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Whatever Happened to ... Eyrle Ray Ransom



Eyrle R. Ransom

by Barbara Brunsby-Lochlear

SPECIAL TO THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

In retirement Eyrle Ray Ransom is literally enjoying the fruits of his labor.

Peach trees in the backyard of his Hopewell community home lean, weighted with juicy, red-ripened fruit; nectarines on another tree stare into the sun while apples hang nearby. Blueberries hide themselves under protective netting as plums peek from their resting place around a corner. A vegetable garden on another corner of the spacious lot boasts of the season's plentiful rain fall which has aided in bountiful yields.

Of retirement Mr. Ransom comments: "I thought I would be able to loaf and fish. Instead, I came home and got tied up with a little orchard, vineyard and garden. And now, by awannie, I can't catch up."

He says he donates four to five hours a day to nurturing the fruit trees, bushes and vines which have produced a bountiful crop this year.

Tending crops have long been a part of the life of the Lumbee Indian. He grew up in the Hopewell community. Born one of nine children of Conley and Cottie Lowry Ransom, he knew firsthand the in's and out's of farm life. After all, his father was a farmer. His mother once taught school in the public schools of Mr. Ransom's native Robeson County.

The 62-year-old grandfather attended Hopewell School where he was a fifth grade student of his brother, Earl Ransom.

"He was particularly hard, and sometimes mean to me. The worse part of having him as a teacher was that he made me call him 'Mr. Ransom,'" he laughs of the experience.

He entered Pembroke High School after completing the seventh grade at the all-Indian elementary school. In the ninth grade, Mr. Ransom was given a job as school bus driver and a fourteen dollar-a-month salary. He drove the bus for four years; seeing his monthly salary rise to twenty dollars during his senior year at Pembroke High School.

Immediately after his 1948 high school graduation, Mr. Ransom enrolled in Pembroke State College. During the summer of that year he met Pauline Sellers, a Tennessee native, and friend of Ira Pate and Reba Lowry, college professors.

After a brief courtship he married her in a Dillon, SC wedding chapel. He completed the second semester of study at the college and at the end of his first school year, moved his bride to Detroit, Michigan in search of employment in the automobile industry.

After two years in the cold, noise-filled city he says he returned to his boyhood community and re-enrolled in Pembroke State College. There he carried a full academic course load and attended tobacco crops on rented farms. He also worked in the school's campus bookstore to supplement his income as a married student.

And he says though he majored in history and minored in English, dramatics became an integral part of his college experience. Also while a student he and three other Lumbees formed a quartet and often performed during "assembly/chapel" at the school.

"Dr. Wellons, then college president, always held weekly chapel in Old Main back then," Mr. Ransom remembers.

It was during assembly that the newly-formed musical group introduced the school Alma Mater song to the college audience for the first time. Mr. Ransom's uncle, Ira Pate Lowry, along with his wife, composed the music and wrote the lyrics to the song.

In 1964 Mr. Ransom graduated from the college and took his first teaching assignment at Prospect High School. There he taught history, Spanish and health all in the run of a school day. His uncle Carlee Lowry was school principal.

A total of seven years was spent in high school teaching

at Prospect, Pembroke, Magnolia and Fairgrove before Mr. Ransom was assigned to Deep Branch Elementary School where he spent 17 years teaching language arts.

It was at this site that he was most involved in introducing drama to students. He says he always directed an annual school play.

"When I went into the teaching profession I saw a need for drama...something more than just books.

"It was such a wonderful thing to take students in September, go with them nine months, put them in a play and see the progress they made towards gaining a deeper self-esteem and confidence.

"Today's students are given opportunities to express themselves in athletics...on the basketball court and baseball fields. Yet, there are too few opportunities offered them to excel in drama.

"After all, what's it all about if not communication? One can't play athletics all the days of their life, but can communicate an entire lifetime," he explains.

"Drama affords communication training."

After leaving Deep Branch School, Mr. Ransom was assigned to the Seventh Grade Center at the old Pembroke Graded School campus for three years before moving to Pembroke Middle School where he spent the final three years of his teaching career.

