

Reunion scheduled

'Firm but fair' a good lesson for SHS teacher

By Laura Kimball
Feature Editor

When Cliff White moved to Southport in August, 1961, to teach, the first advice he received was from Ruth Hood, a seventh grade teacher at Southport High School.

"The first thing you have to know," she said, "is that the first thing you say you have to mean, and you have to follow through on it, or else the kids will twist things around," White recalled.

And as a young science teacher, fresh out of college, White found Hood's advice to be true. He taught physics, biology and chemistry, as well as health and physical education.

"The students were doomed from the beginning. They had no other choice in the science or the physical education department," he said.

White came from a small area near Winston called Dover. His father had warned him that in small, coastal areas people either immediately liked you or they didn't. White was relieved to come to Southport and immediately feel like he belonged.

"It seemed like when I came into town I found that Southport just opened up its arms and said, 'Welcome,'" he said.

In many ways, White feels like he grew up in Southport. Of course, he didn't even come here until he was out of college, but he feels like he started a new life when he moved.

"I grew up, I went to college and I came to Southport. Then I grew up all over again," he said. "It was a new beginning."

White met his wife, Judy, when he moved to Southport. At the time, she was working at the bank that is now BB&T.

While they were dating, he was also coaching the girls basketball team and recalls his team's enthusiasm about his dating life. Before a game they would exclaim, "Let's win this one for Judy!" he said.



WHITE

Some time passed, he and Judy were married, and before he knew it the team was planning to win one for his unborn baby daughter. White wondered where his team's devotion to their coach had gone, but they were only interested in Judy and the baby.

But the team's affection wasn't entirely selfless. In addition to hoping for a win, the team was wishing for the baby to be born on May 25, exam day.

Sure enough, White recalls, his daughter Fran was born May 25, 1963. He canceled the exam and averaged their grades for the year.

"Those were the best years of my teaching," he said. "I would like to think that my students thought I was fair, firm and friendly."

However, he realizes that this may be just what he would like to think. He believes that he was fair and friendly, but isn't so sure if his students thought he was firm.

He remembers giving fill-in-the-blank tests and having a problem with students leaving answers blank. He encouraged them to always guess or to just write the first thing they thought of.

He realized that he needed to be a little firmer with his students when grading one of his fill-in-the-blank tests. One student had filled a blank with the words, "I don't know," and the student in the neighboring desk had written, "Me either."

White laughs about this and said

this is when he switched to multiple-choice tests.

"Those were fun days," he said. Eventually White began to teach driver's education classes. Since he grew up on a farm, White was happy to have the opportunity to continue teaching but in an outside environment.

"I could drive better left-handed than any of my students could with both hands," he said.

When the school burned in January, 1969, White, who was a member of the volunteer fire department, remembers being on the scene. He removed all of the chemicals from the science lab and then helped put out the blaze that destroyed the school.

After the school burned, he was asked to be headmaster of a new private school, called Fort Johnston Academy, which had classrooms at the Presbyterian church. The school had grades one through nine, and there were 77 students.

The private school didn't last but three years, and White went on to teach at South Brunswick High School.

Before retiring in 1992, he branched out to teach driver's edu-

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Cliff White

cation all over the county. He taught many of the children of his former students. Though it never happened, he jokes that he decided if a student ever came to class and told him that he had taught their grandparent, it was time to retire.

When looking back over his 30-year teaching career, his memories of teaching at Southport High School are the most vivid. He recalls the support of the community for the students and for the school, which seems different now in the large county high schools.

"People talk about Southport High School with reverence because it was the central place of activity. It was really like a big family," he said.

But, though he is glad to be retired, he says he will always miss one thing:

"Working with students and watching them learn. I'll always miss that because that's what life's all about."

In service

Clerk's training

Marine Cpl. Gary J. Pezze, whose wife Sharon is the daughter of Lee and Mary A. Moore of Leland, recently was graduated from the Unit Diary Clerk's Course at Personnel Administration School, Marine Corps Service Support Schools at Camp Lejeune.

During the eight-week course Pezze gained a working knowledge of processing and preparing a unit diary, which is the basic document used in the Marine Corps Manpower Management System.

Basic training

Air Force airman Racheal B. Robbins has been graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, TX.

During the six weeks of training the airman studied the Air Force mission, organization and customs and received special training in human relations. In addition, airmen who complete basic training earn credits toward an associate degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Robbins is the daughter of Gary W. Robbins and stepdaughter of Wanda S. Robbins, both of Winnabow. Her mother, Raychel E. Porter, resides in Leland. She is a 1998 graduate of South Brunswick High School.

NAACP to host honors banquet

The Southport-Brunswick County branch of the NAACP will host an honors banquet at 7 p.m. Friday, October 23, at the ILA Hall, corner of 10th and Lord streets in Southport.

Among those honored will be Lillian McMillan, member of the year; Leslie Myrie Jr., male youth of the year; Lashonda Davis, female youth of the year; St. John Missionary Baptist Church of Bolivia, church of the year; Jeff Johnson, minister of the year; Ray C. Gilbert Sr., pastor of the year; SeaWay Printing Company and EZ-Way Grocery, businesses of the year; Leslie Collier, public official of the year; William C. Flythe, com-

munity leader of the year; Ron Thompson, man of the year; Emma Myles, woman of the year; Henry Rose and ILA Local 1838, special thanks and appreciation award; Lashonda Davis and April Evans, ACT-SO Participants 1998; Johnnie N. Grant and Jerelyn McMillan, president's appreciation awards; and Hoopers Chapel Baptist Church, president's award for highest church membership.

The Rev. G. I. Allison, state executive director of the North Carolina branches of the NAACP, will be the keynote speaker, and the branch will be celebrating its 35th anniversary. The price per ticket is \$15.

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Editor's note:
This is the first in a series of interviews with former teachers and students in anticipation of the third annual Southport High School reunion, scheduled November 28.

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End Hunger in Brunswick County!

All donations will be distributed through the Food Pantry of Brunswick Family Assistance Agency in Supply to Local Families in need.

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