

Editorial and Opinion Page



Editorially Speaking

A Public Reminder that Joe Freeman Britt Has Served by Default; and Other Notes on 1996 Elections

"Pray the Lord and pass the anointment," as Howell M. Forgy said just before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. We say it here because the infamous Joe Freeman Britt has announced he will not seek election as a Superior Court Judge. We are among those who remember his tenure in the District Attorney's office in Robeson County. We remember too that the judgeship which he has chosen not to run for, is a seat he held by default. The voters of Robeson County rejected the "the world's deadliest DA" by an overwhelming 2,500 votes, in support of the late Julian Pierce. We recall that the post held by Britt because Pierce was dead and therefore unable to serve, was created for a minority. Now Joe Freeman Britt is many things, but a person of color he is not. We pause to remind him that the voters of Robeson County, in 1988, said that they would rather have a dead Julian Pierce than a live Joe Freeman Britt as Superior Court Judge. We would be remiss in our duty to our readers if we did not remind Joe that he was never elected judge.

We speculate about his "real" reasons for not seeking election. First of all, he knows that he couldn't win and we suspect that his massive ego could not deal with another defeat, this time possibly by a live black woman (Diane Phillips). We speculate that his reason for not giving us an opportunity to vote against him again was because he couldn't bear the idea of being defeated by a Black or an Indian. During his eight years on the bench, we don't recall any outstanding contributions that he has made toward harmonious race relations in our county. It would be interesting to be in on one of those "behind closed doors" meetings that he will no doubt preside over to decide who his replacement will be. Well, we are sure that there won't be any Indians or Blacks in that inner circle. And we are sure that he will not recommend a Black or an Indian for his replacement. If he did so, it would certainly be out of character for him. The good news for Indians is that Superior Court Judge Dexter Brooks, if re-elected, will become Resident Superior Court Judge.

What can we say? We rejoice to know that Joe's public service is drawing to a close, yet we somehow feel cheated that he apparently isn't

brave enough to give the voters of Robeson County another opportunity to say "no way, Joe." Of course, feeling cheated is not a new experience for Indians relative to Joe Freeman Britt. We remember Joe!!!!

It seems to be a year for Joes, or next year promises to be a year without them. Joe B. Freeman, Register of Deeds, has announced also that he will not seek re-election. We remember his bid for that office. We remember the support he received from the Indian voters. Too bad, Joe forgot. We remember also that he was among those who would not appear in a political ad endorsing the Democratic Party. Maybe there is something these two men had in common other than their names!!! We suspect that Joe B. Freeman would not support that ad because he did not wish to appear to support the Indian candidate for sheriff!!! We speculate also that his reasons for not seeking re-election go deeper than those expressed by him. We suspect he and Joe Freeman Britt share the same fear of being defeated by a Black or an Indian. It is common knowledge that Tom Jones, a Black, would run against Freeman as Register of Deeds. It is understood that Indians and Blacks voting together can change the complexion of the political office holders. We wish Joe B. Freeman well as he leaves the office of Register of Deeds and we assure him that Tom Jones, if elected to that office, could be trusted with the keeping of the public records. We assure him also, Robeson County will not slide off into the Lumbee River if a Black is elected to the office. We remind him that his choice not to support the Democratic ticket in 1994 would certainly have haunted him in 1996. Again, we regret that we won't have the opportunity to vote against him.

We certainly expect to hear some comments from some folks about Freeman's physical handicap. Some folks believe that it is almost a sacrilege to say anything about a person, if they are physically challenged. We are much more concerned with the handicaps called bigotry and racism. There are no crutches or wheelchairs that can help alleviate the pain caused by these limitations that are not visible to the natural eye.

We expect to hear soon that the name of Pembroke State University has been changed once again. The move is to call it the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. The overwhelming sentiment seems to be what difference will one more name change make? More questions are raised over the employment situation at that institution than over the changing of the name. We hope that, if the name changes, it will increase enrollment and the hiring of minorities will be considered a priority there.

1996 promises to bring an election that will be interesting to say the least. With the absence of Joe Freeman Britt as a candidate, rumor has it that Diane Phillips, a Black who works for the Public Defender, and District Court Judge Frank Floyd will run, as well as incumbent Superior Court Judge Dexter Brooks. If that scenario happens, we will see an Indian, a Black and a white competing for two seats.

Without Joe Freeman in the race for Register of Deeds, we expect to see Tom Jones, a Black, and Billie Britt, a white, offer themselves as candidates. Terry Stewart, an Indian Republican, will challenge the winner. Other names are being bandied about also as possible candidates for that position.

Of great importance to many people is the possibility of Jeff Moore, an Indian, assistant district attorney, running for district court judge, if Floyd runs for Superior Court.

Senator David Parnell has also announced that he will not seek reelection for the District 30 seat. David Weinstein, former Mayor of Lumberton, has announced that he will run for that position. Other names being mentioned are former House member Pete Hasty and the former sheriff Hubert Stone. That could prove to be a very heated race, if Stone goes for it. If he exercises his constitutional right to run for the Senate, we say publicly, editorially speaking, Hubert, don't count on any support or encouragement from us.

Along the Robeson Trail

by Dr. Stan Knick, Director
PSU Native American Resource Center

One of the most readily recognizable types of jewelry is the work done in silver and turquoise by Native Americans. That particular combination of materials can be seen on fingers, wrists and necks all around the world, but is generally associated with the American Southwest. Navajo, Hopi and Zuni artisans are best known for their beautiful work in silver and turquoise. But it has not always been so.