He retired in 1986 after 32 years in the public schools of Robeson County.

During non-harvest seasons Mr. Ransom enjoys fishing trips to the beach with his long-time friend and neighbor, Earl Sheppard. And before the death of his beloved friend, English Jones, enjoyed birdhunting with the late former Chancellor of Pembroke State University.

He has also been an active member of the church, choosing to permanently close the door to the classroom. He has traveled some since retiring and especially enjoyed a 1986, seven-day Bermuda cruise which was a gift to him and Mrs. Ransom from an appreciative former student, Kenneth Strickland of Alexandria, Va.

From 1987-90 the retired educator worked as a VISTA worker to the Lumbee Regional Development Association sponsored bookstore in Pembroke.

And the year before he retired, Mr. Ransom was cast in the role as an Indian Elder in the movie film "Roanoke."

"I actually filled out a character application as a joke and was cast," he comments. He says what was supposed to have been a three-week filming assignment turned into a six-week one.

"It was a wonderful time," he adds in recounting the movie filming experience.

Come fall after the last apple falls from its tree branch; after the last peach is preserved; the last blue berry, plum and nectarine smashed into jelly; the last grape is squeezed and the vegetable garden has died, Mr. Ransom can gather his fishing gear and mosey to the beach for a mess of "spots." Afterwards he can gather his six children and their families in the backyard and hold a fish fry. He might even want to serve up a pot of his famous boiled collards. Only then can the seasoned gardener catch up ever so briefly with the chores afforded by retirement.

Recognized among

real
estate
developers



Days leading up to Lumbee Homecoming 1978, Glenda Gail Lochlear was busy preparing for competition in the Miss Lumbee pageant. Her dedication to hard work paid off for the Native American days later when she walked away with the coveted crown.

Now 17 years later the petite 33-year-old Robeson County native's hard work has earned her recognition among real estate developers in the Atlanta, Georgia area. Most recently Ms. Lochlear's interior design firm was selected to decorate one of five fully decorated luxury homes being shown in the area.

Her professional assignment was to decorate a \$375,000 Georgia-style home in The Street of Dreams home show currently in progress near Roswell, Ga.

The red brick facade home boasts Anderson windows throughout. It was especially in decorating these windows that Ms. Lochlear's interior designer talents were most visible. She expertly enriched the home's living areas with vivid color schemes, sumptuous fabrics, custom-designed window treatments, finely crafted furnishings and tasteful accessories.

The Street of Dreams show opened June 8 and runs through July 14. Proceeds generated from home tours will benefit the Dream Factory, a non-profit organization dedicated to fulfilling the dreams and wishes of seriously ill children.

Ms. Lochlear's sister, Brenda Miracle formerly of Raleigh, recently joined Lochlear Interiors. The sisters, daughters of the late Braddie Lochlear, Sr. and Janie Lochlear Davis of Rowland, have expanded business operations to include real estate sales.

LUMBEE HOMECOMING

Proudly Presents

The 1991 Miss Lumbee Scholarship Awards Pageant "Salute To America"



MYRA DEESE
Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie & Rogena Deese

Miss Lumbee Nahir Denise Lochlear will relinquish her crown Friday, July 6 at the Performing Arts Center on the PSU campus. The pageant begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$7 per person.

Nahir is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Denzel Ray Lochlear.

Eight young ladies will be vying for the title. They are shown with their parents names:



STEPHANIE CAROL HUNT
Ronnie Hunt and Sarah Lochlear



BECKY LYNN GOINS
Clarence L. and Rebecca Goins



LISA JOY LOWRY
Robon and Lucy Lowry



LORIA DENINE FREEMAN
Mr. and Mrs. Bowman Freeman



LISA HAGAN
Jerry & Helen Hagan



TAMMY BREWER
Mr. and Mrs. Alton Brewer



CELESTE OXENDINE
Merlin and Bessie Oxendine

23rd Lumbee Homecoming!