

Community News B1



NCSA senior is high achiever

Ballerina wants to see more blacks involved

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING
Community News Editor

When Monica Johnson chose ballet as her profession, she knew she had entered an area not overly populated with African-Americans. But, since she was three years old and started training, she has not regretted her choice.

Monica enrolled in the Pre-Professional Program at the North Carolina School of the Arts to continue her study of ballet when she

started fourth grade. She had previously studied at Moore Studio for a year. After four years in the program, she advanced to the school's professional program where for the last six years she has had a mixture of academic and dance classes. The days can be long, she said. "Sometimes I'm in school until six, and with rehearsals, it's nine," she added with only a slight trace of fatigue.

While her chosen career is a grueling one, it's one that the NCSA senior would like to see more African-Americans involved in. She is one of a few African-American students at NCSA studying ballet. She is working hard to excel and set an example. "I want to be one who achieves and let other blacks know it's there," she explained. She expressed a desire for African-American teachers of ballet at the school. "There is only one black teacher here," she said, noting Mabel Robinson, a renowned choreographer and member of the faculty at NCSA.

Monica feels that the lack of more African-Americans at the school may have contributed to the reasons some have not remained there. "I've seen a lot of my friends leave the school," she said. "That concerns me." She questioned some of the school's requirements noting, "Debbie Allen (well-known African-American actress and dancer) auditioned and didn't make it because they said she was too short."

As for herself, Monica feels that NCSA has provided

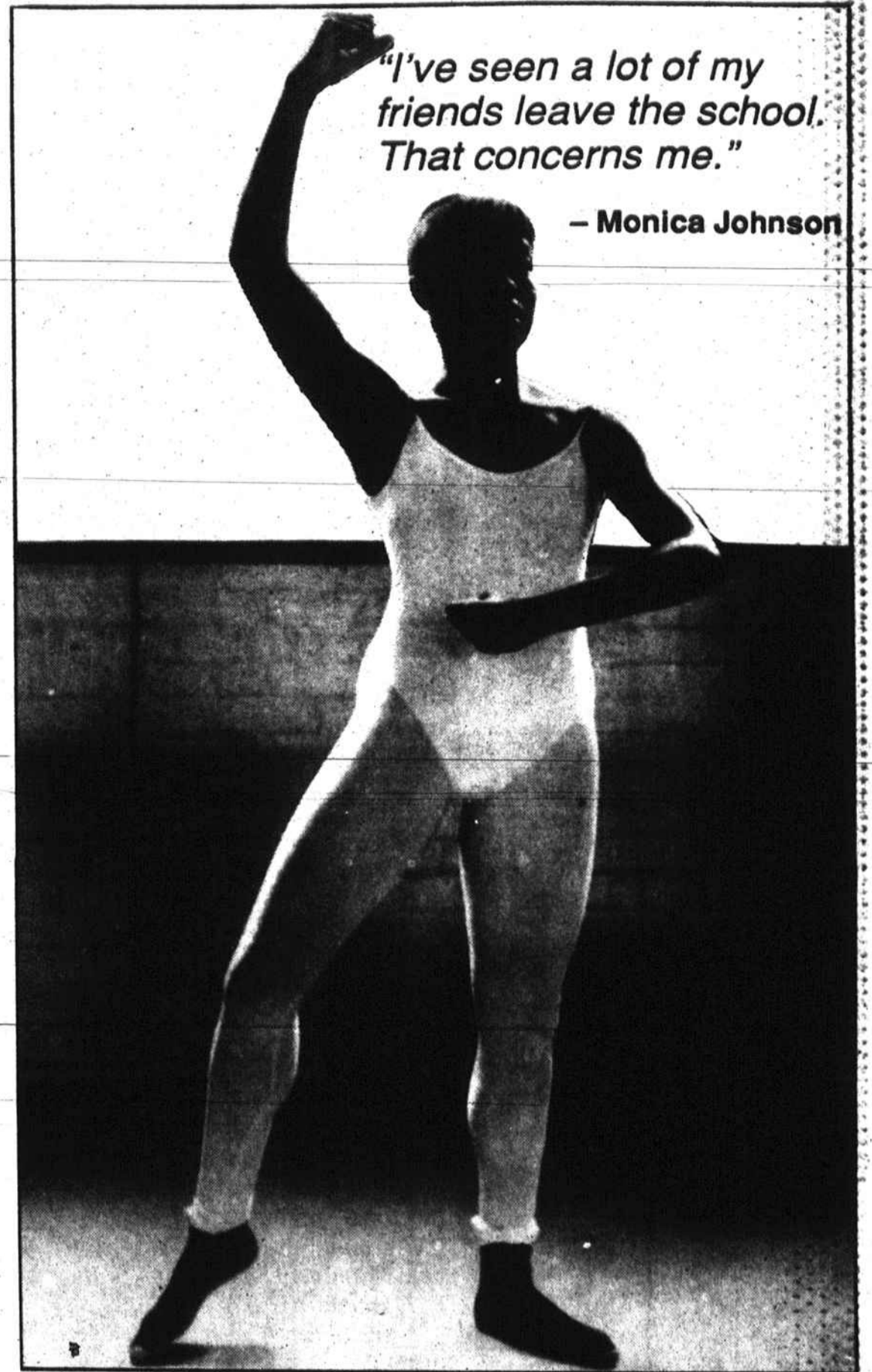
her with a solid educational background and has allowed her "to grow, learn, and participate in many activities." She has danced in several plays, most notably in the school's annual performance of "The Nutcracker."