Turquoise was used for many centuries, long before the coming of Europeans, as an ornament in the Southwest. Beads of turquoise were worn by both men and women, although more frequently by men. These Native people collected turquoise in their local environment, and men were responsible for most of the early work in producing beads from the raw material. Farther south, in Meso-America, turquoise was among the stones used in personal decorations as well as mosaics by Maya, Aztec and other Native people.

Silver appears to have been first used by Native people in South America. Meso-American people learned metallurgy (the science of separating metals from their ores and preparing them for use by smelting or other refining) from South American Indians. But in most of North America, advanced metallurgy was an unknown art. Native North Americans in various locations from the Eastern Woodlands to Alaska mainly cold-hammered chunks of copper, and in at least one instance, meteoric iron, but there were no real underground mines north of Mexico. Annealing, the

process of heating metal slightly to make it more malleable, is also believed to have been known in pre-Columbian North America (see Harold Driver's *Indians of North America*).

Work in silver and turquoise as it is presently known from the American Southwest began after European contact. In what appears to be typical fashion for traditional cultures everywhere, when new technology is introduced the people not only learn how to master the technique but eventually make it into something of their own. So it was with the Native craftsmen of the Southwest.

Sometime around the middle of the 19th century these Indians learned how to work silver into jewelry. They had been using silver before, acquired mainly from Mexicans, but they had not been working it much themselves. Once they got started, they soon began to set it with turquoise, which they had valued longer than anyone could remember. The silver raw material came first from Spanish and Mexican sources, and later from United States coins.

The story was told in the 1940s, by Navajo elder Grey Moustache, of a man named Atsidi Sani (in English, "Old Smith"), who was the first among his people to learn metallurgy:

"He thought that he could earn money by making bridles. In those days the Navajo bought all of their bridles from the Mexicans, and Atsidi Sani thought that if he learned how to make them the Navajo would buy them from him... After Atsidi Sani learned to make silver, he taught his sons how to work it. He told them that silver was

very easy to work. He never made very much silver, but spent most of his time making iron bits [for horses]. His sons made lots of silver, especially Red Smith...

"We learned how to do this from the Mexicans. They used clay molds for casting the metal. The first Navajo smiths used rock for casting...

"Atsidi Chon was a very good silversmith. He used to live over near Klagetoh. He was the first silversmith to set turquoise in silver. The first piece that he set was in a ring... This ring had just one stone in it. At that time the only rings that the Navajo had were of silver with some designs filed into the metal. I remember when this ring was finished, many Navajo gathered around to see it, and all of them thought that it was very pretty. After he finished making that first piece, he made some more jewelry with turquoise in it...

"Young fellows used to come up to him and say 'I want to learn how to make silver; I want to learn how to make jewelry like that.' He used to say to them 'You have two eyes, you can see; watch me and you will learn how for yourself' (*The Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths*, by John Adair)."

They did watch and learn. Nowadays, Native Americans from many other tribes and nations have also watched and learned. Even here in the land of the Lumbee, people are making beautiful jewelry from silver and turquoise.

For more information, visit the Native American Resource Center in Old Main Building, on the campus of Pembroke State University.

Reflections

by Alta Nye Oxendine

It seems that President Clinton wants 20,000 of our "boys" and "girls" to serve as "peacekeepers" in Yugoslavia. There are some who believe that, if this happen, they could end up fighting in that war.

World War II

Reminds me of fifty-some years ago, when we watched our teenage classmates drop out of school to serve in World War II. Some were injured. Others never came back. But life went on back home.

While sorting through family belongings in Montana last summer, I found a box of high school things, including copies of our school paper, the Twin Bridges High School "Vigilante" (The Vigilantes were a group of volunteers who set out to rid the territory of "Road Agents" during the 1800s).

50th Class Reunion

Our "class of 1945" held our 50th high school reunion last July. We were the class whose high school years coincided with WW II, from 1941 to 1945. We graduated between VE-Day (the end of the war in Europe) and VJ-Day (the end of World War II in Japan and the Pacific theater). It was great to see some classmates not seen since our Graduation Day.

The "Vigilantes" I'd saved spanned the war years. S. Spring, 1942, issue commended first graders for gathering scrap iron for the war effort. It also announced that classes would be out for two days in order for teachers to get the government's new sugar rationing program into operation. (What I remember most is gas rationing!) In the November 25, 1942 issue there is an editorial, "Let Us Be Thankful," by editor Jean Armstrong, one of the other students.

Here is an excerpt:
"As we sit down to Thanksgiving dinner tomorrow let us remember these boys who are giving their all that we may have Thanksgiving Day, and let us be forever thankful to them for their sacrifice. Above all let us be thankful for knowing that our cause is right and that we do not have to face the people of the world with lies protesting our righteousness."

I was surprised to find a Thanksgiving poem by fellow tenth grader, Wanda Bayers. It was during our last two years in high school that Wanda and I became close friends. She is the person for whom I named my Wanda Kay. Wanda was going to be the writer! Instead, she is a water color artist.

BE THANKFUL by Wanda Bayers
Thanksgiving Day is a glorious day.
When God will want to hear us say,
Our thanks for all the things we've got.
Stop and think, it's quite a lot.

First comes our freedom and let us thank God
That is's grown into this very sod
And that is why none can take it away
It has grown here and here it will stay

There are a lot of things we can



thank God for
There are millions of things, yes things galore
We can thank him for enough to eat

And just plain bread and butter and clean fresh meat.

And for the very house in which we live
And for the brilliant lights that the sun will give

Yes, and it's God that makes the flowers bloom
And it's things like these that chase away gloom.

There are a lot of things we can pray to God for
Happiness and quiet still peace once more.

But there are a lot of things to thank Him for too
And down deep in your heart they must come from you.

Be thankful, Be thankful for the good things that you've got.
And just stop and think, it's quite a lot.

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