

Students Enjoy Cedar Grove Resident's Stories Of Past

BY TERRY POPE

While entering the Shallotte Middle School sixth-grade classroom last week, Annie Bryant paused to view the more than 50 students who had gathered to hear her stories.

February is black history month, and the lifetime Cedar Grove resident came prepared with stories of famous black Americans and a simple tale about her own life. There was a time when Ms. Bryant would walk three miles each morning, enter a school yard and stroll into a one-room classroom filled with students from grades 1-7.

For her, education ended at the seventh grade, and began again in 1981 when she obtained her GED (general equivalency diploma) from Brunswick Technical College after just six months of study. Now surrounded by colorful classroom displays, carpeted floors and students dressed in designer jeans and parachute pants, Ms. Bryant's lesson to the students was firm and to the point.

"All of you have a talent of some kind," she told the students while shaking a motherly finger in their direction. "It's up to you, along with your parents and teachers, to build that talent."

Among the stories Ms. Bryant told were ones about such talented blacks as Frederick Douglas, Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver, who discovered more than 200 products from the peanut, a thought that stirred the students' imaginations. Studying history and other subjects has never stopped for Ms. Bryant; after all, it wasn't by her own choice that she once had to end her education in the seventh grade.

"Sixty-five years ago, the highest anyone could go was the seventh grade," she said. "There were no high schools in Brunswick County. If your family couldn't afford to send you to Fayetteville, then you were not able to get a high school education in Brunswick County."

But many years later, Ms. Bryant took advantage of an opportunity to receive her GED when Brunswick



SURROUNDED BY STUDENTS at Shallotte Middle School, Cedar Grove's Annie Bryant answers questions

Technical College opened its doors. As a seventh-grader, she had received her certificate promoting her to the eighth grade, but it never came in handy, not to a family of poor farmers.

Ironically enough, BTC was also just three miles from her front doorstep, the same distance Ms. Bryant had to walk each morning to attend Cedar Grove Elementary School. She was named BTC's outstanding student of the month in October 1981, and several mon-

from the sixth-grade class. Ms. Bryant spoke to the class last Wednesday on black history.

the later was named outstanding GED graduate during commencement exercises at the Shallotte Middle School cafeteria, just a short stroll from the classroom where she was now sharing her knowledge with dozens of students.

"A teacher bent over to me one day and asked," Ms. Bryant now recalls, "Do you know you're the most outstanding student in this school?" And I said, "No. I didn't know that."

Four months after being enrolled in the GED program, Ms. Bryant received a note from the school asking her to be measured for a cap and gown. It was a moment of realization for the elderly mother who had raised six children, all high school graduates, while three had also earned college degrees.

But now, the letter in her hand "seemed like it opened my eyes," she recalled. While marching across the stage along with the other 122 students, all dressed in caps and gowns, her mind even wandered back to the days when she had longed for the moment long ago.

There was never any doubt that she would succeed in her quest for a diploma for it was the "spirit that stirred me," she added. "I said I would go if I had to walk."

She draws her strength from her religious background, as a lifetime member of Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Church where she also serves as chaplain. Cedar Grove is also rich in black history. It is a small community where one day several black church members met underneath a grove of cedar trees and decided to form their own church, a descendant of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, the oldest in the county.

Today, Ms. Bryant views the classrooms and schools and recalls how things have changed. Her tales of the one-room classroom, heated by lighter logs and oakwood with no electricity or indoor restrooms interested the students.

"I'm just delighted to see such fabulous buildings today," she said. "But when I see things mistreated or misused today, my mind goes back to those early days."

Even without the beautiful classrooms or supplies, in those days "that was all we knew. We enjoyed life in those days, too," she said.

She left the students with a few history lessons and a few lessons on life. She also left them with a smile.

"It takes 72 facial muscles to frown," she said, "but if you smile, you only use 14 muscles. So it's much better, so much easier to smile than to frown."

Ocean Isle Prepares To Purchase Property For Treatment Plant

Ocean Isle Beach officials have moved one step closer to obtaining more than 146 acres from the International Paper Company for the town's proposed sewage treatment plant.

The property off of Georgetown Road and RPR 1184 will be purchased by the town for \$175,647.60 if the Brunswick County Superior Court determines that amount to be just compensation for the land. Town attorney Elva Jess filed a "friendly lawsuit" on Feb. 12 stating that the property has been condemned by the town to make way for the sewage treatment plant.

If the estimated price of \$1,200 per acre plus interest meets the approval of paper company officials, the court will disburse the funds already on deposit at the Brunswick County Clerk of Superior Court's office.

At the town commissioner's August 15 meeting, a resolution was adopted condemning the property for construction of the treatment plant. J.A. Van Surdam of the International Paper Company office in Wilmington was also sent a notice on Aug. 23 of the town's plan to condemn and purchase the property for \$1,200 per acre.

According to the suit, the paper

company will be allowed to remove any timber, buildings, structures, permanent improvements or fixtures already on the condemned property. The value of such items will not affect the price already established by the town.

Paper company officials may apply to the clerk's office for the disbursement of the funds and accept the compensation price. The town has asked the court not to enter an order for disbursement of the funds until the defendant either waives its right to remove any timber or buildings from the property or has properly removed the items.

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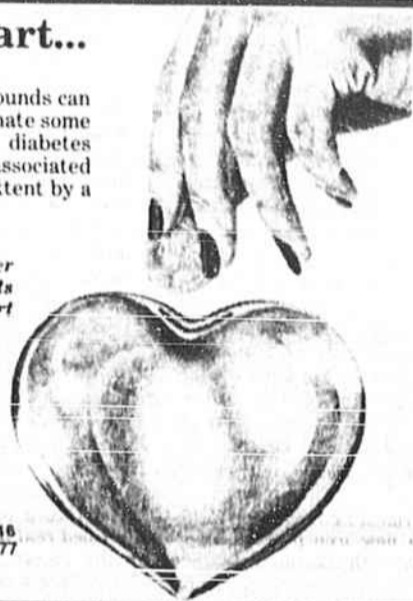
If you are overweight, losing those few extra pounds can not only help your heart, but can also help eliminate some of the other risk factors. High blood pressure, diabetes and elevated cholesterol levels are frequently associated with obesity and are often alleviated to some extent by a weight loss.

February is National Heart Month. Diet Center urges you to support the Heart Association in its efforts to help control America's No. 1 killer... heart disease.

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