Last year, Monica won first place in the dance competition (ballet category) at the NAACP Talent Show. Her prize was a trip to California to participate in the 1990 National ACT-SO (Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics) Competition, also sponsored by the NAACP. She said her experience last year inspired her to practice harder to sharpen her ballet skills even more in preparation for the 1991 competition.

Monica's hard work paid off. She has repeated her winning ways this year in the local competition and hopes to obtain sponsors to assist her in her trip to the 1991 National ACT-SO competition to be held in Houston, Tex., July 5-8. In describing the competition she said, "Students from all over the country participate in this event, and awards are given in several different categories including singing, dancing, speechmaking, and photography."

Daughter of Evelyn Johnson, Monica has two brothers: Gilbert Jr. and Jerome. While the love of her life is ballet dancing, she does take time for hobbies including swimming and bicycling. She managed time to work parttime to earn money for the Nissan Sentra she bought herself. Always goal-oriented, she wants a career as a lawyer, as well as a ballerina. At some point in her life, she would like to have a business of her own.

Monica looks forward to college once she has completed her studies at NCSA. In her growing resumé she describes her main goal: "I hope to accomplish the positive endeavors in life — to become someone special in my eyes, as well as others', and for people to look at me as someone who has accomplished a lot in life."



"I've seen a lot of my friends leave the school. That concerns me."

— Monica Johnson



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

Monica Johnson listens attentively to pointers from world-renowned choreographer, Pearl Primus.

NCSA ballerina, Monica Johnson, is working hard to prepare for July ACT-SO Competition.

OUR FOLKS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING
Community News Editor

The weekend was a time of celebration for the return of two more of Our Folks. For Navy Fireman Fredricko Delano Fair and Army First Lieutenant Bryan Hampton Blue, it was a homecoming that gave each man a hero's welcome for a job exceedingly well-done.

Fair Fares Well At Post Party — Finally!

"I love being back home except they won't let me sleep!" said an exhausted Fireman Fredricko D. Fair after a weekend of festivities that began with his "Welcome Home" party at the American Legion Post #453 Saturday night. Right up to the last minute, friends and relatives who had gathered there were not certain that the guest of honor would arrive in time. It was a tense few hours with one of his sisters, Telissa Fair, frantically checking the airport in Greensboro for the arrival of his flight.

Meanwhile, the brief ceremony proceeded with Fair's father standing in for him. Alderman Larry Womble presented a plaque to Mr. and Mrs. Fair in recognition of their son's valor and service. The Post Commander, James Wilson, also made brief remarks. Guests availed themselves of the splendid buffet table goodies, and the deejay added spirit to the already-charged atmosphere.

Finally, the wait was worth it when the airport taxi drove up, and Fair was virtually mobbed by his family and friends. Fair, who had returned from the Persian Gulf with the crew of the U.S.S. Wisconsin to Norfolk, Va., a week or so earlier, received the hugs and kisses he had been waiting for from his parents, his sisters

