Rose and stayed with them five years so as to attend Cherokee Indian Normal High School," he remembers.

In 1937 he graduated from that school and enrolled in the Indian Normal School. Into his second year of study at the all-Indian school he was told by Lucille Oxendine Lowry that there were two scholarships available for a male and female Indian student to study agriculture at Ohio State University. Mr. Locklear applied and was selected to receive the scholarship for the male Indian student.

And in 1939 he gathered his belongings and moved to Columbus, Ohio where he began study in farm management. His credits earned at the Indian Normal School were non-transferrable. At the new campus were no dormitories, and the young Lumbee Indian student boarded in homes until dormitories were built. He befriended the school's dean and was among the first to get a room assignment.

Midstream his college study Mr. Locklear was called to military duty. The Army draftee reported to service in 1942 and was assigned to the Philippines in the Southwest Pacific; also to New Guinea. World War II raged on.

It was to be three years and seven months before he could return to college study at Ohio State.

Economical times were hard and he rarely traveled to his beloved Robeson County during his final two years in college. "Money was scarce. And even though a busride was eight dollars, those dollars were hard to come by," he remembers.

But the grandfather says there was one time during that period he got to come home, and it became one occasion he'll never forget.

He'd saved his money and bought a "straight through" train ticket to Pembroke, NC on the Baltimore-Ohio line. He had changeover in Petersburg, VA and that's where the trouble began.

"I'd originally bought my ticket for travel on the '89' train which makes numerous stops along its route.

"When I boarded the train in Virginia, unbeknownst to me, the conductor put me on a train which had limited scheduled stops which included Rocky Mount, Fayetteville, NC and Florence, SC."

He says as the train pulled away from its station the conductor began collecting tickets from passengers. With confidence, Mr. Locklear presented his, only to be advised he was on the wrong train and that the train would not stop in Pembroke.

Mr. Locklear insisted on knowing the name of the person in charge of the train's scheduled stops. He demanded to argue his case and got the opportunity when the train stopped in Rocky Mount, NC. Without an appointment, he marched into the director's office and plead his case. The director said he would not make an exception for the misplaced passenger.

"I told the man I wasn't just an ordinary passenger...that I was the mayor of Pembroke, North Carolina and that I could get a train stopped in my town."

The director argued, "There are only three situations which will cause my train to make an unscheduled stop. They are: A sudden death of a passenger; an emergency of particular nature; or if the President of the United States is on board and wants to stop to make a speech."

"I told him that the train would stop in Pembroke because one of the three situations was about to happen," says Mr. Locklear.

"It's to your advantage to stop this train, sir. I'm the mayor of Pembroke and am in a position to stop the train and put passengers on buses or airplanes in order to get them to their destination," Mr. Locklear warned.

He says he reboarded the train and was paged by the conductor shortly thereafter. "He told me orders had been cut to let me off in Pembroke."

As the southbound train slowed outside Pembroke a conductor summoned Mr. Locklear to the rear car. There he readied himself to get off. "Boys, when I got off that train, merchants and other people started coming toward the depot.

They thought the President or some big official was getting off because the train had never before stopped in Pembroke," he laughs. He says his friends still laugh about the incident.

A year later in 1947 Mr. Locklear graduated from Ohio State University. He returned with degree in hand and took a two-year teaching position sponsored by the Farmers Home Administration whereas he taught local farmers new methods in crop growing.

During this time he married Dorothy Lee Locklear, a 21-year-old Lumbee he'd courted for four years. Thinking he would like to become a public school teacher, Mr.

Locklear returned to Ohio State and earned his teacher certification.

In 1950 he took his first teaching assignment at Pembroke High School. After two years of teaching agriculture he took a break from the classroom.

"I thought I didn't like teaching." He gathered together his wife and their only child at the time and moved to Baltimore, MD where he worked with a steel corporation. He says when his wife got homesick a decision was made to return home after the six months stay.

Another teaching assignment was to Prospect School where he taught from 1952 until 1965.

Then in midstream of a teaching career he left the classroom and signed on as an assistant supervisor with Farmers Home Administration in the Lumberton office. He gave three years service to the job before returning to the location where his teaching career began. There at the



Mr. Abner Nash Locklear

old Pembroke High School campus he stayed until his retirement in 1981.

Throughout his teaching years Mr. Locklear continued a second career of farming.

"I love the land and often thought of leaving the classroom to farm. I was raised on a farm and worked harder than hard as a young man," he comments.

The 71-year-old Prospect community resident suffered a stroke in 1985 and no longer tends the farm he still owns in the Prospect community.

Of retirement he says, "I didn't know the days were so long as they are until I retired from teaching school." The father of two sons and two daughters says his activities are slowed by his declining health, but that his love for fishing goes pretty much unhindered.

"I want to fish all the time. I can remember way back yonder when there were just a few people in this community who fished.

"Back then people thought if you fished regularly you were considered a lazy person. The real truth is, it takes a smart person to fish.

"It used to be when I was teaching school, I'd get up at four o'clock in the morning and catch a mess of fish; then dress and go to my teaching assignment."

And every consecutive year since 1949 Mr. Locklear has visited the mountains of North Carolina—often times going twice a year.

"I always wonder why I never got me a place up there around Cherokee," he frets. "I love to go there in the fall and see the coloring of the leaves."

