



# SON OF A GUN

by Joe Lanier

I couldn't have said it any better, so here it is from the Wilmington Morning Star — the bad news on school scores. State school officials and Gov. Jim Hunt were pummeling themselves on the back last week because achievement test scores showed North Carolina pupils well above the national average.

These officials weren't as anxious to point out that the tests also showed that as North Carolina's pupils rise through the grades, they score less well. In some southeastern counties, the drop in scores is almost beyond belief.

Pupils in Grades 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9 were compared with pupils in the same grades around the country. North Carolina first graders scored in the 70th "percentile" which means they scored better than 70 percent of the nation's first graders. . . Not bad. . . Our 9th graders scored in the 60th percentile. . . OK, but not anything to brag about. . . The biggest drop — to 58 percent from 74 percent, occurred in math. Reading dropped nine points and language rose four.

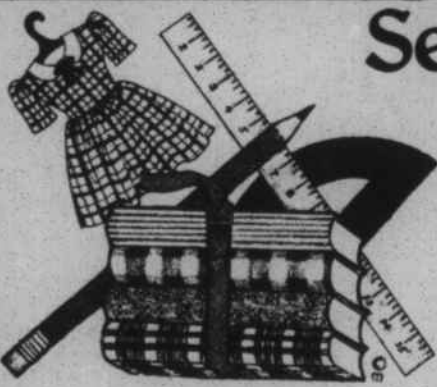
In this part of the state, between 1st grade and 9th grade: New Hanover County students sank to 63 percent from 69 percent. Though reading and language scores increased a bit, math scores sank 16 points. Bladen County students went from an admirable 77 percent to 50 percent — the national average. Reading scores dropped 23 points and math dropped 34. Brunswick County students went from 58 percent in the 1st grade to 48 percent in the 9th grade — below the national average. Columbus County students sank even further. They went from 62 percent to 45 percent. Math dropped 28 points. Whiteville City students went from a solid 73 percent to a respectable 66 percent. Math eased down four points, language seven, and reading 11. Duplin County students started at only 57 percent and sank just a bit to 54 percent. Pender students went from 64 percent to 49 percent, and math dropped to 42 percent from 68 percent. Students and their parents are surely responsible for some of what's going wrong, but the schools must take most of the blame. Somehow they are losing pupils as they get older. . . Anybody have any ideas on what to do about it? . . .

I have been attending the county commissioner meetings from some over 10 years now, though it seems a lot longer — a whole lot longer. . . But, during this time no set of county commissioners have ever had so much to hide behind closed doors to talk about as this one. There has been no great increase or turnover of employees. . . Most of those working for the county have been working for the county for some time. . . Yet, it appears recently they have begun giving trouble — enough trouble to hide to talk about. . . The commissioners almost as regularly as they meet "need to go into executive session to discuss personnel." The use of "executive session" is a nice way of putting it. The truthful way of putting it is "secret session." There has been one office added by this set of commissioners — the county manager's office. Is it the cause of all this trouble. Is it the cause of the need for secret sessions? Is that office the problem or is it the creator of the problem? . . . I wonder. . . Of course we won't know, for they meet behind closed doors and talk it over. . . You know what? . . . We elect them and pay them — pay about \$20 an hour. They average \$80 a meeting and never meet over four hours. Most of the time it is less, and yet they hide to do our bidding. . . Or is it our bidding? . . . One thing they must have discussed in secret session is the trip to Washington State, for I was never absent for an open meeting and I never heard it discussed. . . I don't know if that was legal matters or personnel or matters of their trip. It was tax money spent, of that I do know. . .



## Album Autographing Session

Carol-Ann Tucker is autographing her recent album release for long-time friend Maude Smith of Magnolia. Carol-Ann was born and raised in Magnolia and now lives in Greenville where she is pursuing a career in education and singing. Her new album is a joint venture between her and Jim Aycock with Carol-Ann doing the vocalizing and Jim at the piano. The easy-listening album is available at most Duplin stores. Carol-Ann Tucker and Jim Aycock were at the Duplin Wine Cellars August 1st selling and autographing tapes and records. They will also be at THE LIBERTY CART performance on August 17 for a session before the show.



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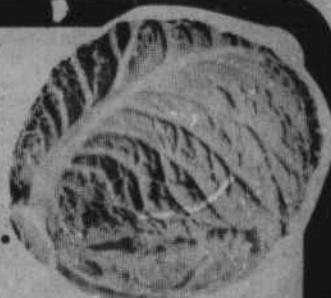
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