

Mrs. Peeler Insists School Board Action Was "Biased"

By Mac Thrower
Post Staff Writer

"I want to get these lies cleared up," Ida Peeler declared as she began an interview with The Post concerning her highly publicized dismissal from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System after 22 years as an elementary teacher.

Mrs. Peeler told her side of the story to The Post in response to the allegations made against her in connection with a series of incidents involving her at Devonshire and Statesville Elementary Schools. This article presents her

opinions and judgments about her dismissal (she is the first tenured teacher to be fired by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board in seven years) and the events leading up to the action taken against her.

Mrs. Peeler insisted that the School Board action was "punitive and biased." "I taught in different schools under a number of different principals for 20 years and I never had a black mark on my record,

First in a series

or a complaint against me," she stated.

"They said I was incompetent, but how can I be incompetent when my class scored as high or higher than others on standardized tests at Statesville?" (Statesville Road Elementary), Mrs. Peeler asked. She also added that recent graduate work she has completed in her field—55 hours at UNCC—demonstrates that she is committed to her work as a teacher.

Mrs. Peeler alleged that the School Board's 7-0 vote to fire her resulted from a two-year campaign directed against her by certain members of the staff, and several parents at Statesville Elementary who were motivated, she claims, by personal, and, in some cases, racial biases.

"I can't possibly describe all the things that went down," Mrs. Peeler said in summing up her experience as a teacher at Statesville Road Elementary. Her problems began,



Mrs. Ida Peeler
...Would like to get lies cleared up she asserted, after a spanking incident at Devonshire Elementary that led to her being temporarily suspended.

ed by the School Board. A suit brought against her in court in connection with the spanking was resolved in her favor after both black and white parents of children at Devonshire testified in her behalf. But she believes that the publicity surrounding her spanking of the white child at Devonshire followed her to Statesville Elementary, where she was reassigned for the next school year.

Mrs. Peeler revealed that some parents asked to have their children taken out of her class before she began teaching at Statesville, "before they even met me." She claims that these incidents were the first in a pattern of incidents in which "kids were hoveled in and out of my class without any notice being given to me."

According to Mrs. Peeler, a conflict soon developed between she and the principal at Statesville Road Elementary, Adeline Ostwalt. Mrs. Peeler charged that Mr. Ostwalt harassed her for racial

reasons. "She has a reputation for intimidating black teachers," she declared.

"They were literally spying on me," Mrs. Peeler remarked in describing the atmosphere she encountered at Statesville Elementary. "The principal (Mrs. Ostwalt) visited my class continually, and the aides (assistants assigned to Mrs. Peeler) reported everything I did to the office."

One of the aides, Carolyn Strauss, was said by Mrs. Peeler to have been hostile because of personal resentment. "She didn't understand her duties...she wanted to lead the class," Mrs. Peeler accused. She said that Ms. Strauss' resentment boiled over into a constant attempt to undermine her (Mrs. Peeler's) position by making negative reports to the principal about Mrs. Peeler's classroom conduct. NEXT WEEK: Part II will present Mrs. Peeler's response to specific charges made against her.

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The Little Theatre Student Guild will hold auditions for its summer show, "David & Lisa," at the Little Theatre, 501 Queens Road, on Sunday, May 30 at 2:30 p.m. and on Tuesday, June 1 at 7:30 p.m.

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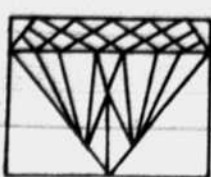
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