

Reunion Will Bring Memories Of 4 River Road Communities

BY SUSAN USHER

Clarence Jones figures there aren't too many people his age left to reflect on old times. But he likes the idea of a community reunion, for he and others have memories and bits of wisdom to share.



JONES

Over the July 4th weekend, the Dark Branch native will be among the speakers at the first reunion held by the Dark Branch, Neck, Marsh Branch and Old Towne communities. "I expect we'll have a lot of folks—maybe a thousand or more,"

he predicted. In his allotted 20 minutes, Jones, who didn't begin learning the basic skills of reading and writing until he was an adult, wants to impress upon the young people the importance of getting an education.

Of the four predominantly black communities once scattered along N.C. 133, the "River Road" from Leland to Southport, only Dark Branch and Old Towne remain familiar names.

The U.S. Army bought the land that once comprised the Neck and Marsh Branch communities for its Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point.

Rosa Bell McMillion and her sister, Josey Smith, who work with

Jones at Orton Plantation, remember what it was like to live in those two communities. But, they pointed out in a recent interview, that's not the case with the young people whose parents and great-grandparents were born and reared in these communities. They'd like to help change that, this weekend.

"After we had to leave (in about 1953)," recalled 70-year-old Mrs. McMillion, "people went everywhere, from Baltimore to California." Many of them haven't seen each other since or met their own kin; the older ones have since "passed on."

One of the displaced, Robert Earl Parker, ended up in Virginia, a career educator who will soon retire.

"He wanted to get us back together," said Mrs. McMillion, who with her sister and their families are among the many volunteers working on the ambitious project.

"It's important because we want our children to remember where we came from and who we are," she continued, sharing information about their own parents, James and Amelia Reaves Davis of Marsh Branch. He was a cobbler; she, a seamstress.

Josey married Charles Smith, whose sharecropper parents, Junior and Maggie Smith, lived "down in the Neck" and eventually bought their own farm, the "Swain place" on N.C. 211.

The three also want those at the reunion to appreciate others who

helped mold their communities—the likes of Solomon King, postmaster and church leader in Dark Branch following the Civil War, and Jones' own great-grandfather, Frank Brown Sr., one of the largest landowners of that area, and his grandmother, Fannie Brown, who was a natural doctor and midwife.

In Marsh Branch, fishing was a major industry, while in the Neck, farming for families such as the McCrackens was a way of life for many.

People such as healer Mary Brown were the stuff of family stories. "One lady whose son had double pneumonia, the doctor let her (Mary Brown) come in and cure him," recalled Mrs. Smith.

Another goal of the weekend is to

honor some of the families in the area who contributed to life in those communities, such as the late Dan Harrelson Sr., whose former store near the entrance to Orton Plantation was well-frequented by members of the community. "He was good to us. They're gone, but their children are here and we want to honor them," said Mrs. Smith.

Events over the June 29-July 2 weekend include church services and on Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., a community picnic at Town Creek Township Park, which will be followed that night by a banquet at the I.L.A. Hall in Wilmington.

More information is available from Clayton Vaught, 371-3227, in Winnabow.

Tools Stolen In Vehicle Break-Ins

Assorted tools worth \$2,000 were stolen from several company trucks last week at the Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation office near Shallotte.

According to a report on file at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, the vehicle break-ins happened between Friday at 5:30 p.m. and Saturday at 8 a.m.

The trucks were parked in a fenced-in storage area at the offices on N.C. 130 West. Entry was gained into the vehicles by prying open their doors.

In another incident involving a local business, Margaret Christy, owner of Trawlers Restaurant in Calabash, told sheriff's deputies that her establishment at the corner of N.C. 179 and Ivey High Street was broken into Sunday morning.

Sunday between 2:35 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., someone pried open a back door to enter the building, then removed mainly food, wine and change. Theft loss was estimated at \$502.75.

Also, Phillip Tysinger of Lanvale Nursery on Route 5, Leland, said goods were stolen from his business on U.S. 17. The break-in was discovered last Thursday at 11 a.m.

After cutting a fence, the thief broke out the glass in a door to get inside a garage, then took two Stihl chainsaws, an Echo gas trimmer and a pair of cutters, all worth \$765.

Other Leland Thefts

The sheriff's department on Monday also was investigating other break-ins that were reported in the Leland area.

