

## For Jones, It's Not All Business—Family Comes First

BY TERRY POPE

On the wall in Jerry Jones' office hangs an autographed photo of stock car racer Richard Petty. A model of Petty's red and blue No. 43 Pontiac, a present from a Shallotte town employee, rests on a table.

"I've been a Petty fan every since I started following stock car racing," said Jones. "He's been good for the state, a good ambassador."

Jones' son, Mark, 24, once stood in line six hours to get his father the autographed photo. When Jones and his wife, Barbara, had a second son, they named him Kyle. He's now 21.

True racing fans can quickly make the connection. Richard Petty has a son, Kyle, who followed in his father's footsteps and developed a racing career of his own. The Joneses borrowed the name from a family they admire.

Family ties. It's what drew Jones back to Shallotte 23 years ago, when he returned to help run a local lumber company. He once was in line for a promotion that would have forced him to move.

When breaking the news to his family, they all agreed. "You might be moving, but we're staying," they said.

"That's how they felt about it, too," said Jones. "I feel good about this community now. This is home."

Jones, 46, is assistant manager in charge of purchasing at the lumber company and has delivered materials, driven a truck, "whatever it takes to get the job done," he added.

He has quickly moved up the political ladder in recent years, too. He served four years as an alderman on the Shallotte town board and was later elected mayor. He gave up that seat when he was elected county commissioner for District 2 last November.

No one pushed the Republican to enter politics. In one town election, two seats were up for grabs, yet the night before a filing deadline Mayor Beamon Hewett was on the telephone asking people to run for alderman.

"I just got to thinking," said Jones. "It just didn't seem right that the mayor should have to get on the phone and ask people to run. I told myself that the next election I'd be on the ballot."

But Jones lost that battle by 10 votes. Mayor Hewett's recruiting had worked. Six people filed for three available seats. Jones finished with 100 votes while the third highest person had 110 votes.



SHALLOTTE'S JERRY Jones has moved rapidly up the political ladder. The first-year county commissioner studies a thick 1991-92 county budget with a businessman's eye.

Two years later, Jones ran again and won. He hasn't lost an election since.

That means his telephone rings more often these days. Serving as county commissioner requires listening to a lot of people, he said. He spends hours each day reading about county news, returning phone calls

and meeting with residents.

At his first commissioners' meeting, he was chosen vice chairman and was appointed to the Brunswick County Planning Board in an ex officio capacity.

It has been a year of budget cuts. Shortfalls in state revenues have stretched county

budgets tighter than in many previous years. The decisions Jones has had to make in his first year on the county board, he admits, have been tough ones.

Following a recent commissioners' meeting, a woman approached Jones, placed her hand on his arm and said, "I'm really disap-

pointed in you."

"You have to do a lot of soul searching," said Jones. "If I feel in my heart that I'm right, I'll still listen to input and decide from there. You have to make a decision and carry on."

Serving as commissioner is almost like having a second job, he said. Family support has kept him going.

"You could make a full-time job out of it," he said. "Being Shallotte mayor could be a full-time job. The time involved is however much time you want to put into it. I try to put as much time into it as I can."

Both sons now attend college, Mark at Emory and Henry College in Emory, Va., and Kyle at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville. Throughout school, they played a variety of sports that kept the Joneses involved in community activities.

Barbara, who traveled with the family to races, also never missed a ballgame.

"From little league on up. It didn't matter where the games were, she was there," said Jones. "We were always real supportive of them and the schools."

The family has always come first, said Jones.

Becoming a commissioner, he said, has been a learning experience.

"To be honest, I didn't realize there were so many things involved," said Jones. "There are so many services that the county has to provide its residents."

There will probably be as many changes for Brunswick County in the next 10 years as there have been in the last 20, he predicted. Jones is a good judge on county growth, for every day he is involved in selling the materials used to build local homes and businesses.

To handle the growth, Jones would like to see county water lines extended and county-wide zoning laws adopted.

"We need to provide as much water to the numbers of people that we can," he said.

Some people don't like zoning, while others do, he noted.

"It's a situation that's going to have to come about," he said. "It'll benefit all of us to have some guidelines in place."

His goal is to be a fair representative of Brunswick County, an ambassador, like Petty.

"I don't know if I've gotten used to it yet," he said of his role on the board of commissioners. "If we disagree on an issue, then I must do what I think is best. If we don't see eye to eye, I still hope to be their friend, regardless."

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