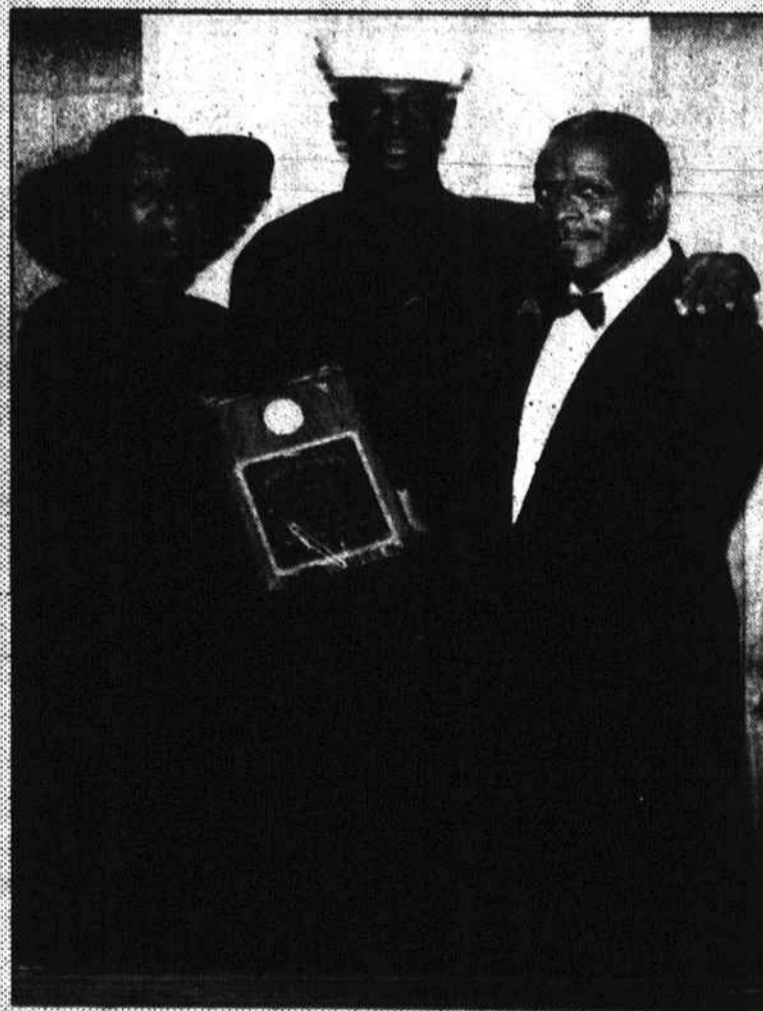


Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

Navy Fireman Fredricko D. Fair admires plaque his parents, William and Shirley Fair, received while waiting for his arrival at Saturday celebration.

Telissa and Treba, and his brothers William and Romero, as well as others in the family. He has a sister, Leneé, who is in the Navy also.

Later, describing his experience overseas, Fair

said, "Being over there, it was a hurry-up-and-wait situation" until the war started. Even though everyone knew it was coming, he said it was hard to believe. "But, everybody was happy that it did," he added. He was in the engineering department working beneath the ship's water line in the "shaft alleys" which was not the best location on the ship, given the constant threat of mines in the water. "If we were struck, we would have been in more trouble because we were so low already below the water," he recalled. He was not concerned, however, because "the ship was well-built."

Fair, who joined the Navy a year after his graduation from R.J. Reynolds High School in 1989, said that the war gave him "a real good sense of how the military works." He explained, "Regardless of differences you might have with another crew member, everybody works together as a team." As a result, he said he came away from the experience with some real close friends.

Right now, Fair said, "I'm going to enjoy being on the land, being with my family as much as I can." He returns to Norfolk April 29.

"And They Lived Happily Ever After"

First Lieutenant Bryan H. Blue's story with the *Chronicle* began last year in September a few days before he was to wed Virginia "Sissy" Hash. The elaborate plans for the wedding had been placed on hold because he and others at HHC 1st Battalion, 327 Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne were among the first to be deployed to the Persian Gulf. The couple served as the inspiration for the first of the series of articles that have appeared in this column.

Well, Bryan is back, and the couple wasted no time. He arrived in the States Monday, April 8, Sissy met him in Ft. Campbell, Ky., and they returned to the city Thursday. The beautiful ceremony took place as planned Sunday, April 14, at St. Peter's World Outreach Center where Sissy's father, the Reverend James C. Hash, is pastor. Was it worth the wait? "Definitely!" beamed the new Mrs. Bryan Blue.

In an interview a few days following the wedding, Bryan recalled his war experience from the perspective of an executive officer, senior first lieutenant, privy to much of the military strategy involved. "The war overall—the air phase, ground phase...—was an unqualified success," he said with the pride of an officer. He said that a person would have had to be there to watch as the action went from the first phase of Desert Shield to the first phase of Desert Storm through to the end. "Everything along that entire frontline went exactly on time, exactly as we were briefed," he said, summing up the "agility, decisiveness, and speed" of the military action.