And though he no longer takes trips to California and Florida he does yearn to take a cruise ship to the Virgin Islands. And if he doesn't throw himself another birthday party this summer like he did in observance of his 65th he will do just that.

It was six years ago and he wanted the community to know he'd turn 65 years old. He sent word out that the community was invited to his home for a celebration.

In preparation for the party he cooked two hogs; 100 chickens and prepared all kinds of vegetables. He even ordered ten gallons of homemade ice-cream he churned. All this for his adult guests. For children he prepared "young-un" things.

"I've always liked people and wanted as many as could come to my party to be there," he comments. As each guest arrived they were greeted with a banner which read: "Thank God I'm 65."

In the middle of his front yard sat a blue plastic 30-gallon barrel. On the barrel was labeled: "Help Ab get a Nab." It also said: "Gold for The Old."

"If we didn't have fun that day."

Magnolia High School Observes Final Homecoming



John W. "Ned" Sampson served as Grand Marshal for the final Homecoming of Magnolia High School.

By Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
SPECIAL TO THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

A warmth of unity was the fare on February 8th as the alumni of Magnolia High School gathered for a farewell to their alma mater.

It was an occasion marked by embraces, gestures of affection, reminiscences, and tears as former students and faculty members crowded into the school's modern media center.

"Today is a very special day in the lives of alumni of Magnolia High School. It's their final homecoming," said Noah Woods, principal of the school.

A steering committee of faculty members led by athletic director and coach, Kathy Epps began work in planning the event months ago.

Homecoming began early in the day as alumni began arriving on the campus located on U.S. Highway 301 South in the Saddletree community. During a 11 o'clock reception former classmates and former faculty members reminisced of bygone years walking the halls of the school which was established as a high school in 1933.

Several bulletin boards displaying photographs of alumni and past school events commanded much interest to the group in attendance.

Among those alumni present at the reception was Louise Chavis Locklear, a 1958 graduate.

"There were 28 graduates in my class," she remembered. She added that the class was so small she knew everyone in it. She fondly remembered special teachers as the late Johnny Blanks and the late Tom Blanks.

Of another teacher, John W. "Ned" Sampson, she commented, "There is no other person like him I've ever associated with. I hold so much affection and admiration for Mr. Ned." Sampson served as Locklear's basketball coach from 1954-58. She said the school operated without a gymnasium until 1955. Before then the basketball team played outdoors. The team won its first district wide championship three years later.

Among numerous former teachers attending the reception were Mmes. Alice Blue; Dora Oxendine; Mary H. Locklear; Deborah O. Sampson; Sarah Bell and Mary Bell.

Special guest of honor was John W. "Ned" Sampson. Arriving at the reception, he wove his way through an admiring line of former students who greeted him with applause and embraces.

"Mr. Ned was an outstanding coach, teacher and friend," said alumni Noah Woods (1949-fall '50). "And today we are honoring him by appointing him Grand Marshal of activities."

Later that evening hundreds of students and community people cheered as Sampson arrived in a chauffeur-driven limousine, compliments of the school's Booster Club members. Sampson had come to attend the final homecoming basketball game at Magnolia High School.

Other special guests honored and recognized during day-long activities were former school principal, Robert Hunt, and James H. Hammonds who served many years as assistant principal, and as interim principal between the tenure of the late Mark Brooks and current principal, Noah Woods. The late Frank Epps served as the school's first administrator.

Other activities throughout the day included basketball games played by alumnae and alumnus; junior varsity team; and girls varsity team. Former homecoming queens were recognized during the evening activities; followed by a cheerleaders' dance.

Sherry Clark was crowned Homecoming Queen.

The day ended as 900 well-wishers gave honor and recognition to their final homecoming of Magnolia High School.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Public Schools of Robeson County merged in 1989. Magnolia High School is scheduled to become an elementary school in the fall of 1991.



Jerry Baker ('61) left embraces his former elementary school friend, retired music teacher, Sarah Bell [1957-86] is seen far right. Mary H. Locklear as Billy Fields ('61) looks on.



Louise Chavis Locklear holds a shirt which announces the year she graduated from Magnolia High School.

The Pembroke Kiwanis Report by Ken Johnson

The monthly business meeting was held at the Town and Country Restaurant with President Mitch Lowry presiding.

Boy Scout Chairman Ed Teets presented Mr. Roland Coulon, a real friend of Troop 27 who has recently painted the Boy Scout Hut. The club donated \$250 to the troop for scouting. Henry Smith and Hank Teets are working on a rescheduling program for Troop 27.

Clayton Maynor announced the Pembroke Rescue Squad is holding a fund raiser golf tournament this coming Saturday at Riverside Golf Course. It will be a Captain's choice best ball tournament. Entry fee is \$20.

Bill Oxendine announced the International Convention will be held in Anaheim, CA on June 24th- June 27th. The registration fee will be paid by the Club.

Dr. Gary Willis, professor of sociology, spoke at last week's meeting. He was presented by Clayton Maynor.

Garth Locklear told of the Randolph Eddings family having one daughter and three sons in the military service of their country.

Treasurer Albert Hunt reported \$8608.29 in the treasury.

Presiding-Mitch Lowry; Invocation- Garth Locklear; Song Leader- Ed Teets; Reporter- Ken Johnson.