Frank Ballard of Route 1, Leland, reported last week that someone stole his 1986 Chevrolet four-wheel-drive truck from his residence on Blue Banks Road.

The theft occurred between June 20 at 3:30 p.m. and last Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. Items in the truck included four Stihl chainsaws and assorted tools. The value of the vehicle and other stolen property was not listed.

John Stephen Price of Route 4, Leland, told authorities that someone broke into his home at the corner of Lanvale and Bluff Roads while he was at a ballgame Friday between 6:15 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. The intruder entered the house by breaking out a rear window.

Stolen were two Browning 12-gauge automatic shotguns, a Browning 16-gauge automatic shotgun, a Ruger .223-caliber rifle, a Redfield scope, a 19-inch Sanyo color television, a Magnavox videocassette recorder, a 35mm AEI camera, several watches and assorted jewelry. The property was worth \$4,350.

Lizzie Williams of Route 5, Leland, reported that someone pried open a rear window of her house on Fletcher Drive and stole a public address system worth \$1,200. The break-in was discovered Saturday at 8 a.m.

Also, Leary Grady of Summerville AME Zion Church on Summerville Loop Road near Leland told the sheriff's department that someone broke into the church Saturday night.

The break-in happened between 6 p.m. Saturday and 8:10 a.m. Sunday. Grady found that a side door to the church had been kicked open. All that

was stolen was a telephone from the pastor's study.

Other Break-Ins

Charles Ray Evans of Lumberton told officers that someone broke into the garage at his residence in the Sunset Harbor community. The incident occurred between Friday night and 1 p.m. Saturday.

An Evinrude 25-horsepower boat motor and Hummingbird fish finder were stolen from the garage. Theft loss was placed at \$3,400. Damage to a door was estimated at \$250.

Mary B. Bordeaux of Winnabow said her home off N.C. 87 East near U.S. 17 was entered between last Wednesday and Sunday at noon. The intruder entered through a rear sliding glass door.

Reported stolen were assorted jewelry, a push lawn mower, a Poulan chainsaw and a tape player. The property was worth \$1,987.

Judith Stultz Vernon of Axton, Va., told authorities that someone broke into her father's vacation home and a storage building in Ocean Trails II subdivision.

The break-in happened between May 19 and 5:30 a.m. Friday. Nothing was taken from the home; assorted tools worth \$410 were removed from the storage building.

Corey Reaves reported that someone forced open a window and entered the Ruth F. Reaves residence on U.S. 17 near Bolivia between June 11 and Sunday.

A microwave oven, console television, videocassette recorder and cordless telephone were stolen. Value of the items was not listed.

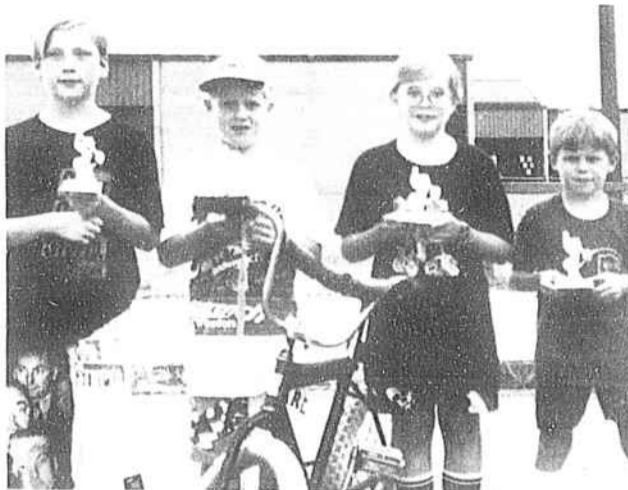


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Four Place First In Rodeo

Jordan Reeves of Shallotte (second from left) emerged overall winner in the bike rodeo held last week at Shallotte Middle School by Cub Scout Pack No. 227, as well as taking first place in the eight-year-old division. Other first-place winners were (from left) Clinton Rountree of Holden Beach, nine-year-olds; Peter Macon, Seaside, 10-year-olds; and Chucky Foehrkolb, Village Point Estates, seven-year-olds.

