

Tribute To 'Jimbo' Clemmons Raises Student Scholarships

BY TERRY POPE

The Rev. Calvin Moore's dream to honor the man known to many as "Jimbo" began two years ago.

When more than 100 friends and family members gathered in Leland Sunday to pay tribute to James Franklin Clemmons Jr., the Brunswick County educational pioneer wasn't there to receive their accolades.

Clemmons, principal of Lincoln Primary School for 35 years, died this past spring before the day to honor him arrived.

"It's time to present this soldier with his medal of honor," said Moore.

Helping Hands Inc., a non-profit group that repairs substandard housing for the needy in Brunswick County, coordinated the program held at Leland Middle School to help raise money for scholarships to be given in Clemmons' name to underprivileged students.

Sunday's program raised \$3,036, said the Rev. Thurman Everette, president of Helping Hands. Donations to the fund can be made at United Carolina Bank branches.

The Rev. Edison Moore recalled the time Clemmons and some parents sewed together burlap sacks and dyed them red to hang as curtains at Lincoln School.

"He lived through to see some of his work pay off," said Moore. "Thank God that he came this way, that our boys and girls might have a chance."

Clemmons was a graduate of the Brunswick County Training School for blacks in Southport and majored in math and social studies at N.C. Central University in Durham. He served in the U.S. Army, earning the rank of master sergeant, and received a medal of honor from U.S. Army General George Patton.

In 1946, he received a master's degree in administration and supervi-



FRIENDS PAID tribute to Clemmons and his family at a ceremony Sunday. Pictured are (front from left) James Clemmons III, Thelma Clemmons, Tia Clemmons and Durrell Clemmons; and (back) Linda Green, Dorothy Wilson, Calvin Moore, Angelyn Moore, Thurman Everette and Wilhelmina Everette.

sion from Columbia University in New York and was nominated for a Rhodes Scholarship to study abroad. Instead, he returned to Brunswick County to become a teacher, principal and two-term member of the Brunswick County Board of Education. He lost his bid for re-election to the board last November.

"When I see him, I see a scholar, a salesman, a teacher, a principal, a board member, a father, a husband, and above all, an educator," said P.R. Hankins, superintendent of Brunswick County Schools.

Hankins recalled the many times Clemmons dipped into his own pocket to pay for lunches for stu-

dents who did not have the money.

Former School Superintendent Ralph King worked with Clemmons for 14 years, including the controversial period when Brunswick County Schools desegregated. Lincoln, an all-black high school, became a primary school for grades K-3 in 1968.

"He played a vital and key role in bringing this about," said King, "not just in this community but the entire county."

At times, Clemmons appeared to be possessive of his students and school, King said, often using the terms "my school, my students."

"That was motivated by his

strong love, his caring and concern for his school," said King.

Doug Baxley, who served six years with Clemmons on the school board, said he is just beginning to realize the meanings behind some of Clemmons' favorite expressions, such as, "A kicking mule won't plow."

"He often said that he was color blind," said Baxley. "I grew to believe it. He's one of those unsung heroes that had a commitment."

The man that succeeded Clemmons as principal at Lincoln Primary, Joseph Butler, said Clemmons never learned how to whisper. Butler recalled a time when

school workers were unhappy about a decision the board had made. Clemmons told them, "You elected me to represent you. If you think we're not doing what's right, then go and voice your opinion. I am only one, but if you're right, you can bet your bottom dollar I'll be with you 100 percent."

Clemmons once attended an auction and purchased a number of typewriters. He gave one to a student who couldn't write legibly, Butler said.

"He once told me, 'You can't say what I say. I said it to help you,'" said Butler.

Clemmons first met Shirley Babson when she was elected to the school board in 1976.

"His day didn't end when the school day ended," said Mrs. Babson. "I would call him a proud man. Mostly, he was proud of his children."

Clemmons once told her, "The best way to free a person is to free the mind."

He struggled to bring salaries of custodians from the "stone ages," she said.

"He was a genuine man," said Mrs. Babson.

Leland Mayor Russell Baldwin said it was Clemmons' inspiration that encouraged the town to allocate \$6,000 of its 1991-92 budget toward educational projects.

"We have got to realize, as 'Jimbo' did, that there are scientists walking among us disguised as children," said Baldwin.

"Jimbo" got his nickname from his parents, shortly after he was born July 12, 1920. A longtime friend shares his middle name, Franklin Randolph, also a former Brunswick County school board member.

"Jimbo's" a name that would follow him throughout his life," said Linda Green, family biographer. Randolph didn't realize until

Sunday's ceremony that the two also share the same birthday.

"Now I know why we are so much alike," said Randolph. "If we've got something to say, we're going to say it."

The night before Clemmons died, he called Randolph to talk about ways to raise student test scores. Randolph thought it peculiar that Clemmons would talk for about 45 minutes on the subject.

In the conversation, Clemmons had also encouraged Randolph to tell people to "go down to that board of education and be in support of those that have their heads screwed on right."

"The next day, that's when I heard the word," said Randolph.

Clemmons, a 41-year veteran of Brunswick County's school system, had died.

A slide collection recalling Clemmons' life was donated to the Lincoln library.

The Brunswick County Ensemble, Spice of Life singers and Monica Richardson, a former Lincoln student, provided music.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Hewett Heads Renfrow Campaign Effort

Ronald E. Hewett of Supply will serve as chairman of the Brunswick County campaign committee for Edward Renfrow, candidate for lieutenant governor in 1992.

"I am proud to have someone of Ronald Hewett's character to manage my campaign in Brunswick County," Renfrow stated in a June 26 news release. "He is a very talented, energetic and well-respected individual who I know will do an excellent job in promoting my candidacy for lieutenant governor."

Hewett is a lieutenant in the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and coordinator of Project D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). He is a member of Supply Baptist Church, treasurer of the Brunswick County Shrine Club and a member of Shallotte Masonic Lodge and the Sudan Temple.

Caison Selected

Amy Lois Caison of Supply, a rising junior at West Brunswick High School, has been named Brunswick County's winner in the annual James B. Hunt Young Citizens Awards.

The Hunt awards recognize high school students who have excelled in service and leadership in their communities.

Miss Caison and her family will be invited to the Wake Forest campus Sept. 28 for activities and an evening banquet.

She will be eligible for one of

three college scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Completes Training

Navy Seaman Recruit Andrew H. Morris, son of Robert L. and Constance M. Morris of Southport, has completed recruit training at Recruit Training Command, San Diego.

During his eight week training cycle, he studied general military subjects designed to prepare him for further academic and on-the-job training in one of the Navy's 85 basic fields.

Morris is a 1988 graduate of South Brunswick High School.

Babson In Marines

Marine Pvt. Heath G. Babson, son of William A. and Shirley C. Babson of Route 2, Bolivia has completed recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C.

During the 13 week training cycle, Babson learned the basics of battlefield survival. He was introduced to the typical daily routine that he will experience during his enlistment and studied the personal and professional standards traditionally exhibited by Marines. He gained proficiency in a variety of military skills.

A 1990 graduate of South Brunswick High School, Boiling Spring Lakes, he joined the Marine Corps in January of 1991.

Completes Course

Spec. Manuel Evans has completed a U.S. Army primary leadership course.

He received training in supervisory skills, leadership principles and

small unit training techniques essential to a first-line supervisor in a technical or administrative environment.

Evans is a fighting vehicle infantryman in Vilseck, Germany. He is the son of the Rev. Emanuel B. Evans of Route 2, Bolivia.

The specialist is a 1985 graduate of South Brunswick High School, Boiling Spring Lakes.

Named Magistrate

Art Roberts, chief of police at Long Beach, has resigned that position to become a Brunswick County magistrate.

Roberts was named Long Beach police chief in July 1990.

Following magistrate training, Roberts will split his time between

Bolivia and Southport offices.

When a state hiring freeze was lifted earlier this month, Brunswick County Clerk of Court Diana Morgan appointed Roberts to the position.

School Board Resets Meeting To July 15

A meeting set for Monday, July 1, by the Brunswick County Board of Education has been rescheduled for later in the month, according to a notice from the board.

The board plans to instead hold its regular monthly meeting Monday, July 15, at 6:30 p.m. at the administrative office conference room in Southport.

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