Bryan said that U.S. casualties were kept to a handful in an operation that was more massive than in any since World War II, and that they inflicted more casualties to Hussein's forces than had been thought possible. His unit captured 307 POWs, he said. Yet, he

added, "War and destructiveness at that level is still nothing to clap about...I just wouldn't want to do it again."

Bryan recalled that his commander had said prior to the start of the war, "A lot of you will be cowards, a lot of you will rise to the occasion and do what is expected," which proved to be an accurate prediction. He said, "We had a lot of people who broke emotionally, hence professionally..." But, he hastened to add that those represented the few because when the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade had to lead the attack on January 24, "Everyone was prepared to do what they were supposed to do."

Noting his pleasure in being home again, Bryan said, "Two days ago, I was standing in the sand; two days later, I'm standing in the green grass." The happy couple will leave sometime this week for a honeymoon destination and departure time that they are not making public at this time. Bryan is on a mandatory combat leave until May 6, after which he will return to Ft. Campbell for six more months. He then goes to Infantry Officers' Advanced School in Ft. Benning, Ga., for five months. When asked whether his bride will accompany him, he said with the authority of a career military officer and a proud new husband, "Wherever I go, she's going." And Mrs. Blue agreed quite happily.

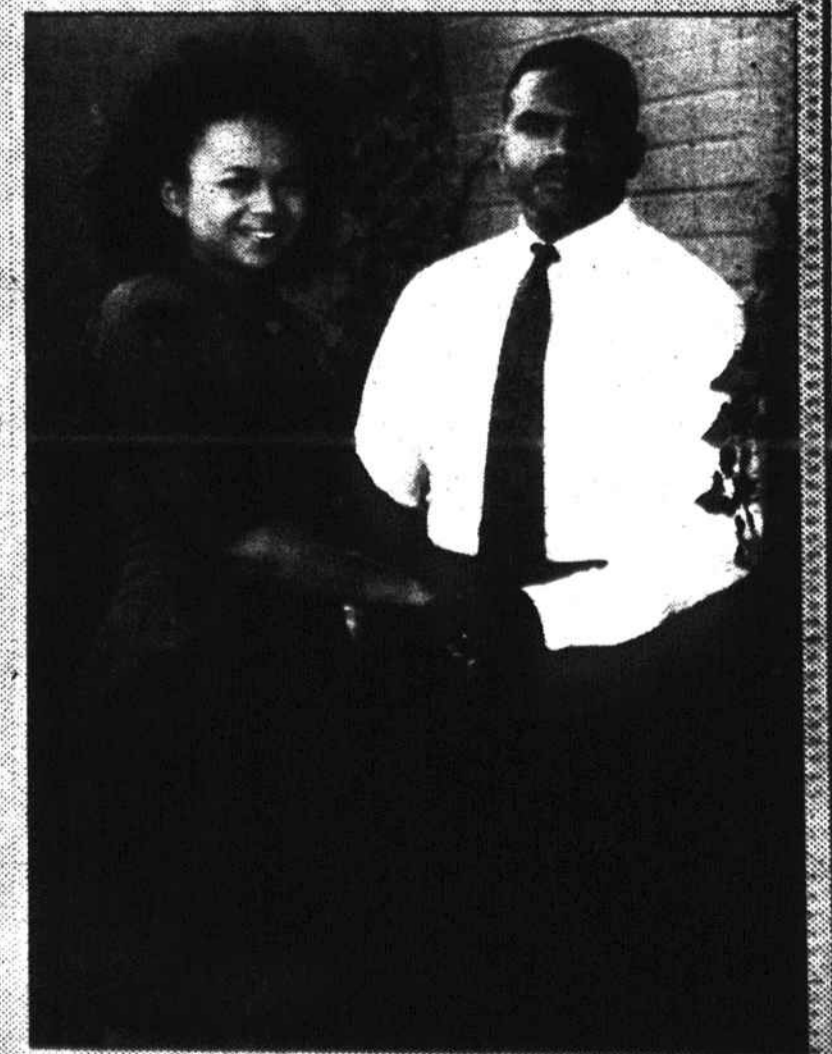


Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

First Lieutenant and Mrs. Bryan H. Blue will soon be off to parts unknown for their long-awaited honeymoon.



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

Joining Fireman Fredricko D. Fair and his parents are (l-r): William McDonald, Post Service Officer; Telissa Fair, sister; and Larry Wilson, Commander of American Legion Post #453.