County May Permit More Hardship Cases In SADs

BY RAHN ADAMS

Assessment payments in Brunswick County's first three special assessment water districts are coming in steadily, but officials involved in the collections say they need additional direction from commissioners on how to handle hardship cases.

At Monday's regular county board meeting in Bolivia, the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board is expected to ask commissioners to give Tax Collector Nancy Moore the authority to grant hardship status to deserving property owners, even if they don't meet the current guidelines for installment payments.

At present, a property owner who doesn't qualify for hardship status is required to pay his assessment in full within 60 days after the county adopts the final assessment roll in his respective SAD project. Until the assessment is paid, a lien against the individual's property exists.

Earlier this year, commissioners approved an installment payment plan for property owners on limited or fixed incomes, in response to public sentiment that the 60-day payment period was too short, especially for senior citizens.

The installment plan is based solely on the property owner's monthly

household income and the number of individuals in that household, with the allowable number of monthly payments ranging from four to 20 based on those two factors.

However, Ms. Moore, whose department handles SAD collections, told utility officials last week that at least 15 property owners who don't meet the present eligibility requirements have asked to participate in the installment payment plan. There are 10 to 15 standard hardship cases in each of the three districts, she added.

If given authority to do so, Ms. Moore would review the requests individually and take factors other than just household income into account, as to whether or not the assessment would cause a substantial economic hardship on the property owner. She said the requests should be filed in writing.

According to Ms. Moore's figures as of June 16, some \$140,134.93 or 65.1 percent of the \$215,262.70 levy in SAD 2 had been paid. The past due date was May 3. Delinquent property owners were notified of that fact earlier this month.

In SAD 1, some \$68,384.17 or 23.3 percent of the \$293,004.14 levy had been paid. The past due date in SAD 1 is July 11. Also, \$18,579.23 or 13.3 percent of the \$140,135.83 levy in SAD 3 had been paid. The past due date in SAD 3 is July 25.

July Show To Help Kids At Christmas

It may be hot outside, but one local group is thinking Christmas—in July.

The Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center will sponsor a benefit country and gospel show on Saturday, July 8, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Shallotte Middle School.

Featured will be local artists and groups such as Gene Simmons and the Cedar Grove Gospel Choir.

Proceeds will be used to help needy children in the county during the Christmas season.

Offices To Close Independence Day

Post offices, financial institutions and the Brunswick County Government Center will all be closed on Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day.

Also, town halls at Shallotte, Calabash, Holden Beach and Sunset Beach will also be closed Tuesday. Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall will be open normal hours, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., and will also be open all day Saturday.

Twins To Appear On TV Talk Show

Sabrina and Serena Varnam, the twin daughters of Ronald and Jencie Varnam of Varnamtown who are pursuing modeling careers in New York City, will appear on local television next week.

The twins will be guests on the Jim Burns Show next Tuesday and Wednesday, July 4 and 5, televised on WJKA-TV 26 at 10 a.m., said Mrs. Varnam.

AT HOLDEN BEACH

BRING HOME THE BEACON

On Sale At

- ALAN HOLDEN REALTY
- BARN RESTAURANT
- BEACH MART
- CAISON'S SUPERETTE
- CAROLINA SEASIDE RETREAT
- CITGO STATION
- FARRELL'S FOOD MART
- GENERAL STORE
- GINNY'S CHICKEN HOUSE
- JEFF'S GROCERY
- HOLDEN BEACH PIER
- HOLDEN BEACH SEAFOOD
- JAN'S RESTAURANT
- ROBINSON'S VARIETY
- SPAN MART
- SKY MART EXXON
- L. BOOKWORM
- CAPT. PETE'S

Municipal Bills Advance In Senate

Two bills whose adoption would affect two Brunswick County towns and communities adjacent to them moved forward in the N.C. General Assembly this week, according to Rep. E. David Redwine.

The Senate Local Government Committee approved a bill that would allow residents of both Calabash and Carolina Shores to vote in August 22 referendums on consolidation of their communities and a bill that would allow residents of the Leland area to vote on incorporation.

Both bills must now go to the Senate Finance Committee, then to the full Senate. Any amendments will then have to be approved by the House.

So far there is at least one such amendment. In action initiated by Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. of Tabor City, said Redwine, the Senate committee amended the Leland bill, removing a

clause that barred the town of Belville from taking steps to annex adjoining land in the Leland area before residents of that area had the chance to vote on the issue of incorporation. Redwine had included the proviso, he said, so that Leland residents could vote on the issue without using Belville's immediate intentions as arguments for or against incorporation.

The Leland Civic Association launched a community-wide incorporation movement in reaction to Belville's announced intentions earlier this year of annexing a chunk of Leland's business district and a large residential area. An effort by Redwine to work a compromise such as consolidation of the communities failed, but Belville has since retreated in its position. Mayor Kenneth Messer, who owns some of the property in question said the town in

April decided to consider only those businesses or areas where the property owners wish to be annexed.

In advancing the amendment, Soles noted that in the past Leland area residents have voted twice against incorporation while Belville is an incorporated area with plans for orderly growth.

Short Reappointed

Rosetta Short of Long Beach has been reappointed to the N.C. Coastal Resources Advisory Council for a term of two years.

The council serves as a liaison between the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission and the general public.

Mrs. Short, starting her 15th year as a council member, was first appointed to the board in 1975 to fill the unexpired term of Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson.

autopsy was inconclusive. He earlier had speculated that the murder charge possibly would be reduced to assault for one suspect or the other, if the autopsy pinpointed the blow that killed Pigg.

Probable cause hearings in the case are scheduled for July 11 in Brunswick County District Criminal Court. Ballard was released from the Brunswick County Jail on a \$20,000 bond two weeks ago. McCowan was still in custody Tuesday, also under a \$20,000 bond.

Autopsy Fails To Point Out Blow That Killed Man

An autopsy performed on a man who was beaten to death near Southport earlier this month did not indicate which of two suspects might have delivered the fatal blow.

Brunswick County Coroner Greg White told the Beacon Tuesday that the regional medical examiner's office in Jacksonville was unable to determine whether Earl James Pigg Jr. died of injuries to the front or back of the head—a finding that might have indicated which suspect would remain charged with murder.

Ronald McCowan, 28, both of Smith Mobile Home Park off N.C. 211 near Southport, were charged with murder in connection with the June 10 beating death. Pigg also was a resident of the mobile home park.

According to the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, the death followed a brawl that began outside Pigg's residence involving the victim and Ballard. Ballard allegedly struck Pigg in the face with a stick and wooden two-by-four during the fight. The struggle ended inside

Ballard's mobile home when McCowan allegedly struck Pigg in the back of the head with a two-by-four, authorities said. Pigg was dead on arrival at Doshier Memorial Hospital, Southport.

Brunswick County Det. Ray Spencer said both men were charged with murder because investigators could not determine which suspect might have inflicted the fatal injuries.

Spencer said Tuesday that the murder charges against both men apparently would stand, since the

Varnamtown Making Big Plans For Anniversary

One of Brunswick County's youngest and smallest towns has big plans for its first anniversary. Varnamtown will celebrate Founder's Day on Labor Day weekend this September.

Some of the activities planned by residents of the waterfront village on the Lockwood Folly River are a parade, pageant, crafts fair, fish fry,

Sunday afternoon gospel and country music songfest, competitive games and a weeklong fishing contest.

The parade will be held Saturday, September 2, and both commercial and non-profit entries are now being accepted, said parade chairman Marlene Varnam. Non-profits enter for free; the cost for business entries is \$10 each.

Spearheading plans for the celebration is the two-month-old Varnamtown Ladies Auxiliary, of which Tonya Robbins is president. She can be contacted for more information on any of the planned events, at 842-9359. She's also the contact person for membership in the auxiliary, which meets next at 4 p.m. Sunday, July 9, in the fellowship hall of Dixon Chapel

United Methodist Church.

Auxiliary Mary Dawson is in charge of the pageant, in which the first Miss Varnamtown will be chosen on August 26, just in time to take a prominent part in the festival itself.

Display space at the craft fair is available for \$10 per plot, with Ms. Robbins the contact person.

You don't have to be an American to die of a heart attack.



You also don't have to overeat. Or consume excessive amounts of cholesterol. Or ignore high blood pressure. Or smoke. But that's what a large segment of this country's population does. And that's one reason the United States has the highest incidence of heart attack in the world. At the American Heart Association, we're trying to help Americans change the way they live. And die.

American Heart Association
WERE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE